

Alhamra - The Premier Cultural Centre Of Pakistan

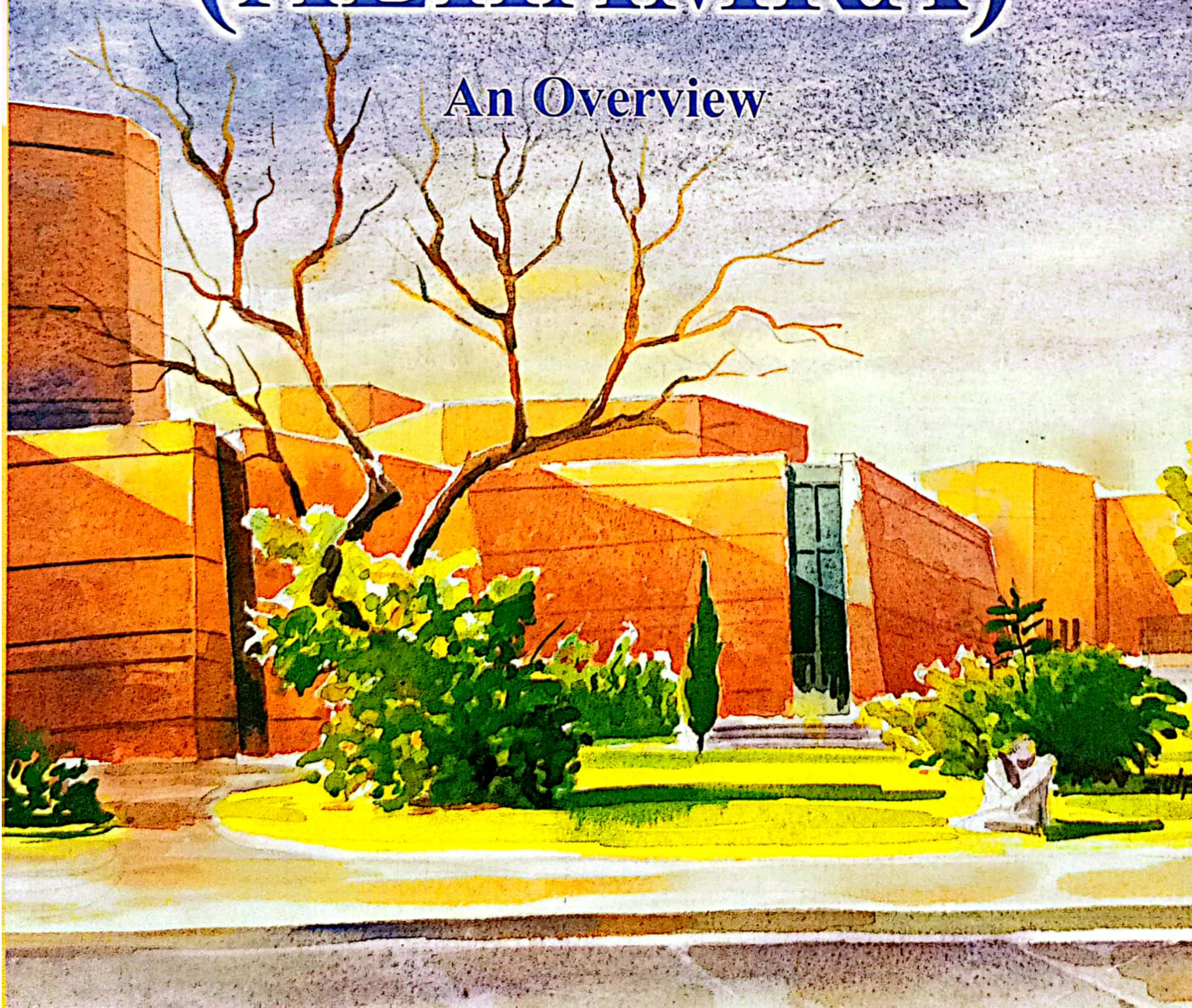
50 YEARS

of

LAHORE ARTS COUNCIL

(ALHAMRA)

An Overview



PAINTINGS AT ALHAMRA

Dr. Mrs. Mussarat Hassan

Just after the riots during the partition of India and Pakistan, in one of those brave efforts by individuals to grope for sanity, an exhibition of paintings was arranged by some artists under the umbrella of what remained of the Punjab Literary League. This league had been holding regular painting exhibitions in Lahore since 1920. This particular exhibition was held, as was usual then, in the hall situated in the upper storey of the Shahdin building, (above the then popular Lorang's Restaurant) in the Charing Cross Lahore.

The exhibition was opened by Khwaja Nazim ud din and through him the artists – prominent among them being the great Chughtai himself brought home to the establishment the impropriety of housing art shows on top floors of commercial buildings. The Alhamra Arts Council was thus formed in 1949 and art was formally provided an official roof and an official mandate.

The space provided for art activity was a private property which was spacious and vacant after the exodus of innumerable residents at the time of partition. It was an old building built during the British days. It had an impressive arched porch leading into the entrance hall and rooms with very high ceilings and thick walls which shut out the cruel heat of the summer. Its brick red distemper of the early days was later changed to a mellower yellow.

This building had a vast compound which was adorned with several lofty pine trees, but the built up area was limited and could not meet the requirement of an active Arts Council. Therefore the need to rebuild was an important item on the agenda of the newly created government body which supervised the working and the uplift of art affairs in this busy enclave of the art world. At that time the art scene in Pakistan was dominated by A. R. Chughtai and Ustad Allah Bukhsh and to

some extent by Haji Sharif. There were also painters like Mian Mohammad Hussain Qadri, Master Miran Bakhsh, Abdur Rehman Ijaz and Mian Inayat Ullah. But as they had not been associated with the Alhamra Arts Council during their lifetime and some of them had only posthumous exhibitions at the Alhamra Art Gallery we will not discuss their work now. Chughtai and Master Allah Bakhsh had both established themselves as artists of excellence after more than forty years of painting very popular pictures. CHUGHATI (fig.1) made a name for himself by painting in the wash technique, which was a Japanese technique that had been indigenised by the Bengal painters and came to Lahore via that route. He illustrated the poems of the popular poet Ghalib and later the works of Iqbal. He is credited with having made---'a conscious effort to revitalize Indian painting on national footing.' His early work showed the influence of watery washes of the Bengal School, but a visit to England gave him the focus of the Pre-Raphaelites, with the linear quality of Beardsley's work playing a prominent part in polishing his style and talent and his technical knowledge about etching.

USTAD ALLAH BUKHSH (Fig.2) on the other hand was a painter of large surfaces, who started his career as a calligraphist on large boards and became a painter of stage backdrops in the Bombay theatre industry. He was basically a romantic who fashioned his painting on the romantic painters of Europe. He portrays his land, culture and folklore with grace and expertise and has left behind him a range of pictures in oil, water colour and pen and ink which bear witness to his mastery in this field. HAJI SHARIF was the traditional painter among them who was painting in the Mughal miniature tradition in opaque water colours. He was mostly painting beautiful renderings of old miniatures which even thematically were related to the past. This in itself would be unacceptable as a criteria to judge Haji Sharif's contribution, because he acted as a bulwark upon which the whole edifice of miniature painting in Pakistan was revived and reinstated. He had several generations of artists behind him who like him, worked at the court of Patiala. His grandfather painted in the Mughal miniature style and even though his own father was influenced by the Pahari miniatures Haji Sharif emulated his grandfather and continued the Mughal tradition.

Chughtai was on the Governing Body of the Council for many years and was fully associated in the decision to enlarge the scope and the premises of the Council.

Mr. Faiz Ahmad Faiz was among the earliest Secretaries of the newly formed Arts Council, and he managed to associate a large number of young artists, actors and musicians who started to use the place for frequent gatherings. One of the reasons that it became so popular among the artists was that it was centrally located. It had a pleasant outdoor space for sitting around meeting fellow artists and a small canteen that catered to the simple needs of the gathering and provided the inevitable cup of tea, a cold drink or even an occasional samosa.

The space available at the Arts Council for these gatherings was an alternate evening arrangement for the frequenters of the teahouse. This teahouse is a place that has often been mentioned in literary as well as art circles because the writers and artists had made this small restaurant a point of daily rendezvous. Situated as it is on the Mall it is near enough for the university, the museum and the Art School faculty and friends to frequent it regularly on almost a daily basis. One often reads about the heated discussions and the important issues that were raised there.

In the evening similar gatherings started taking place in the Alhamra Arts Council. We read about all sorts of wonderfully talented artists gathering here to interact and to argue in favour of their particular point of view. This ambience was further strengthened by the construction of a temporary structure which came to be known as 'the hut' which was the focal point for the gathering of many painters.

Actually the story of paintings at Alhamra began with the hut, with the gathering of so many painters who had such a passion for painting. The hut was the venue for evening painting lessons for amateurs which were started by Mrs. Anna Molka Ahmad and Mr. Khalid Iqbal, both of whom were teachers at the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University. Moyene Najmi was later employed as an exhibition officer at the Alhamra and Miss Naseem Hafeez Qazi was later included in the team of teachers.

ANNA MOLKA, (fig.3) the daughter of Polish and Russian parents, was a British artist who had trained at the Royal College of Art in London where she met and married Sheikh Ahmad. This is how she came

to live in Pakistan. She became the Chairperson of the Department of Fine Arts at the Punjab University and went on to create a place for Fine Arts in the curriculum of more than fifty colleges in the province of the Punjab. Apart from that she was instrumental in starting art classes at Alhamra. Concurrent with her role as an administrator, she was an energetic painter who wielded the palette knife to apply thick paint on many colourful and dramatic pictures where the element of the sunshine creates bright vistas and deep shadows.

KHALID IQBAL (fig.4) on the other hand after he came back from the Slade School of Art, London was a quiet and dignified foil to the vibrant personality of Anna Molka. His teaching methods were subdued and effective. Khalid Iqbal has always been a believer in representational painting and asserts that we have a different situation here and should not follow Western concepts of art unthinkingly because there is no similarity of attitudes. European Art was a revolt against their old society and its value system, 'whereas our modern painting is based on looking at reproductions'. 'There is nothing of the spirit---It is opposite of revolt. It is a part of obedience.' Khalid Iqbal paints through a process of acute observation and an understanding and feeling for his subject matter. He is one of the few painters who have been painting in Lahore for more than forty years. He left the Punjab University in the late sixties and joined the National College of Art as a Head of their Fine Arts Department. Over the year he has produced fewer portraits, but his landscapes have unfailingly given a lot of pleasure to the connoisseurs of painting.

MISS NASEEM HAFEEZ QAZI (fig.5) studied at the Punjab University for her Master's degree in Fine Arts after which she went to Spain to study works of the masters at Madrid. Her main concern was the human figure and she has painted the street urchins of Lahore with a sympathy and understanding that is typical of her personality as a very kind and a humane person. She was responsible for starting the Fine Arts Department in Lahore College for Women and it is a tribute to her that it is today the only College in Lahore outside the Punjab University where Fine Arts is offered for a Masters' degree. She spent a lifetime teaching at the Alhamra in their Art academy as well as the children's classes where children of all ages who chose to come to her every weekend were taught the intricacies of the Fine Art and Painting.

