

# HANS: A Door of Possibility for Special Children

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Special children, or to be more specific, autistic children, are profoundly artistic. Their art cannot be perceived through ordinary eyes- it requires aesthetic vision- believing in this, HANS, a university student run organisation started its journey on 12th October, 2005. Primarily it started with the aim of social progress through warm and used (but wearable) clothes distribution to the poor, but in 2005 the focus shifted to autism and its pragmatism.

The idea of shifting from relief distribution to creating a sound platform for autistic children has come from the very first President of the organisation, Ishtiaque Shahriar Shaanto. He has worked in many development projects and believes in the capability of Bangladeshi youths. Shaanto says, "Young people are the blood of the society. Their contribution to social development always ensures a better future. Keeping this in mind, our organisation tries to provide a humanitarian facility for the children who are



PHOTOS: COURTESY

dren's talents with everyone out there.

The much-admired initiative of HANS is the Human Chain, where all the members of this organisation gather on Dhaka streets, holding banners and festoons with a view to make people understand and acknowledge the truths, sufferings and the necessities of these children.

Yet another initiative, Emerge from Unknown, calls for paintings done by autistic children. It is one of the most significant initiatives by HANS. Here, they organise week-long exhibitions of the paintings at Drik Gallery, inviting prominent visitors to inaugurate the exhibition.

The exhibition provides an opportunity for the autistic children to identify and acknowledge their talents and abilities.

"Share with Innocence" is another initiative under which HANS organises cultural programmes for these special children. The young ones are given a fully decorated platform to showcase their talents such as recitation, singing, dancing and acting. This stage provides them a broad platform with a number of viewers watching and appreciating their performances. During previous years, HANS also published magazines dedicated to autistic children's work, which were enriched with many contributions made by teachers of schools for special children -- write ups about how to facilitate children's mental and physical upbringing.

The ultimate aim of this organisation is not only to stand beside these special children, but also to create greater sensibility and compassion within the society. HANS tries to develop and spread humanitarian urges within youth groups to initiate benevolent steps towards unprivileged groups.

Everyone involved in this organisation hopes to see a society full of concerned and empathetic individuals with their hands extended towards love, kindness and consideration.



special in their own way."

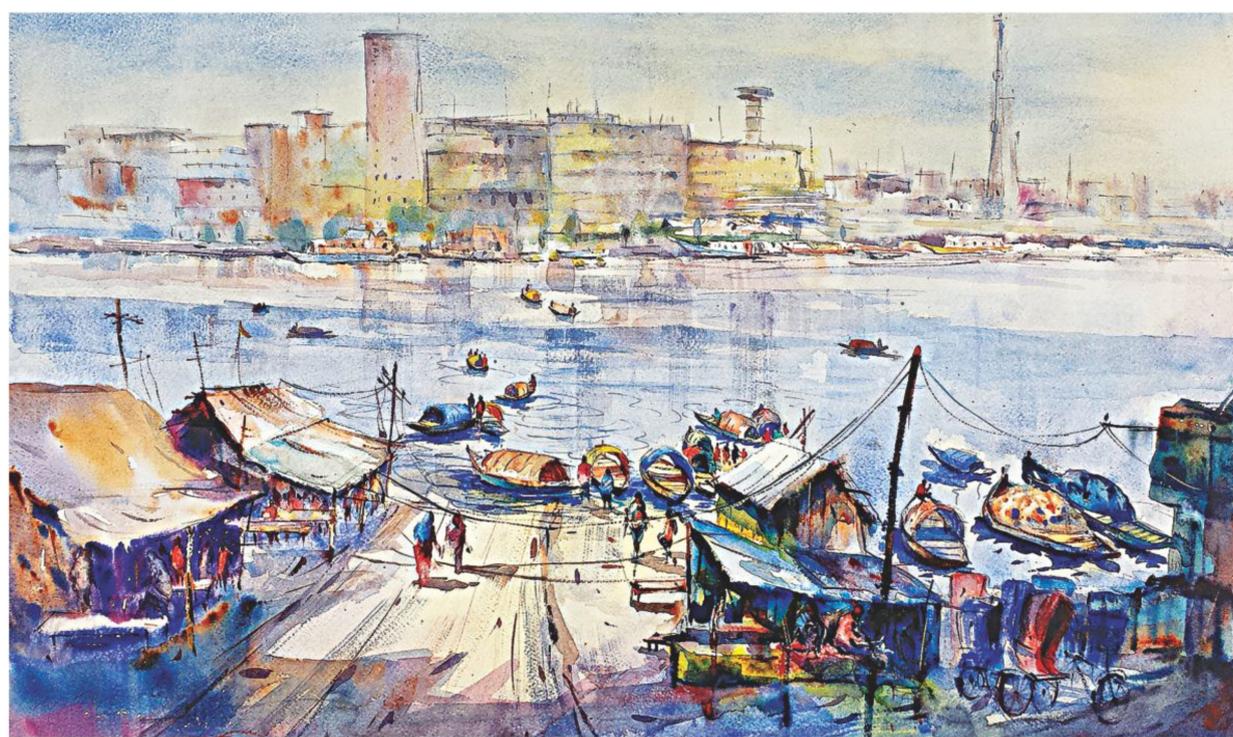
The initial aim of this organisation was to bring changes in the way people saw 'autism'. A very common phenomenon about autism was, it had association with possession and evil spirit. Their very first step was to change such views. In order to do that, volunteers of this organisation started gathering information about autistic schools and their activities, gradually making a habit of visiting the schools once a week. This helped them to stay in close proximity to the children and their teachers. The teachers also helped them learn as to how to act, react and manage the children. One of the important reasons to visit these schools was to increase these children's ability to accept new faces and create a path for one-on-one connection.

