Chittagong Art College, Sabhiul Alam, who founded the institution, Abul Momen, and Munijul Islam were his teachers. The BFA degree, however, was done at Dhaka. In 1985-86, while at Aarong he studied at Ahmedabad, Gujarat, at NID, the National Institute of Design. There he did a special course for a year, specialising in textile weaving and design. He has experimented with both *jamdani* and *nakshikantha*.

Why did he delve into craft and not switch to pure visual art? As a school and college student, he loved to make the stage and other artefacts that were used as props. He enjoyed making covers for books—as did Hashem Khan and Rafiqun Nabi. He took pleasure in making the stage for "Durga" and "Saraswati" Pujas. Sabhiul Alam, his Principal at Chittagong Art College, told him that he excelled in designs. He advised him to concentrate on crafts - as he had a flare for that. "Basically, I can handle handloom, textile, pottery, hand-crafted wood and jewellery," he says. "More importantly, I'm trying to establish curriculum development in craft with ease", says Chandra Shekahar. He helps places like 'Rong' to set up design studios, where housewives, with time to spare, and with a knack for handicrafts can come and work.



As for the old masters, verging around Zainul Abedin, all of them are his favourites. Individually, he has been keen on them, as well as the work of mature photographers. He has advised young aspiring artists and craftsperson to study them to the last point and beyond. An artist's imagination and perceptions are wonderful to follow, he says.

Does he tend to follow the masters of the west and implement them in his style or his own manner? To this he says: "Beauty and truth, universal moralityare all one, I believe. It is just that in certain places, the style has been expressed in a certain manner."

Speaking about the galleries and crafts places that he has ventured to Chandra Shekhar says with confidence, "I've been to Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Laos and Singapore. I've been to India and Nepal. In each place I've been lucky enough to find people who understands Hindi or English and I've expressed my feelings and beliefs with brief sketches where words failed me—as in the case of many other travelling artists – who wished to merge with the other foreign people and exchange their ideas and opinions.

"I've been to North America and Canada and England and Germany. I spent most of my time at the museums, gathering ideas."

Mellow and outgoing, with his flowing beard and shoulder length salt and pepper hair, he exudes the appropriate aura of a master craftsman.One respects and admires him for his infinite knowledge of art and related subjects. He has time for nouveau concepts like installations and video art.He is certainly a man for all seasons"

How has art evolved with the technological revolution? The artist cum master-craftsman replies that advertisements, electric connections and media extensions like the mobile phone, and i- pad bring a lifestyle that is so different from before the World Wars. Artists, today, he says, watch many TV channels. They are like couch potatoes, or lounge lizards, he says. The disciplined artist, however, does not jumble up his concept of lines, colours and forms. Shekhar believes that a true artist remains cool and confident about his selection of subjects and texture.

However this is not easy, says Shekhar. One can get distracted and mesmerised by the social, political and economical elements around him. These compound the lifestyle around an individual. It is difficult not to be overwhelmed by happenings around an individual and also elements, such as what is happening in the Middle East, Arab World and Afghanistan. Matters even in China and Tibet affect a person, feels the maestro. An artist feels and thinks just as much as the next person, he says. How can he/she not care about things like global warming – when even the rickshaw–puller and taxi-driver speak of negative elements around us, he says. It's impossible to live in an ivory tower these days, when even the fish seller reads a newspaper, he concludes.