These three were then the teachers who took on the task of teaching amateur artists at Alhamra. But more than the teaching the important thing was the atmosphere of liveliness that they created. Any aspiring or established artist knew that very important art activity was going on at the Alhamra. They therefore made it a point to congregate there in the evening. Some came there to discuss, others came to listen and to learn. Each felt satisfied enough to wish to return the next day. This was the ambience in which the Lahore Arts Circle was created. Fashioned on the lines of the Lahore Arts League it derived its inspiration from the gatherings at the Lahore Alhamra. Basically the founder members were all painters who wanted a platform from which to launch their considerable output and also to thrash out the theoretical storms that the art movements throughout the world had generated. There was a lot of painting and theorizing going on around the Alhamra at that time. Anwer Jalal Shemza, Moyene Najmi, S. Safdar, Ali Imam, Ozzir Zuby, Raheel Akbar Javed, Qutab Sheikh, Hanif Ramay and so many others. There was a flamboyance about their work and about their talk and they livened up the art scene to its end. SHEMZA (Fig.6) was a handsome young artist who had trained at the Mayo School of Art and was teaching art at the Cathedral School in those days, but was versatile and apart from being a painter, he was a writer of short stories and plays. He also made designs on unglazed pottery and painted it rather nicely. In those days he was painting figures though they were strangely distorted and disturbed and shocked the sensitive onlookers. When he went to England he joined the Slade School for a diploma and then completed a post graduation in graphic art from the same school. It was during this time that he got married and settled down in England with his British wife Katrina who was herself an artist. His painting veered towards pure abstraction and showed distinct influence of Paul Klee, when he came back to hold an exhibition in Alhamra in 1961 and again in 1967. But as critics point out 'what Klee learnt and adopted from Islamic culture, Shemza knew to be his birthright.' His sense of design was exquisite and his linear geometric renderings gave his work a modern as well as the oriental touch which grew more and more pronounced towards the end of his days. He had planned to hold an exhibition of his works in Pakistan but his death prevented him from doing that. His wife brought to Pakistan his last exhibition which was held appropriately enough at the Alhamra Art Gallery in 1985.

In sharp contrast to Shemza's confidence and his flair was the tall graceful quiet MOYENE NAJMI (fig.7) who talked with a gentle voice even though he could laugh heartily. He was employed as an art teacher at Aitchison College where his rooms offered hospitality to all his friends. His students recall with affection, even to this day the special brand of freedom that he gave them for expressing themselves. In addition to which he made available for them a wide variety and range of art materials, equipment and art books, that exposed them to art activity all over the world. He opened up new worlds for them and then left them free to work the influences out of their system. His own paintings were realistic initially, but became more and more abstract with a rich mixture of texture and abstract shapes - a result no doubt, of association with Murtaza Bashir, the Bengali painter who came to Lahore and was captivated by the charm of the place.

There was ALI IMAM who was cheerfully involved in teaching at Lawrence College Ghora Gali, but soon left it and Shemza took his place. Ali Imam used to do landscapes then, in simplified shapes and bright poster colours. He seemed to have a strong sense of design and he outlined his figures with thick solid lines. Later, after his return from England, his colours mellowed into pastel shades of blue and gray and his line played hide and seek with the highly textured background.

SHEIKH SAFDAR (fig.8) was slightly older than the three mentioned above. He had qualified from the JJ School of Art, Bombay. He even lived there for some time. Out of all the art schools in the Indo Pakistan sub-continent the Bombay School was known for its leaning towards the modern art movements of Europe. Safdar was influenced by this trend but when he returned to Lahore he started doing female figures which showed the influence of Ajanta cave paintings adapted to modern concepts of space - dividing and subdividing it to suit a pattern or balance it in the picture plain. He obviously tried to paint the Punjabi scene but inadvertently reverted to motifs that betrayed the locale of his training. He was a prolific painter whose hard work and industry impressed all those who came in contact with him. He held the first recorded exhibition of his painting at Alhamra in 1964 and had many more thereafter.

AHMAD PERVEZ (fig.9) spent a life of undulating fortunes, with a sadly limited number of peaks and a great abundance of abysses and

chasms. His family opposed his interest in art and initially he spent some time in Karachi to try and earn a living through other means. In 1952 he came back to Lahore in the apprenticeship of his uncle Jacobus Micheal who had a commercial studio in Lahore. His early work was influenced by his uncle's copies of old masters but Pervez was meeting fascinating artists at the art colleges, at the tea house and at the Alhamra, who had been abroad and had acquired a fascination and understanding for modern painting. Pervez was most receptive to these influences and every day he would listen to these artists talking. His paintings started to timidly escape the confines of the real and ventured into the experimental realms of cubism and pure abstraction. He held several one man shows at the Alhamra in 1964 and then again in 1966. When he went abroad his mind was already a fertile ground for abstraction and in England it blossomed forth into glorious bursts of rich colour.

OZZIR ZUBY was a talented and active student of the Mayo School of Art who was living in Lahore at that time. He worked in many techniques but during those days he was making realistic, bold and powerful sculptures of all the contemporary writers and poets. He occupied the Bagh-e-Jinnah studio for a long time. Very soon afterwards he got a scholarship to go to Italy where he met the famous sculptor Henry Moore. When he came back he found Lahore had changed and he went to Karachi, and has branched off into doing stylized drawings. His work now has a strong sense of design and rhythm.

RAHEEL AKBAR JAVED (fig.10) is another Lahore painter who was part of the Lahore Art Circle, but who has now lived in the US for the past several decades. He has evolved over the years from his early tentative experimentation in various mediums and stylization of recognizable elements, to a firm and assured purely abstract grouping of forms. He uses collages of thin coloured tracing paper for his carefully designed juxtaposing of geometric forms. He had his first one man show at the Alhamra in 1967.

QUTAB SHEIKH another abstract painter settled in Germany and his compatriots have very little knowledge of his work.

HANIF RAMAY (fig.11) was involved with the Lahore Art scene in the fifties and the early sixties. He was lost to politics for more than a decade but came back again to hold one man shows of beautifully

rendered calligraphic compositions which have a symmetric and balanced handling of space and form and are coloured and designed in a fashion that has the typical Ramay touch. All these artists left the Lahore art scene for some reason or the other. Some travelled to Karachi or abroad during the uncertain years of the fifties and the sixties and carried with them the flavour of Lahore and the Alhamra painters' set up. Ali Imam went in 1952-3 and Shemza followed soon after. But the Lahore scene was livened up by the arrival of Murtaza Bashir from Bengal and Shakir Ali and Sadequain from Karachi.

MURTAZA BASHIR (fig.12) after his art training in Florence came back to Dhaka with a rich influence of Byzantine and Etruscan art. He was impressed by the stylization in these old works of art that belonged to the 3rd century BC.

He had come from Dhaka to exhibit his work in 1961 and found the atmosphere so stimulating that in those days he expressed a wish to settle down here. He joined the Lahore painters in their evening discussions – fighting about theories, airing views and generally participating in fruitful art activity during the course of the day.

SADEQUAIN (fig.13) was one of the most prolific and versatile painters of Pakistan. His burning desire to depict the human condition and comment on general social framework of society took him to the remote shores of Gadani which provided him with a vocabulary that expressed his mood. The cactus was a symbol that stayed with Sadequain for a long time, signifying the struggle as well as the decadence of man. Sadequain came to Alhamra in the late sixties and put up an exhibition of his work. There was not enough space indoors, so his huge paintings were put up outside in the shadow of the Nedoes Hotel, on scaffoldings and other temporarily made structures to support the weight of the huge murals. Sadequain also succumbed to the charm of Lahore and came here time and again. He painted the huge mural on the ceiling of the Lahore Museum which deals with the story of man. He was a poet and made use of calligraphy in his pictures to enhance the narrative element.

SHAKIR ALI (fig.14) came from Karachi to join the staff of the Mayo School, which was in those days, through the efforts of the Principal Mr. Spedding, raised to the status of a National College of Art. Shakir Ali had traveled widely and had received his art training at JJ School of Art in

Bombay in 1938, where he was introduced to Impressionism as practised by its Principal Mr. Charles Gerrard. The Post Graduate Course in mural decoration at the same school gave him an insight into Ajanta Painting. He went abroad for his training at the Slade School as well as an art diploma from Prauge. All these thought processes and experiences he brought to Lahore and to the little community of artists who gathered at the Alhamra to sort out the concerns of the art world. Shakir Ali's work was a powerful source of influence on modern painting in Pakistan and in Lahore and at the Alhamra he found groups of young painters who were searching for an idiom to formulate their own personal expression and their unique mode of existence. His work before 1955 was bold and vivid, forms of bright earth colours emphasized by thick black contours, forms overlapping each other to create two dimensional patterns that were enriched with texture.

It was in 1961 also that a National Exhibition of Paintings, Sculptures and Graphics was held in Lahore at the Alhamra Arts Council. This was the first exhibition under state patronage sponsored by the Ministry of Education and organized by the Pakistan Arts Council of Lahore. In those days exhibitions were held in the hut or in the main building as the situation and number of paintings required. In the main building the foyer, the rooms downstairs and upstairs and the walls of the staircase were used to display pictures that seemed to occupy every nook and corner of the old Alhamra building.

Meanwhile a fresh crop of young painters was emerging in Lahore and were becoming visible on the art scene and of course in Alhamra. This group of four or five painters were students of the Punjab University and the National College of Art. These young painters were always present at the regular gathering of artists where older artists debated the finer points of painting. Any new painting was reviewed here and analysed and made or rejected in this most august of critical gatherings. SUFI WAQAR, IJAZ UL HASSAN, COLIN DAVID, ASLAM MINHAS and a bit later ZAHOOR UL IKHLAQ and SAEED AKHTAR were the emerging artists who sat on the fringes of this gathering of people some of whom had already travelled abroad, seen with their own eyes the wonders and the madness that other artists were producing around the world. While others were on the threshold preening themselves up for the brave flight that might take them out and never bring them back again. This was a decision of a lifetime that they were facing, on the verge of travelling out into the

wide world which awaited them with all the wonders that their friends told them about. They instinctively knew that there would also be the uncertainties which a career in painting in a strange land can have in store for them.

WAQAR SOOFI was the son of the famous poet Soofi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum. He qualified in Fine Arts with a Master's degree from the Punjab University and was considered one of their very good painters. He had started to effectively experiment in modern techniques even as a student and was very successful and admired in the exhibitions that were held then, but after his Masters he decided that he had a better future elsewhere. He left Pakistan soon afterwards and has been teaching in the States since then, very rarely displaying a need or any urge to come back.

IJAZ UL HASSAN (fig.15) had teachers like Moyene Najmi and Khalid Iqbal during his school days. He has a history of more than forty years of painting behind him. In his early years he seems to have been influenced by Gauguin, but he was experimenting all the time. He used his immense sense of design and colour to paint very effective pictures with a sharp political and social comment. But political changes in the country restricted open expression and he had to resort to symbols for expressing ideas. He is among the few painters whose early stylization of form gave way to realism. He has a passion for public art and one of his main ambitions is to paint huge pictures in public places which the common man can see regularly. One of the big murals to be made in recent times is the huge ceramic mural that he made for the Alhamra Arts Council in which he experimented with the tiles mosaic method that had been used as wall decoration since the Mughal times. He has over the years made many huge paintings which are breathtakingly beautiful and have been much appreciated.

COLIN DAVID (fig.16) is another artist who has been painting consistently for over forty years. He trained at the Punjab University Fine Arts Department for his Master's degree and then went to the Slade School of Art in London for post graduation. On his return he joined the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University and after teaching there for some years shifted to the National College of Arts from where he retired a few years ago. Colin David is a master of drawing and has acquired a reputation for his superb rendering of the human figure. His paintings are

designed with great expertise and his use of subdued colour is most effective. In his early work he used a thinly painted, textured background which gave a clear indication of his brushwork. Over the years his paintings have acquired a graphic quality which has been achieved through the use of opaque colours, with the figure suspended on a flat surface and the element of design used to show the form of the superbly drawn figure.

ASLAM MINHAS was a quiet competent painter who never really lived up to the tremendous promise of his student days. He took his Master's degree in Fine Arts from the Punjab University and started a Department of Fine Arts at the Government College Lahore. But this department never went beyond teaching the students of FA. He was a good draughtsman and painted many good portraits during his student days. He also taught at the Alhamra Art Academy.

ZAHOOR UL IKHLAQ (fig.17) was a protégé of Shakir Ali. Shakir spotted the talent in Zahoor when he was still a student and employed him at the National College of Arts in the Fine Arts Department immediately after his return from the Horsney College of Art and the Royal College of Art London. His early work has a unity of design which is ached through the delicate and harmonious flow of linear meandering and movement. In his later work Zahoor has tried to include meaning in his work and give a message, mostly against nuclear armament but the message has not really created the horror and the terror that should have been associated with a nuclear explosion. One feels that instinctively Zahoor was a delicate and subtle painter whose sense of design transcended his concerns for the problems facing mankind. His later paintings therefore try to tackle problems that are the concerns of his society, but one gets the feeling that the result is a deeply thought out cerebral composition rather than a heartfelt emotionally moving outburst. Zahoor lived abroad for many years until he came to Lahore last year and tragically died in his hometown.

