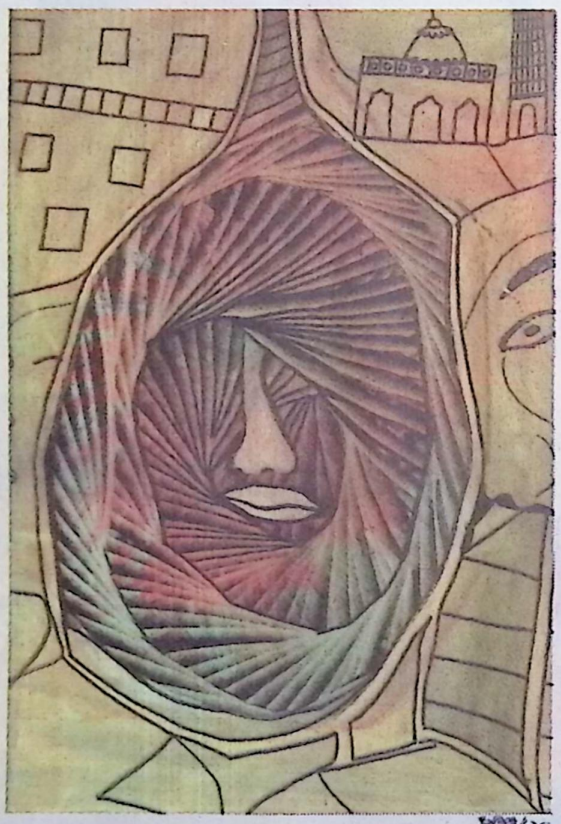
The Lore of the Laity

Looking back at Kazi Monir's years in creative actions

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Imagine a corpus of literature of the laity in need of illumination, or in plain parlance -- illustrations. Who would be able to chip in? Who is that gifted image-maker with the ability to touch on every aspect of that transient idea called life, or love and also the longing that results from both? Who would be able to fathom the mind of a natural human where these thoughts and sentiments intermingle, and at once would feel a sense of belonging in the midst of such emotional beings?



The name that would certainly come to mind at first would be of Rabithranth's famous for his oeuvre that brings out the raw energy of a bygone Bengal, whose work also seems adequately saturated with a sense of the soil and on top of that has a soulful air to it all. However, Kazi Monir, another self-taught denizen of the same geography, who in a retrospective of sorts, occasioned by his illness to generate medical expenses, has clearly demonstrated very recently that he is ready and set to take over.

If imagery is a word loaded with passion and ignites imagination in most humans, this earth-bound Monir, a newspaper vendor turned artist, is the one responsible for making it speak the vernacular. It is a language otherwise absent in the esoteric practices of artists confined within the grand edifice of the academia.

What Monir evokes through free associations with natural elements and the uniqueness of the laity can easily be linked with the soulful ballads and self-searching philosophies of his own land. One can conclude that he has spontaneously internalised the lore of his land and people. A visit to the recently-ended 4th solo of the artist would help one realise that image making is not for the myopic or for ones whose sight is covered in protective goggles, nor is it for the ones who cater to the bourgeois taste without even being informed of the self-indulgence that accompanies it.

Monir's metaphorical landscapes, non-representative propositions as well as a flurry of highly expressive humans serve as an eye opener for many. They initiate a kind of revivification of the belief in the holistic defined by that definitive longing for visions.

Monir's art is all about visions, which he formulates or imagines within the space of his artwork, though they easily spill over to encroach on the minds of the viewers.

The culmination of ideas and emotions into visions seems an impossibility through mediation of formal education. As we are all aware that any curriculum fashioned in the mode introduced by the subsequent colonizers lead to an utter loss of the indigenous knowledge, and that results in the drying up of the vigour, which is of social origin, and with which one encounters his or her immediate surroundings. This, we now understand, has already led to such impoverishment of the soul that imagery has become bleaker and expressions weaker, as they are solely built on self-assertion -- a loner's futile attempts at representing the real in the absence of any understanding of the self.

Going beyond the self and reclaiming the collective is how one should explain Monir's image making process. If he asserts his self when he is in charge of the medium, applying it to its fullest potential, he abdicates the same once he enters the dimension of the collective -- where things are lent a new characteristic -- unnatural or elemental in their form, shape and colour and most of all in their behaviour.