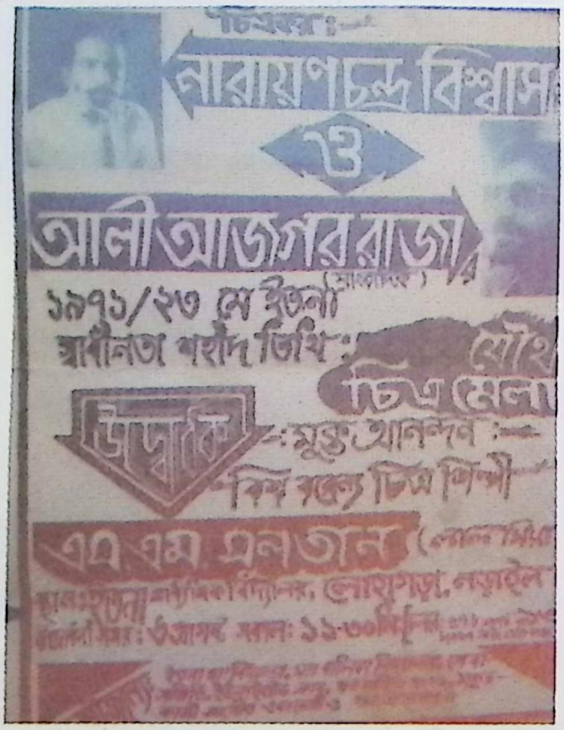
The last major exhibition of Bimanesh's own work was a watercolour landscape series, "Rural Nature" hosted by Dhaka's Bengal Gallery in 2011. It is unsurprising that a protégé of Sultan's would find rural landscapes inspiring. "I thought about the motherland," says Bimanesh.

But more recently his mind has become occupied with the Creator of that motherland's beauty. His contemporary works are concerned with spirituality and feature religious symbols – all religions are paths to the one God – with terracotta relief elements and angels. "Artistic styles change as artists mature," he says.

I ask if he can paint a little. He pulls pots of paint from under the sofa.



Detail of the poster advertising the exhibition of Narayan Chandra Biswas and Ali Azgar Raja attended by SM Sultan at the time of the opening of Itna public library.

When Narayan Chandra Biswas understood it was Lal Mia who stood before him he was astounded. From childhood he had heard – Lal Mia could draw fine pictures, he had no family of his own and kept animals and pet birds. And in those few moments Narayan had learnt that speaking gently with good pronunciation was also a form of art.

Before he realised, the hour was gone. Narayan awoke from his trance at the sound of the Victoria College bell signalling the start of Krishna's exam. He ran to the hostel but his brother had left.

"Did you get lost?" his brother asked after the exam. Narayan started to explain but before he finished his brother's roommate interrupted, "Krishna, can it not be that your brother fell in love with Lal Mia's song?"

Krishna saw the point. "Yes, some of Lal Mia's disease is also in my brother."

Since childhood Narayan had pursued drawing as a hobby. Being from a poor family he knew not to dream of attending an art college, yet after his chance meeting with Sultan his enthusiasm grew. If only he could learn some techniques... But he was too shy to ask.

It was some years later when Narayan was already a teacher at Itna High School that the chance came for a proper introduction. A junior friend, Ali Azgar Raja, was already taking lessons from Sultan and encouraged Narayan to accompany him.

"If you agree, then sometimes..." Narayan said nervously to Sultan; but before he could finish the sentence Sultan laughed sweetly and said, "It is



PHOTOS: ANDREW EAGLE

A self-portrait by artist Narayan Chandra Biswas, symbolising confusion and also his existence within the many aspects of nature - as SM Sultan would have appreciated.

For SM Sultan, artistic thought and creative act was where merit lay, more than in the created article.