SAEED AKHTAR (fig.18) was another talented student of the National College of Arts who made a name for himself very early in life through his very glamorous portraits. He had been raised in Quetta where he had access to many portraits done by Bevan Pettman. In fact he was lucky enough to benefit from the latter's advice on painting faces. He had

his first one man show at the Alhamra in 1966 and has been commissioned to paint portraits of the National as well the army personalities.

The comraderie and friendship that existed among the artists during those early days was often strengthened with an occasional honest to goodness disagreement and a severe fight that never lasted for very long. But this interaction and this fellow feeling that the artists were able to develop in the early years of the formation of the Arts council was remarkable but a bit too good to last. Suddenly there seems to have been a major shake up in the art world of Lahore. The artists who had lived here, sharing ideas meeting daily and exchanging interpretations, even fighting over them, seemed to draw apart. There were a few developments of a personal nature that led to strong disagreements among them. These disagreements could not be resolved by anyone and they attacked the very roots of the wonderful unity that had made Lahore such a fertile ground for development and introduction of new artists as well as new ideas. The Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University which had formed the backbone of this unwritten alliance and friendship between the artists seemed to rock with the after effects of this development. Khalid Iqbal, Colin David left the Punjab University and joined the National College soon afterwards. But the whole atmosphere changed so much that the urge to sit together for an evening and discuss the work, the thoughts of artists and philosophies on these thoughts seemed to disappear with the harmony of these gatherings.

At about the same time the Arts council was taking steps to create more built up space for art activity. There were comprehensive plans for building an area which had room for a National Art Gallery, an Exhibition Gallery and an Art Academy as well as the facility for storing a large amount of art work. The National Gallery was to be housed in 5000 sq feet of space and the Exhibition Gallery was to have 2800 sq feet of space. There were to be three studios for 30 students each, with a combined space of 3675sq feet of space. Apart from that there were three lecture halls planned for 40 students each with a combined area of 5250sq feet. There was to be a Folk Art Museum sized 3500sq feet and a Folk Art Store of 1500sq feet. At that time the Arts council had many grand objectives and a lot of stress was laid on research on unknown areas and documentation of artifacts that could be discovered there. The Council sponsored a trip to Kafiristan and sent four artists to document and discover the art traditions

of this far flung area of Pakistan. That is how we hear of artists Zahoor-ul-Ikhlaq, Khalid Lateef, Manan Azmi, Mehmood Roomi and Zafar Ahmad travelling to this remote area. This is a tradition that has not been seriously continued, which is a pity because it would have brought back a lot of information and visual data on areas which have been barely touched by civilization.

The war of 1965 was commemorated by the army with paintings. The Alhamra Arts Council and the army sponsored a group of painters to tour the Hudyara Burki sector and try and recapture the moments of war. As a result there was an exhibition of about 33 war paintings at the Alhamra and later a booklet of these paintings was published in September 1966.

All the exhibitions were invariably followed by seminars at which all the thinkers, the writers and the intellectuals were invited, to discuss the exhibition and to talk about other relevant issues in the context of the exhibition.

The Arts Council started another very popular activity in 1961. The art classes for Children were held once a week and attracted a lot of notice and appreciation. Not only were the classes popular, but the regular exhibitions that were organized by the teachers to show the work done in these classes was applauded and won a lot of praise for Mrs. Anna Molka Ahmad for starting this facility. Miss Naseem Hafeez Qazi undertook to teach at these classes and she fulfilled her duty till a long time afterwards.

Another regular feature of the Art Council Exhibition Schedule was the yearly exhibition of work done by the students of the Fine Arts Academy of the Alhamra. The students of the Academy were casual students who had a love for drawing and painting and they were thrilled to have a chance to exhibit at the Alhamra. By this time a new crop of painters was emerging from the art institutions. But the transition from the work of senior artists to the work of the youngsters was quite sudden and seemed like a big hop in terms of time. Suddenly it seemed that a whole middle generation of artists had vanished from the scene due to one reason or the other. Maybe they had become disinterested in interaction with each other. Whatever the reason, many of them found the lure of the west irresistible because of the availability of more comprehensive visual and detailed information about foreign countries and the opportunities that

they offered. At the same time the ties binding the artists to their home town had become weak and gradually lost their hold on the artists' community. The new artists who were emerging had not benefited as much from the gatherings at Alhrama for the simple reason that by the time they were old enough to benefit from them the meetings had ceased to be as interesting as before.

The new emerging artists were ZUBEDA JAVED, DR. KHALID MEHMOOD, ZULQARNAIN HAIDER, GHULAM RASOOL, SALIMA HASHMI, DR. IJAZ ANWAR and myself.

ZUBEDA JAVED (fig.19) was a student of the Punjab University who developed a style of her own during the years that she painted for her Master's degree. She was able to escape the confines of representational work and branch off into the mystery of the impressionist strokes. She has had many successful one person exhibitions at Lahore as well as in Karachi where her lively colours coupled with her deft brushwork have won a following of admirers for her.

DR. KHALID MEHMOOD'S work has the same impressionist handling, but his figures are a bit more distinct and his composition more straight forward. He was a student and later the head of the Fine Arts Department for many years before his retirement. He has painted consistently and has taken part in many exhibitions.

ZULQARNAIN HAIDER (fig.20) a student of the Punjab University and the Fine Art Department has been a student of Khalid Iqbal and as such a deeply committed artist who believes in realistic representation of all elements. He is a brilliant draftsman and studied drawing at the Beaux Art in Paris for over four years. His paintings were initially very similar to Khalid Iqbal's work, but he has evolved a visual vocabulary over the years that can be distinguished from that of his teacher.

DR. GHULAM RASUL is a prolific painter who has been associated with the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, gradually rising to the position of its Director General. Ghulam Rasul has effectively used the element of design in his work often subordinating volume and perspective to the need for balance of surfaces and harmony of design.

SALIMA HASHMI studied at the National College of Arts and later at the Rhode Island School of Design in the US. Salima has committed herself to the cause of women and other social issues and makes pungent statements through mixed media collages and pencil shading to highlight their plight.

DR. IJAZ ANWAR (fig.21) has visited the old city of Lahore with his water colour sketch pad, time and again and we have witnessed the large number of beautiful and popular water colours that he has produced. Over the years his visits to the spot have diminished but he has been working in his studio on the same theme with extraordinary persistence and a great deal of success.

I am basically an interpreter of character in my portraits and have over the years endeavoured to present the character of my models from as sympathetic an angle as possible.

By this time another generation of painters was coming up. Ghulam Mustafa and Iqbal Hussain both painters from the National College of Arts, were probably the direct result of the presence of teachers like Khalid Iqbal, Colin David, Ijaz ul Hassan and Kamil Khan at the college. The atmosphere of creative excitement which had disappeared from the Alhamara Arts Council and the Punjab University Fine Arts Department had been suddenly transferred to the National College for a brief period. Shakir Ali was the moving force behind it. He made a lot of effort to cultivate that atmosphere. Imagine a place where Shakir Ali was painting his stylized designed murals, Khalid Iqbal and Colin David were painting with their firm belief in the classical tradition, Ijaz ul Hassan was making those dynamic and thought provoking paintings about politics and society and Kamil Khan was propagating a new concept of architecture. These teachers with their radical ideas of going to the people for inspiration, were there to inspire youngsters. So was Zahoor with his quiet presence. These people had created a vibrant atmosphere where the students were experiencing a shake up in their beliefs and an awakening of their sensibilities. A communication with society was created which had very refreshing results. The Crop of National College students of that time have produced a large number of artists who have in one way or another participated fully in the concerns of their society and have excelled in a diverse range of expression. We have the dynamic film producer Shirin

Pasha who was a good painter during her student days but went on to achieve a remarkable degree of success in film production. There is Mansoor Hassan who was a painter but has now been exploring the unlimited possibilities of print making. There is Ghazala Rehamn who has revitalized the traditional crafts of furniture making and has been producing strikingly beautiful pieces of wood craft for the discerning buyers of furniture in Lahore and all over Pakistan. There is Sheherzade Alam who has with a dedicated single minded persistence taken the art of pottery making to new heights. There is Shehbaz Khan who is such a talented painter but has somehow not focused on painting. Recently he started to exhibit in group shows and was admired for his work. Tanvir Rehman is another painter of that period of the National College, who has made her mark in group exhibitions. She has recently ventured forth in the domain of commercial films and has been lost to painting for a while.

IQBAL HUSSAIN (fig. 22) learnt very early in his career that he had a ready made motif in his surroundings and an idiom that he could pursue for the rest of his life. He used the ready made atmosphere of what is commonly known as the red light area to paint remarkably well composed pictures of the women of that area with a depth and understanding that seeks to enhance the stark realities of the life of these women. It was inevitable that his topic would become a strong symbol that would overshadow any other work. But Iqbal Hussain has tried to counter this by painting landscapes, misty morning scenes in the city or early morning on what is left of the River Ravi.

GHULAM MUSTAFA (fig.23) is one of the most hard working painters. His palette has a subdued range but he manages to create a play of light and shadow in his work which is pleasing to the eye. He has done a series of very popular cityscapes in which he has explored the dark alleys and the shady streets of Lahore that are suddenly livened up with a stray ray of sunshine creating a drama and lighting up a small portion of the picture. He is at present along with Zulfiqar Zulfi carrying on the good work started by Anna Molka and Khalid Iqbal in the Alhamra Art Academy teaching drawing and painting to a large number of amateur artists.

The story of painting at Alhamra would not be complete if one did not mention ZULFIQAR ZULFI (fig.24) who is a graduate of National

College and has apart from teaching at the art classes taken upon himself many roles at the Alhamra. It is a wonder that he gets any time to paint but he is a very competent artist who can paint quite beautifully. Totally different from Iabal and Mustafa are two other painters from the National College who choose to express themselves in another visual vocabulary. AFSHAR MALIK and QUDDUS MIRZA both went abroad after studying at the National College. Afshar went to the Slade School of Art and Quddus went to the Royal College. Both came back with a different perspective from the one they went out with. Afshar is a lithographer and a mixed media sculptor. He also does etching. His paintings have an element of the naïve narrative which is so charming in child art. Quddus on the other hand takes inspiration from miniatures, from their beautifully rich colours and the division of space into two dimensional picture planes. His treatment of figures is naïve and childlike as well. In the mid eighties, when Martial law in Pakistan was still in full cry and expression was limited, the Artists' Association of the Punjab started its series of two exhibitions a year. One was an annual exhibitions of Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Arts while the other was a display of drawings. This regular event was a rallying point of many budding artists who could not put up one man shows but still wanted to display their work. The great merit of these exhibitions was that the Association invariably produced a brochure which was a permanent record of the exhibition and can be of great value to the researchers and writers as a visual reference material.

SHAHID JALAL is one of the outstanding members of the Association who has no art qualification from any institution and has therefore not been mentioned in their context. He has developed a style of his own which is executed with thick impasto brush strokes, the surface being further divided to form a subtle pattern in his patiently executed landscapes, in which the sunlight and shadows are the other striking elements of the larger design.

The younger artists from the Punjab University Fine Arts Department were also producing work that was being regularly exhibited at the Alharma. Rahat Naveed Masood, Shahnawaz Zaidi, Khalid Saeed Butt, Kehkishan Jaffery, Maliha Azmi, Naela Amir and Safia Farooq are some of the painters who have painted in their individual styles and expressed themselves through portraiture landscape or miniatures.

RAHAT NAVEED MASOOD and SHAHNAWAZ ZAIDI have made an impact with their painting of portraits. Shahnawaz has recently started making figure compositions of mysteriously clad female figures with a bearded male form lurking behind. DURRE WASEEM is a product of the Punjab University who has been painting with an enthusiastic flourish. Her brushstrokes are confident as though she is stressing her own awareness of the environment that she is depicting. Her lack of affectation makes her paintings refreshingly sincere.