Whatever the volunteers learned from the teachers, worked as the basics

to spread consciousness amongst the parents and concerned people to eliminate the stigma around autism.

Another very important step of HANS was to arrange interactive sessions with the parents about how the upbringing should be, since these special children demand special care. "Every child is special, every one of them needs extra care" - this has been the motto of HANS since birth.

With the progress of time and scope, HANS has evolved with more ideas and facilities. It has grown in quality and quantity. Now, with the help of a more constructive executive panel, they hold large programmes for these special children. In collaboration with multinational companies, HANS organises events each year, that spread plenty of awareness amongst parents, the media and also donors. These programmes also identify and showcase the chil-



"Kheya Ghat" by Partho Pratim



Painting by Samira Kamil



## Exhibiting young ideas



"Save Nature" by Bipul Mallick

**TAIARAFT**

'Dhaka Summer: Deo Volente' a two-day art exhibition made its first mark in the capital on the 26th of July, 2017. The exhibition pulled in crowds from all ages as they showcased various ranges of artworks. A total number of 17 artists were part of the exhibition, amongst who, 15 were debuting in the art scene for the first time.

While the entire arrangement consisted of various works belonging to different groups and mediums, it was encouraging to see collaborative exhibitions being arranged in Dhanmondi. Prominent artist Abdus Shakoor Shah, the chief guest, inaugurated the event at the Drik Gallery, while Farida Yasmin, general secretary of the National Press Club, Imdadul Haq Milon, editor of the daily Kaler Kantho and Naem Nizam, editor of the daily

Bangladesh Pratidin, attended the ceremony as special guests.

Mahir Abrar, the core organiser, when asked about what made him put this list of artists together, says, "I saw a post on Facebook which was actually an advertisement to sell art. I talked to a few of my artist friends and decided to organise an exhibition -- which basically kicked off with the Dhaka Summer: Deo Volente exhibition."

Interestingly, the event showcased the work of mostly young and new artists namely, Arafat Ahmed Ali, Anupama Biswas, Humayra Jahan, Israt Jahan Treena, Ishika Chowdhury, Rafid Ahnaf, Samira Kamil, Sanjida Tahseen Tahmida Radi, Wadud Kafil, Maleeha Ali, Partho Pratim, Venessa Kaiser and Tareq Kaiser. Most of the pieces were based on oil paint or acrylic, even though some of the

pieces did try to define a change within the scene.

"There was a sense of accomplishment amongst the artists, once the event was inaugurated," says Abrar. "There is a huge appetite for art that is not often catered to. I had mothers bringing in their children to inspire them after school and office workers coming after a day of hard work to check out the exhibition."

Young artist, Samira Kamil says, "This exhibition made me feel all the more enthusiastic about practicing art and showcasing my work in Bangladesh! There should be more exhibitions for young artists to express themselves." Clearly, the Dhaka art scene is slowly taking a shift towards a more impendent market where pop-up art bazaars have otherwise become the new thing. The audience is also very appreciative towards such initiatives.