So we see that painting at Alhamra has been going on for fifty years now. We have had a few National Exhibitions here though not as many as we could have wished for. We have seen an all Pakistan Exhibition to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Pakistan in which 208 paintings were displayed. These last few years have seen the work of Musarrat Naheed Imam, Jamila Masood and Misbahuddin Qazi from Islamabad, Akram Dost and Kaleem Khan from Quetta, Tayyaba from Peshawar, Naheed Ali, Qudsia Nisar and Wahab Jafar from Karachi and Musarrat Mirza from Hyderabad displayed in the National Exhibition which was held by the Artists Association to celebrate their tenth Anniversary.

One has come to expect some new names to emerge from recent exhibitions, and it is always pleasing to see the work of Shamim Shaukat, R. M. Naeem, Mubashra and Sami ur Rehman, Dr. Naseer Haider, Uneeza Zulfiqar, Afshan Muzafar, Rabea Ali, Mirza Tahir Siraj, Amjad Pervez, Afshan Hussain and so many others.

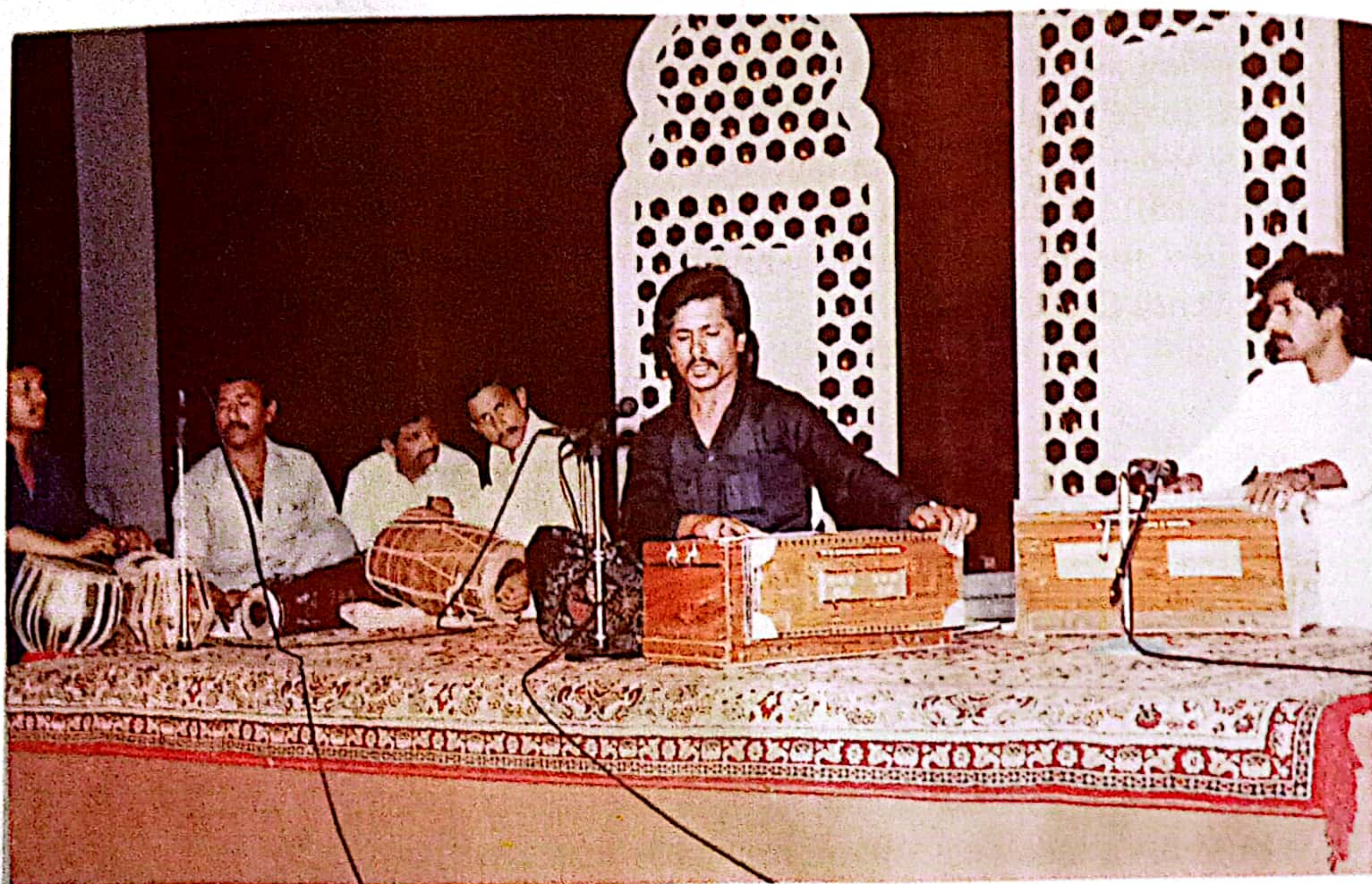
Under the aegis of the Alhamra administration the beginning of an attempt was made to start a permanent art gallery at the Gaddafi stadium art complex. This gallery owns about 102 paintings which was a collection that was made in the past a long time ago. It was a commendable beginning and the fact that at last the Alharma administration had a chairman in Mr. Yousaf Kamal who could cross red tape barriers and create the first space for art in the country needs to be stressed and lauded, but the fact remains that this collection of art objects was started more than twenty years ago. Several generations of artists have come and gone and Alharma has not acquired a single work of art from any of them. The advantage gained when the collection was started has been allowed to lapse for too long. There have been many priorities and important items on

our national agenda, it is therefore a moot point and something worth discussing whether art and culture have any priority at all. The presence of the huge complex suggests that we have placed it on a high priority point. What we need to do therefore is to build on an excellent beginning where solid foundations have been laid so that a worthy art edifice emerges, for the pleasure and enlightenment of our coming generations of the twenty first century.



افتتاح ۱۴ اگست ۱۹۸۱ء

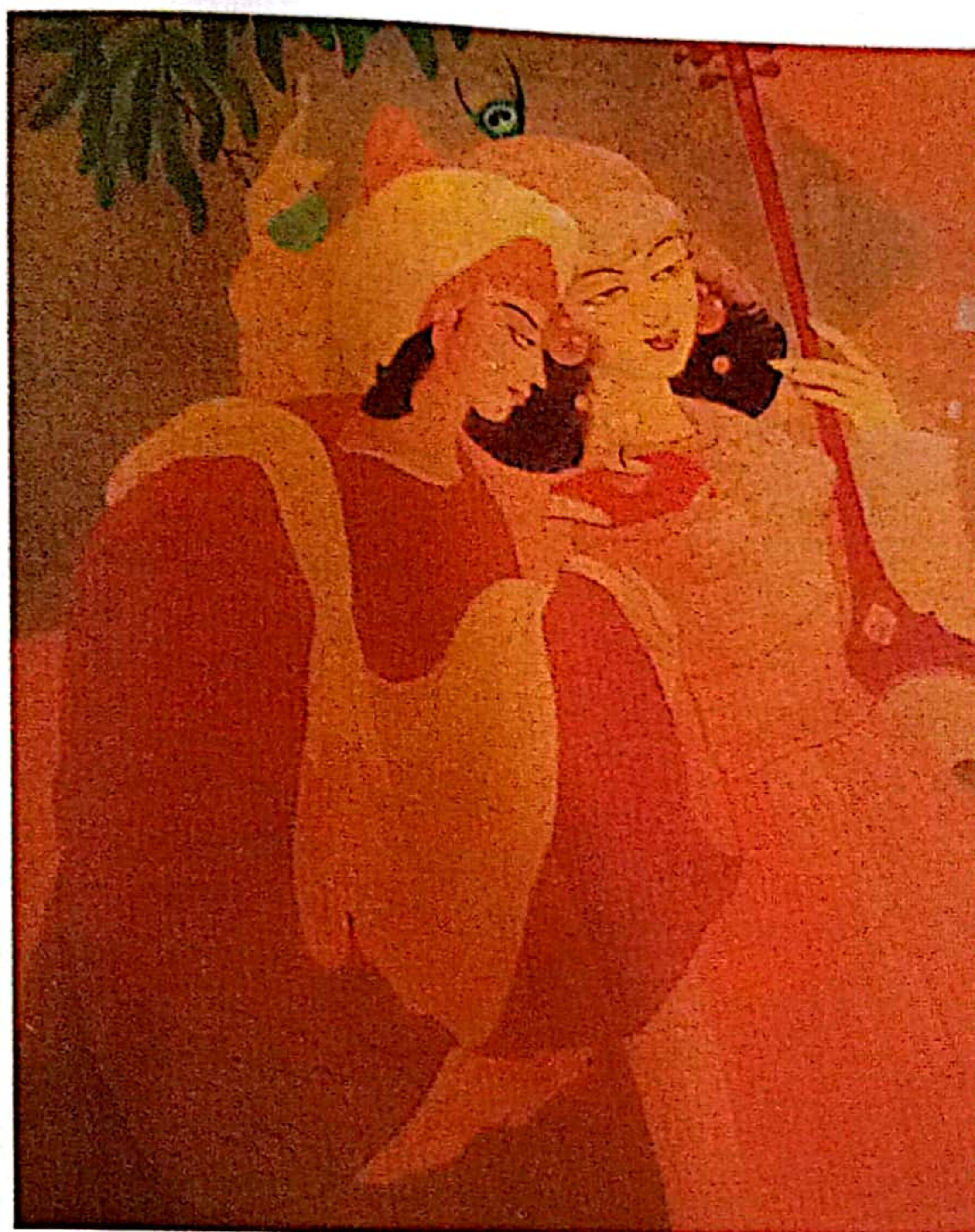
Invitation Card for inauguration of Alhamra Hall-I



Attaullah Esa Khalivi



Ustad Salamat Ali Khan, Sharafat Ali Khan



Abdur Rehman Chughtai. Fig. 1.



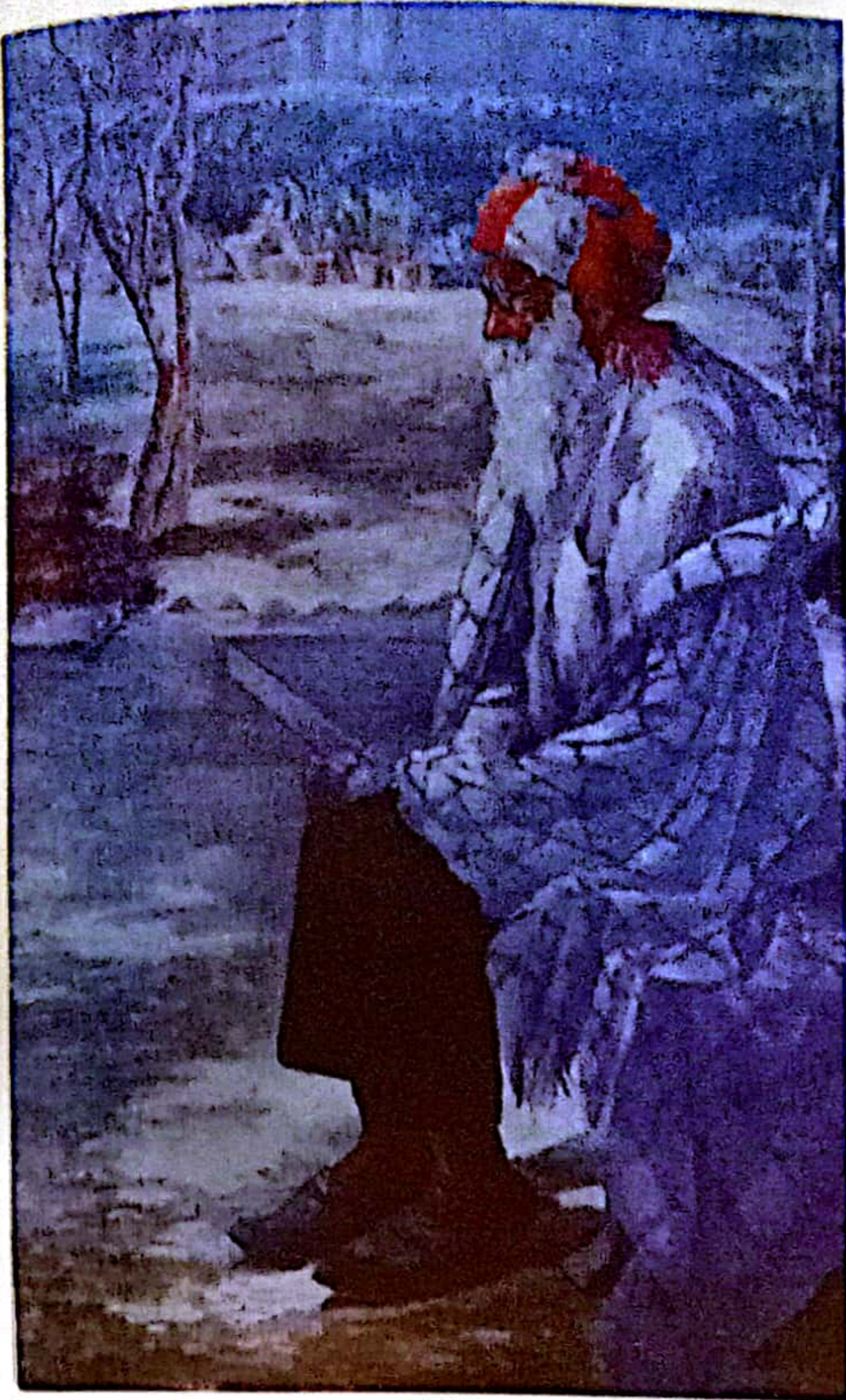
Allah Bukhsh. Fig. 2.



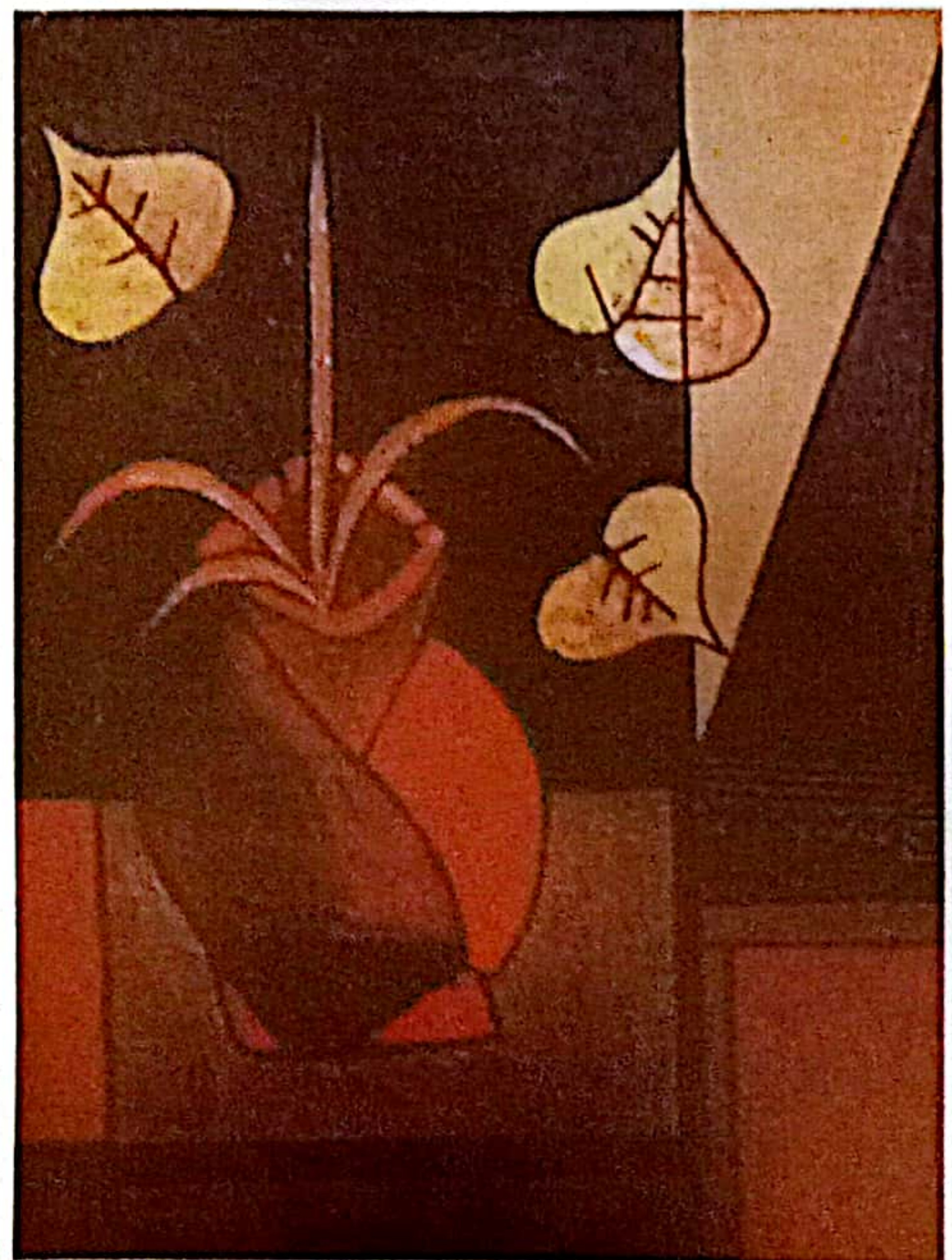
Anna Molka Ahmad. Fig. 3.



Khalid Iqbal. Fig. 4.



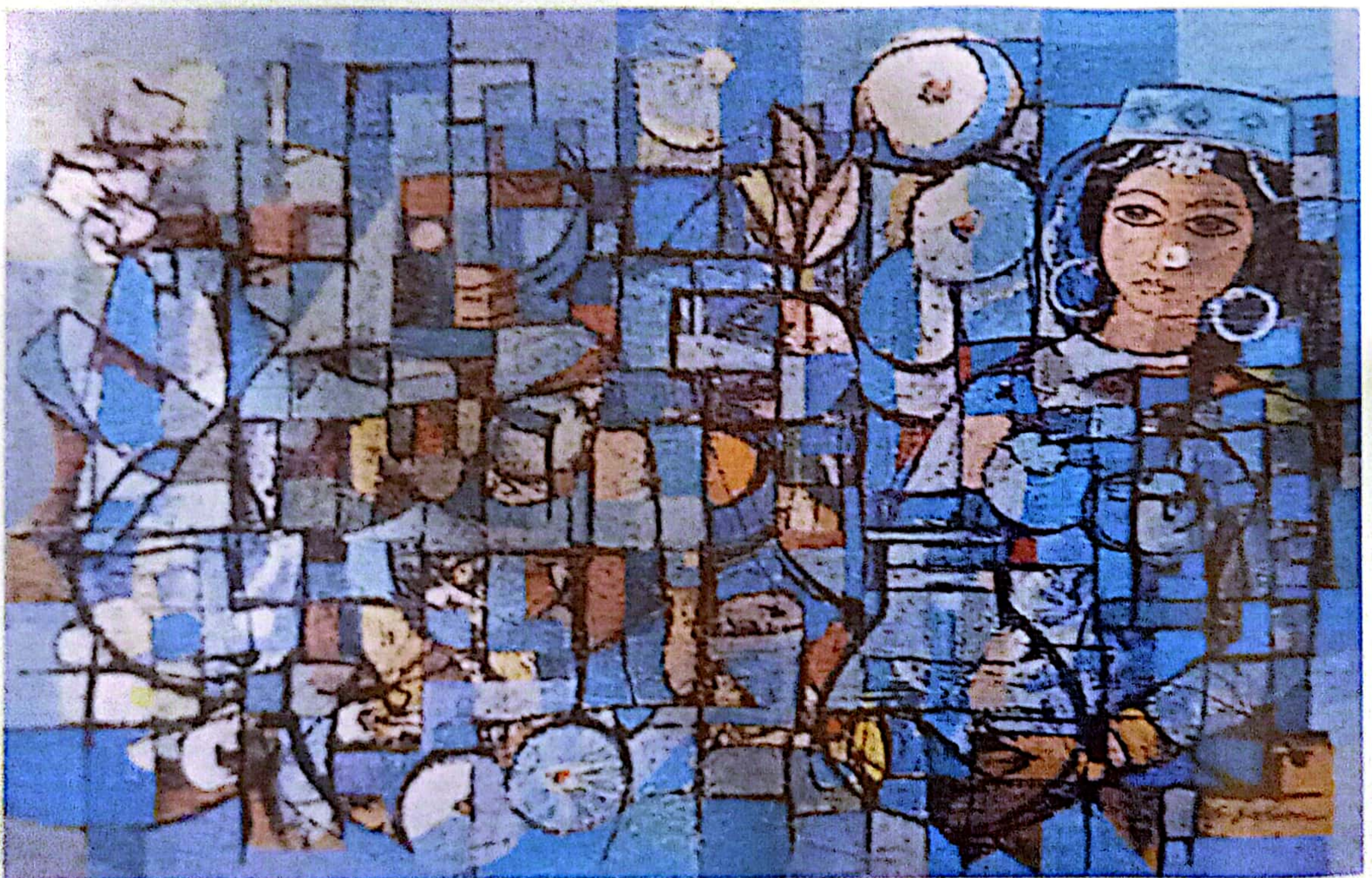
Naseem Hafeez Qazi. Fig. 5.



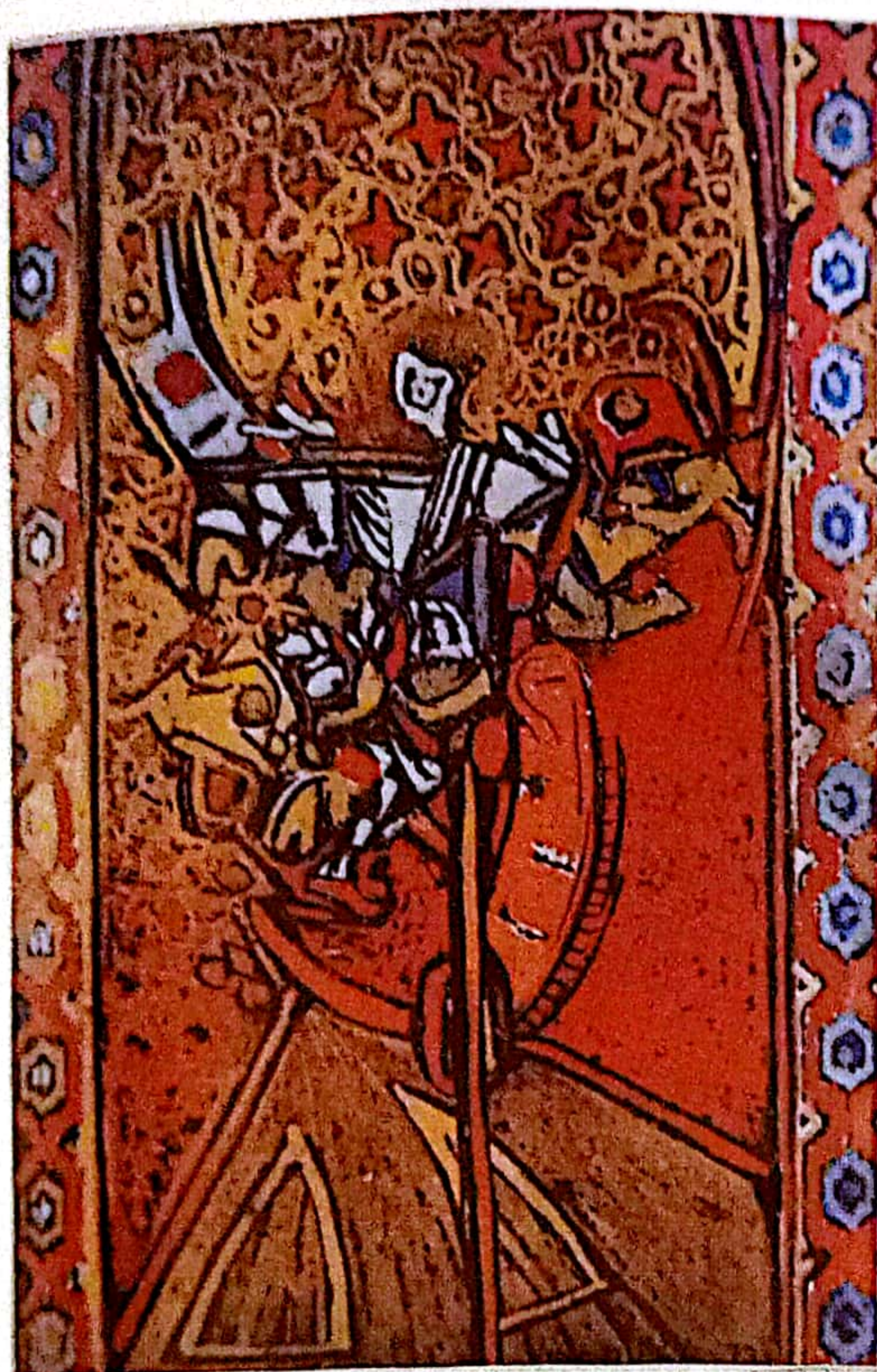
Anwar Jalal Shemza. Fig. 6



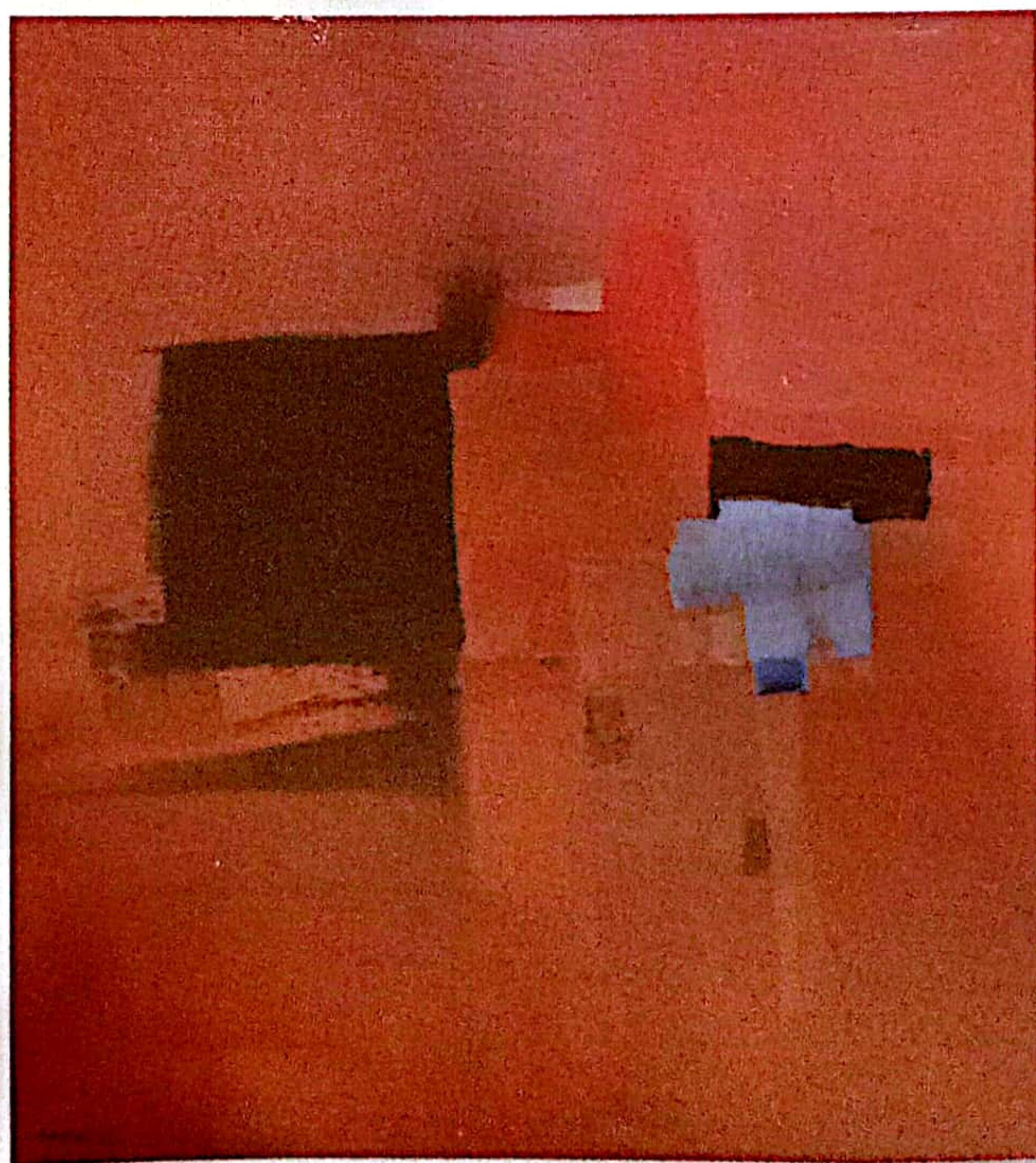
Moyene Najmi, Fig. 7.



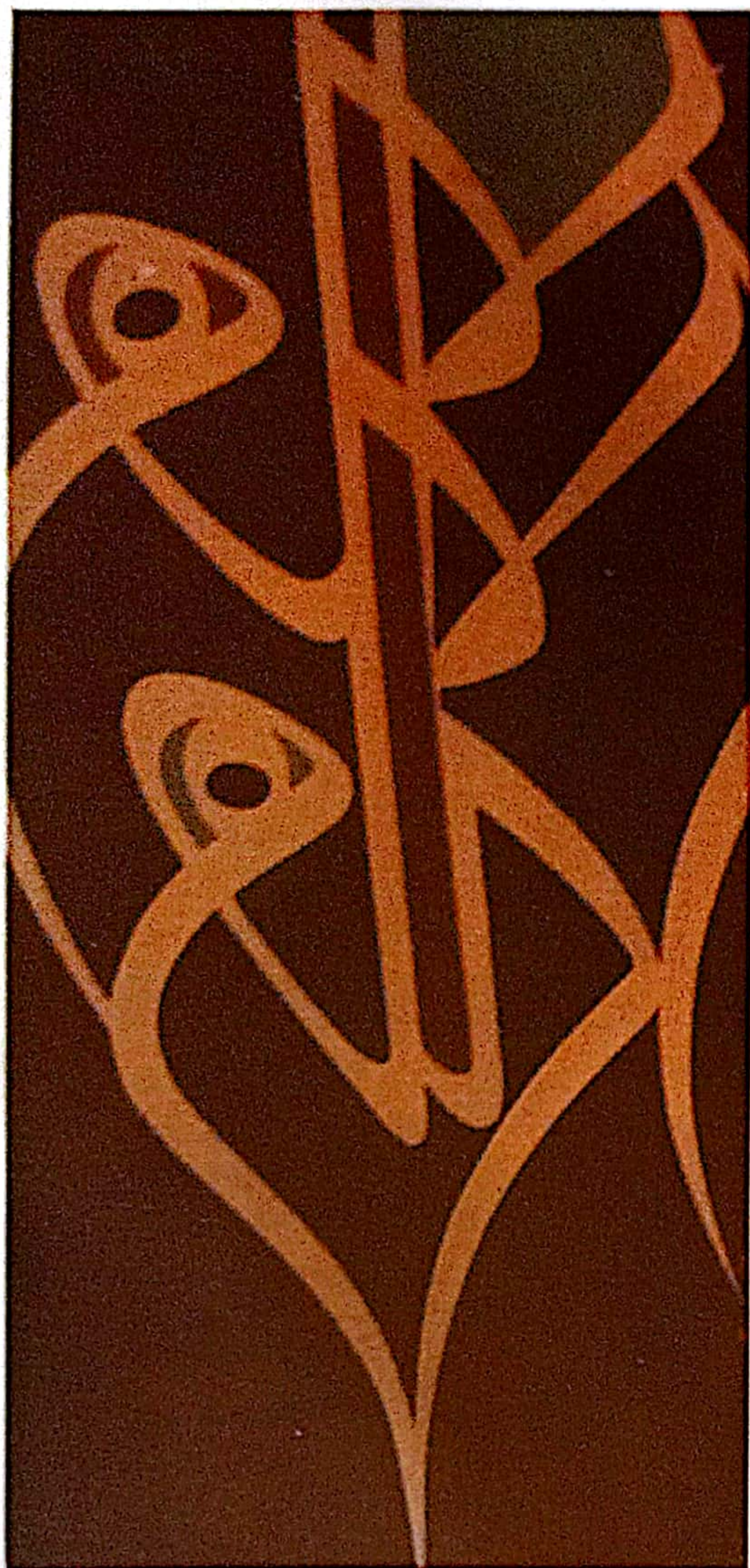
Shaikh Safdar, Fig. 8.



Ahmad Pervez. Fig. 9.



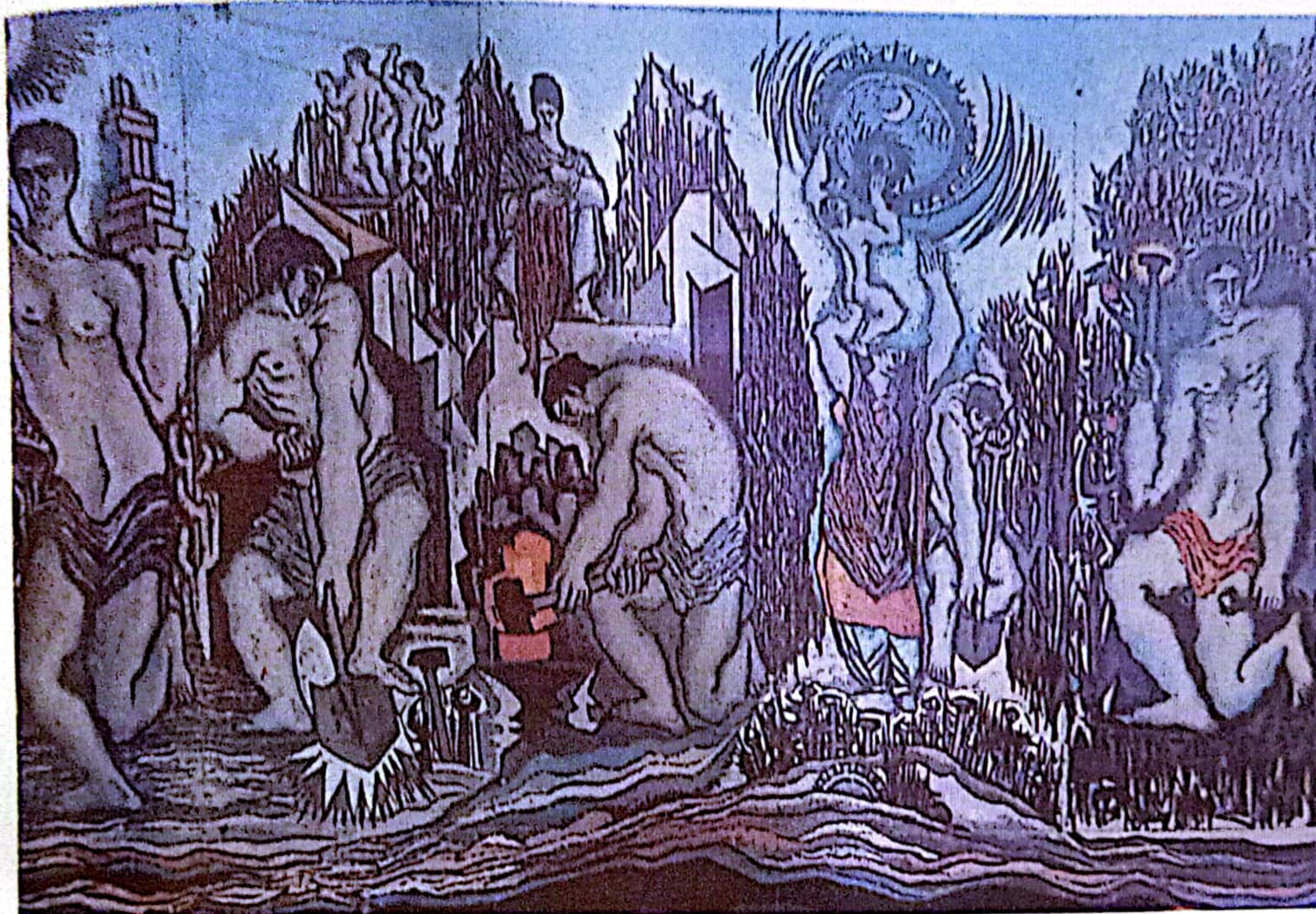
Raheel Akbar Javed. Fig. 10.



Hanif Ramay. Fig. 11



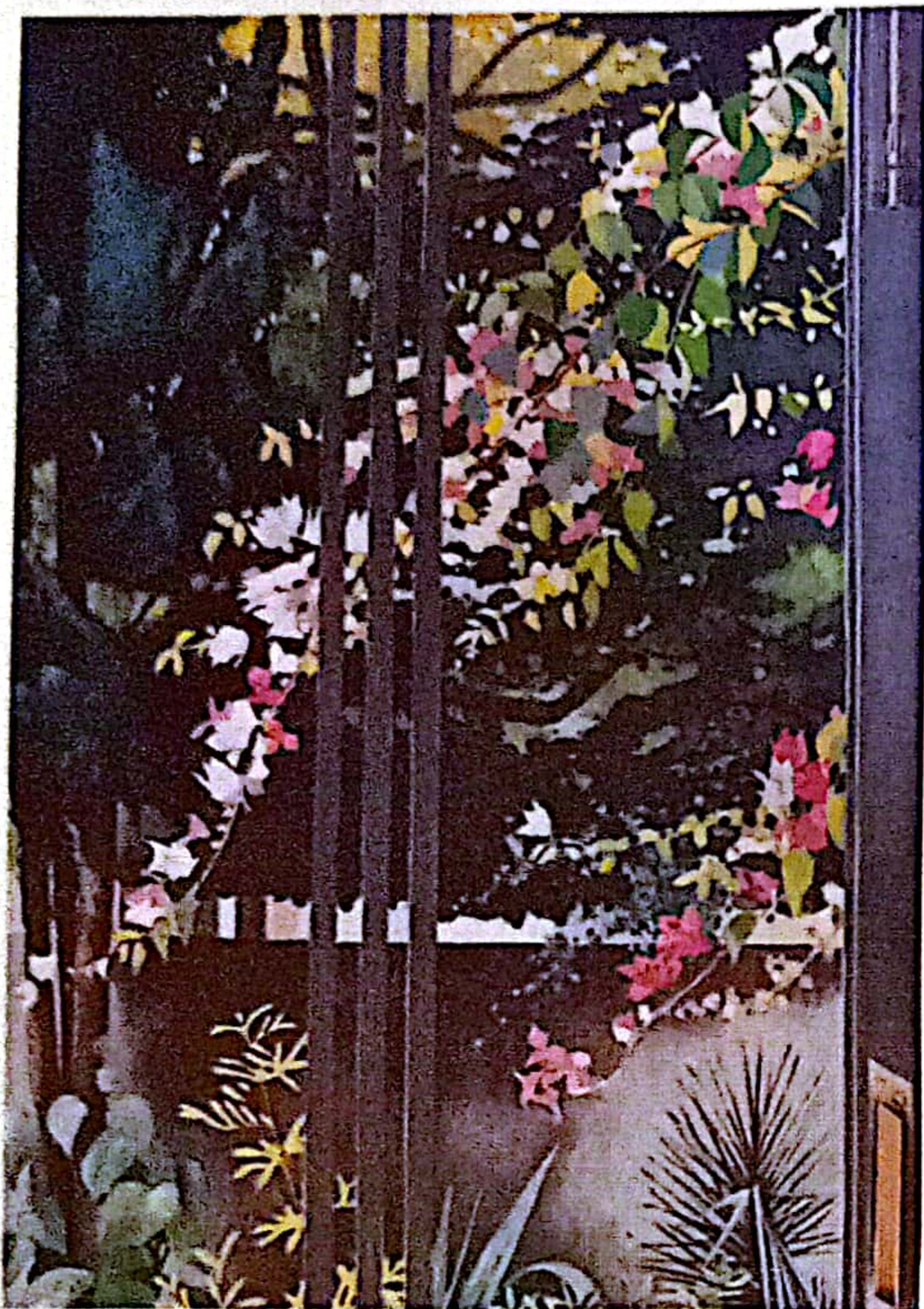
Murtaza Bashir. Fig. 12



Sadeqain Fig. 13.



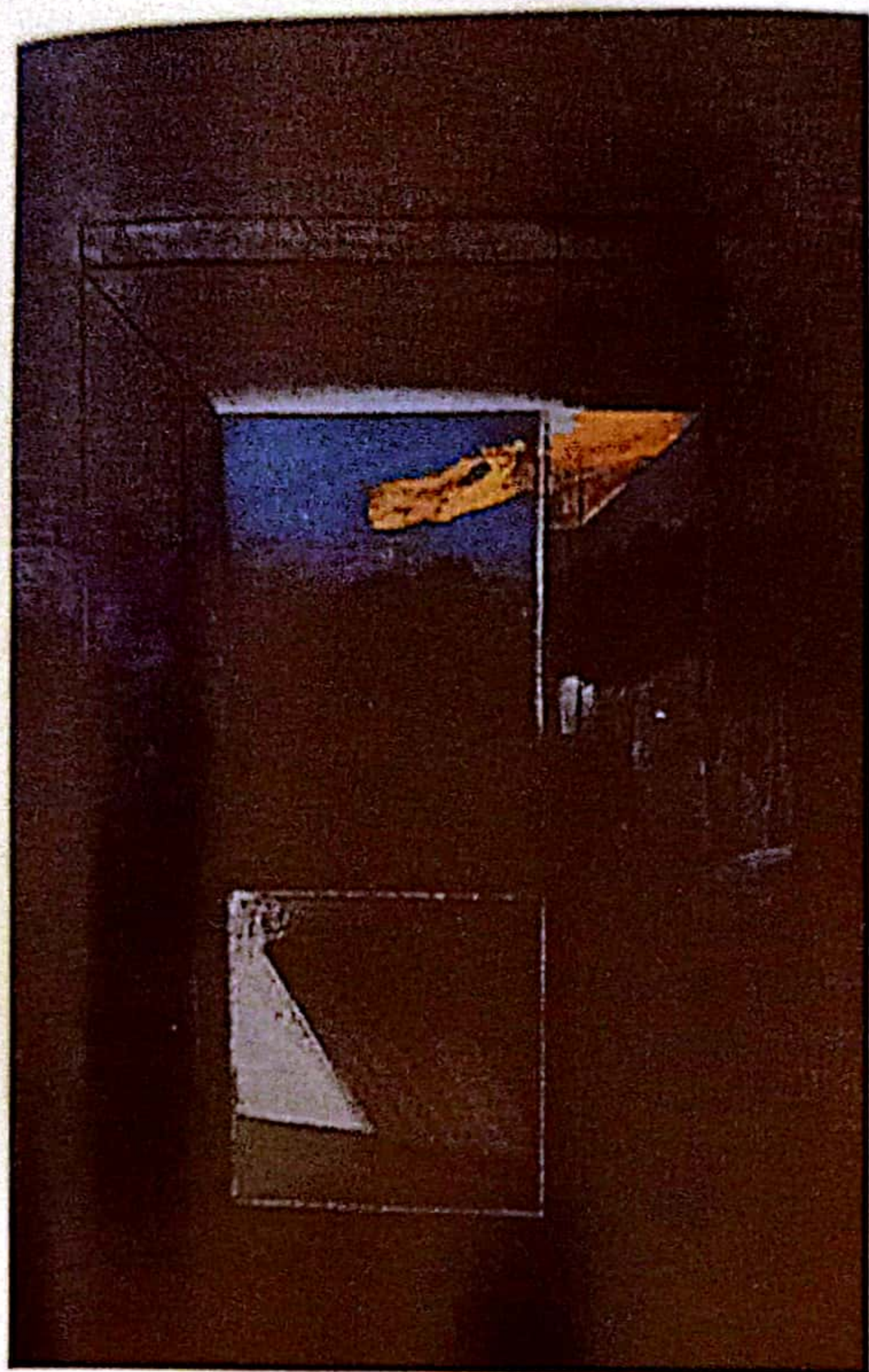
Shakir Ali. Fig. 14.



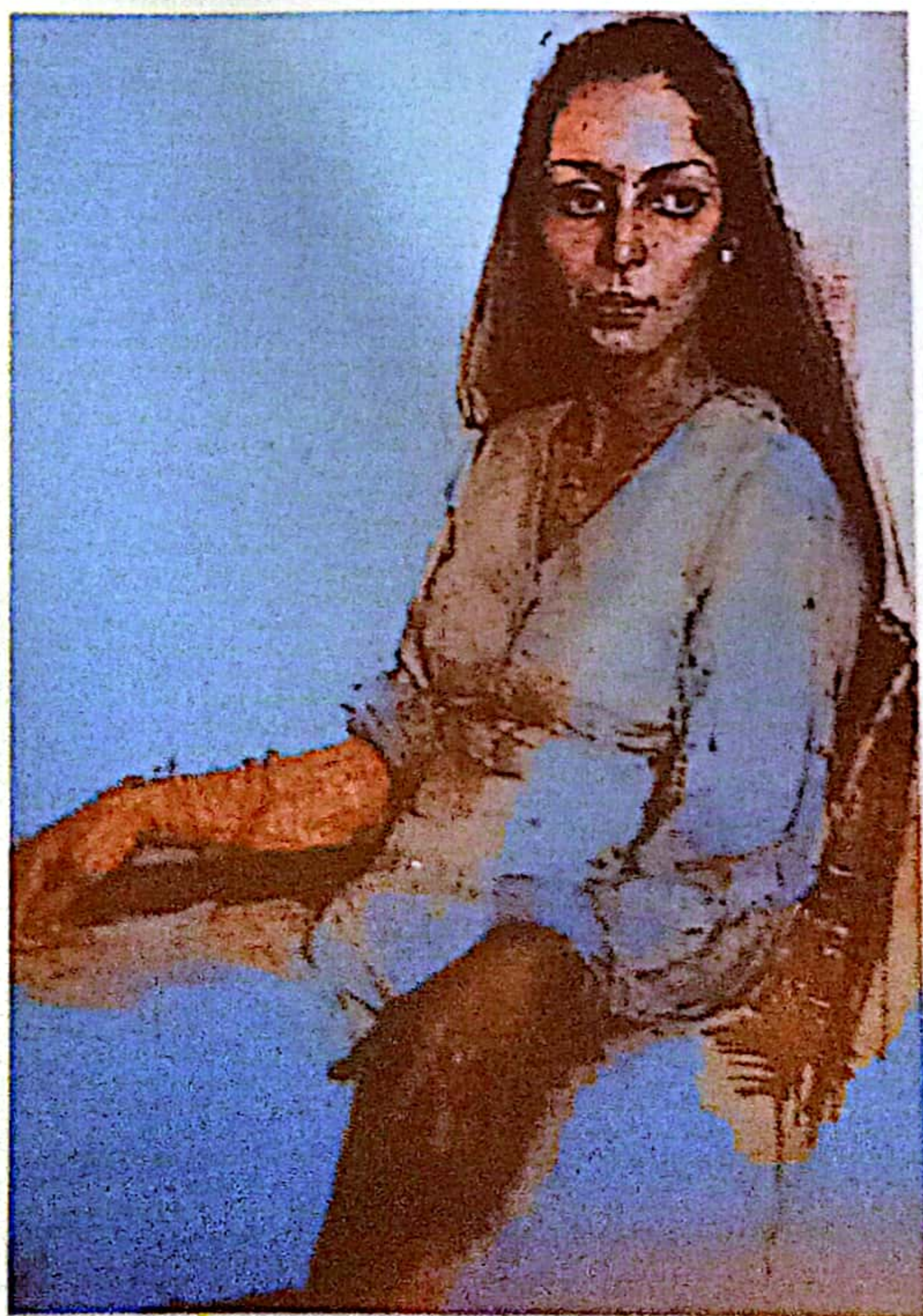
Ijaz ul Hassan. Fig. 15.



Colin David Fig. 16.



Zahoor Ikhtlaq Fig. 17.



Saeed Akhtar Fig. 18.



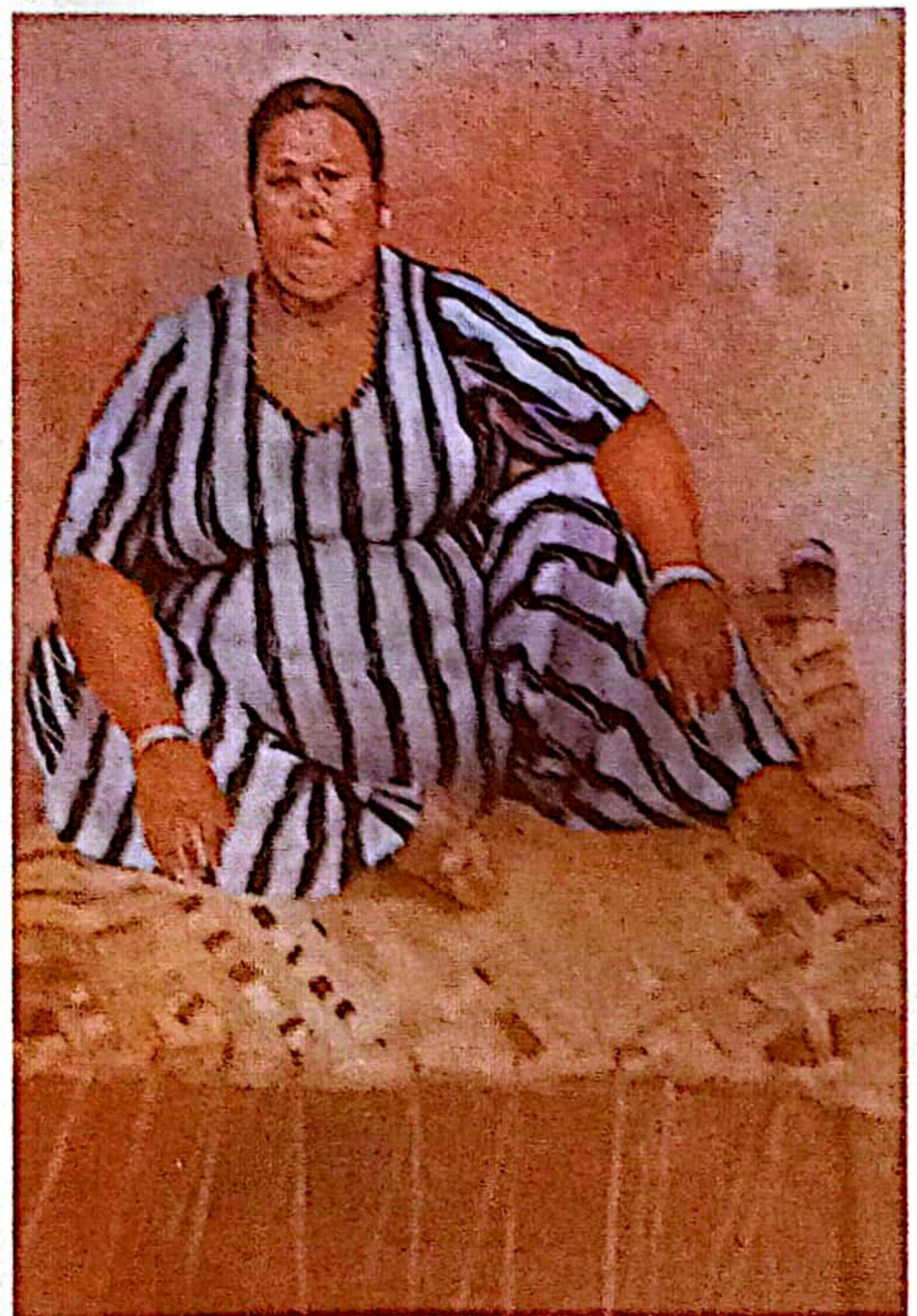
Zubeda Javed. Fig. 19.



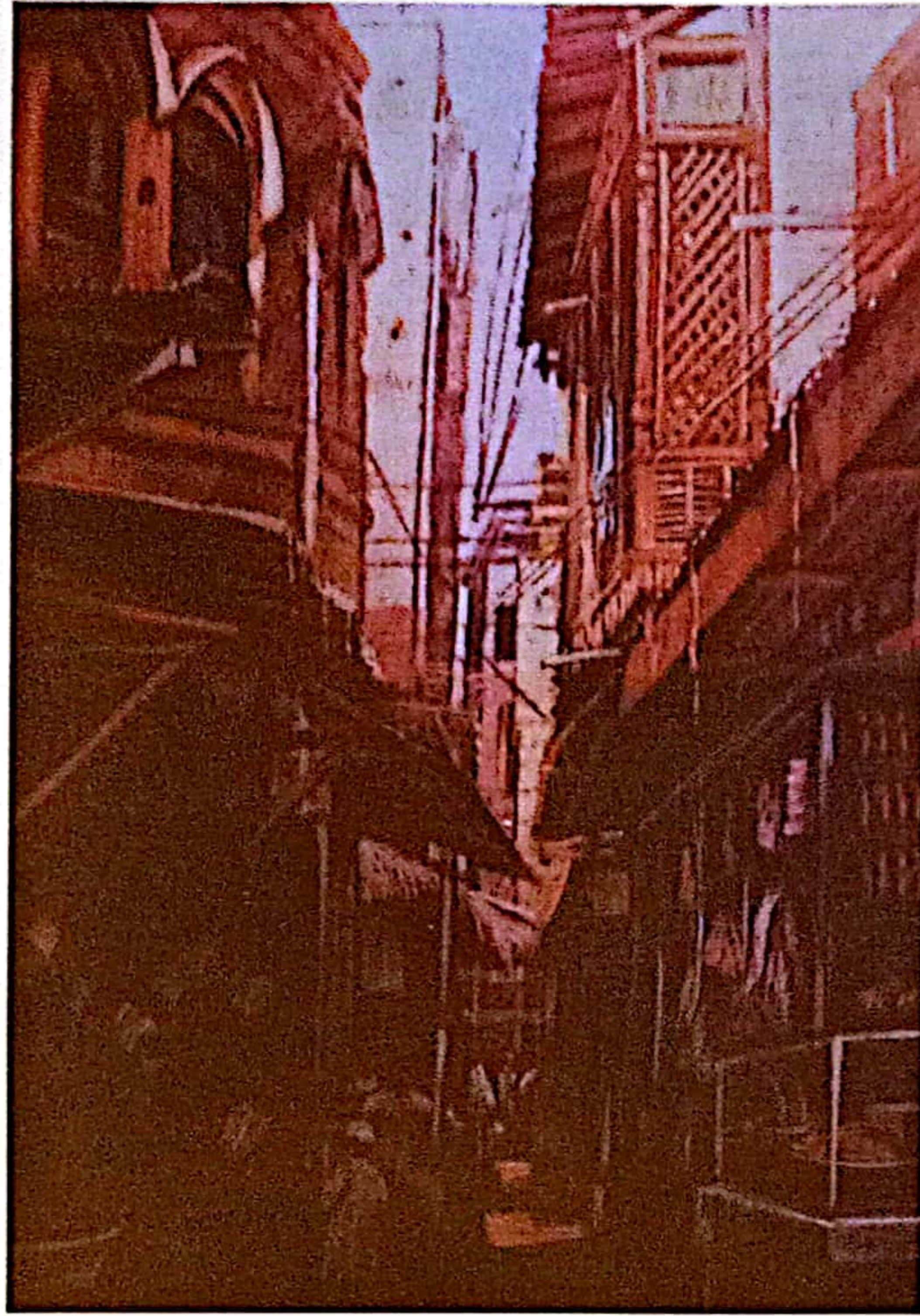
Zulqarnain Haider. Fig. 20.



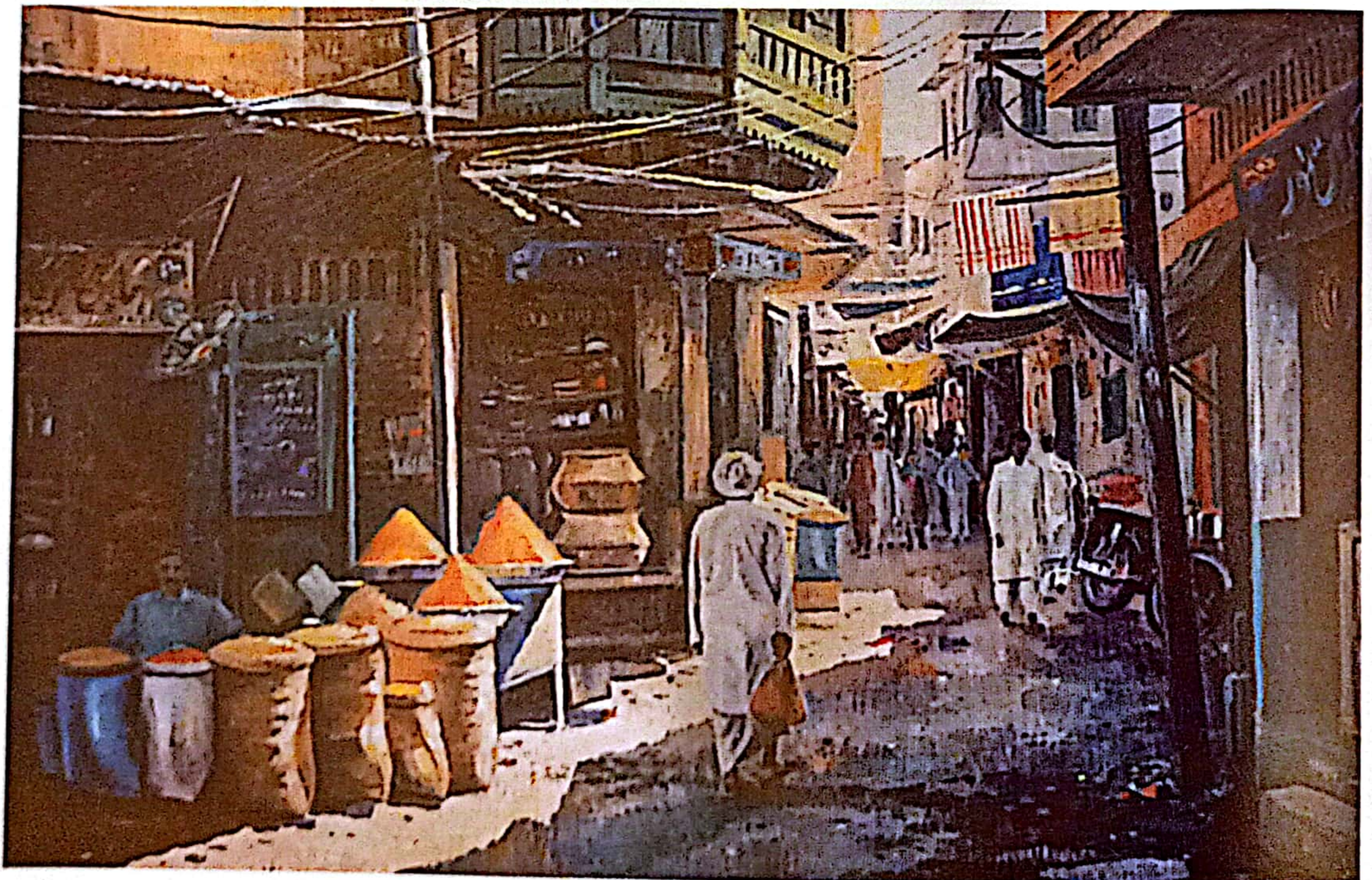
Ijaz Anwar. Fig. 21.



Iqbal Hussain. Fig. 22.



Ghulam Mustafa. Fig. 23.



Zulfiqar Ali Zulfī. Fig. 24.

پاکستان کا اولین ثقافتی ادارہ

الحکمران

(لاہور آرٹس کونسل)

پچاس سال
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ایک طائرانہ نظر

