

Mystic Expressions by

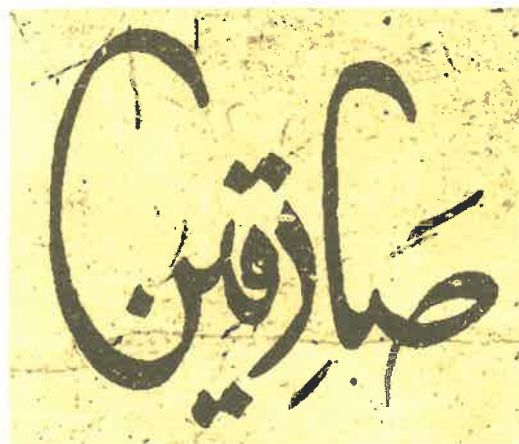
SADEQUAIN

An Odyssey to Exaltation with Ghalib, Iqbal, Faiz and Sadequain



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by



9316



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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my grandparents. Syed Sibtain Ahmed Naqvi, Sadequain's father, was an accomplished poet in his own right. Fatima Khatoon was Sadequain's mother, an unschooled housewife, but an avid reader, who could quote Mir Anis or Iqbal with authority.

Syed Aley Ahmed was my maternal grandfather, who established Aley Ahmed Girls School in 1933 in the small town of Amroha in Uttar Pradesh, India, at a time when girl's schools were not in vogue. Masooma Ahmed, my maternal grandmother, was an equal partner in her husband's campaign for girl's education.

And to all those citizens of the world who visited the SADEQUAIN Foundation site www.sadequainfoundation.com and conveyed their words of encouragement.

Acknowledgements

This book has been a labor of love. It contains a partial collection of paintings by an iconic painter based on the literary works of three of the most exalted poets of the Urdu language.

Sadequain's paintings, based on the poetry of Ghalib, Iqbal and Faiz represent a confluence of the most extraordinary talent of the art and Urdu literature. In the normal course of events, these masterpieces would be considered the cornerstone of any artist's portfolio. As such, these extraordinary pieces of artwork should have been meticulously recorded for the sake of art history, their locations tracked, and their provenance kept up-to-date. But sadly, opportunists snatched most of these artworks; their whereabouts are unknown, and their records do not exist, even on paper. Sadequain is partially to be blamed for being careless about the preservation of his work. His detractors were aware of his weakness, and they took maximum advantage of his susceptibility. Therefore, the collection of paintings in this book is only a partial representation of his portfolio. Sadequain painted a total of 105 illustrations based on the poetry of Ghalib, Iqbal and Faiz. In addition, Sadequain eulogized Iqbal in several of his large murals. But the SADEQUAIN Foundation succeeded in locating only fewer than 20 out of the 105 original paintings. This book contains the images of these 20 original paintings, and in addition, images from various records, which amount to a grand total of 53, a little over half of the original number. As a bonus, this book also contains two murals, each measuring 56 feet wide, and each painted on 14 individual panels. Both these murals were based on Iqbal's poetry. Sadequain painted these murals at the request of Pakistan's Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, specifically to be housed at the Islamabad Sports Complex on the occasion of the South Asian Games. But during its relentless pursuit to locate Sadequain's hidden treasures, these murals were found missing from the Islamabad Sports Complex, and instead, were eventually discovered in the storage room at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts in Islamabad, behind discarded furniture and covered under layers of dust.

In spite of all the shortcomings of this book, it is still the first ever collection of Sadequain's work based on the literary works of three of the most revered poets.

This book would not have been possible without the contributions of Hasan Muhammad Naqvi and Khursheed Naqvi, who allowed their collections to be included. Irfan Ahmed of Mutbuaat-e-Irfani provided the historical notes on the illustrations of the poetry of Faiz.

I would also like to express my gratitude for the unconditional support by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts and the Lahore Museum. Several of the illustrations of Ghalib and Iqbal, which were placed in the storage at the Lahore Museum and PNCA, were allowed to be brought out into the day light for photography. I am grateful to Rizwan Baig, who photographed the paintings and processed the images to be print-ready in digital format.

This book would not have been possible without the unconditional support by my partner in life, Riffi. She took upon herself the complete responsibility of our household and encouraged me to embark on the project, which I consider no less than a spiritual journey.

I am most grateful to Mr. Naseer Ahmad Baluch and his team at TOPICAL Printers for processing this book in an expeditions manner. Farhana Rafique was instrumental in restoring the less than perfect images provided by the SADEQUAIN Foundation to their original colors. Aamir Ali expedited the book layout by maintaining an effective liaison with the Sadequain Foundation located on the other side of the globe.

Prologue

In a November 26, 2009 article in the Pakistani publication *NEWSLINE*, a prominent art personality stated: "I don't think 30-35 years down the line the youngsters will know who Sadequain was, because his work won't be exhibited then." The statement was hurtful, but sadly may come true. In a manner similar to the cases of a few fortunate poets, who are immortalized by prominent singers, an artist's work has to be kept alive by catalogs, exhibitions, and museums. If the history of Pakistan's departed artists is any indication of what is to be expected in the future, then Sadequain's future is at stake. The response of artist Ismail Gulgee, when asked why he felt compelled to establish his own museum in his lifetime, was a naked truth, "After I am gone no one will do it." And then he quoted Sadequain's example. In Sadequain's case, in spite of producing thousands of pieces of artwork, the locations of only a few hundred are known now, and only a few hundred have ever been documented in books, magazines, or newspapers. It begs the obvious question: what ever happened to the rest of his work?

The SADEQUAIN Foundation has been engaged in exhaustive research to locate Sadequain's murals, paintings, calligraphies and drawings, and to this day continues to do so. Based on Sadequain's own quotes, analysis of historical notes on Sadequain's work and exhibitions, countless interviews, and the voluntary information from scores of people — many of them possess Sadequain's works — the Foundation places the number of Sadequain's artworks at around 15,000. It is common knowledge that who so ever approached Sadequain, was rewarded with a memorabilia and seldom left empty-handed. Newspapers reported that his exhibitions held in Lahore during the 1970s attracted as many as 5,000 visitors per day. If we were to assume that only a fraction of these visitors managed to acquire a collectable from Sadequain, even then the numbers are dizzying.

Sadequain is arguably one of the few artists of the country whose name is associated with specific pieces of his works, in a manner similar to, for example, Tolstoy's name being associated with *War and Peace*. In Sadequain's case, a mere mention of the mural on the ceiling of the Lahore Museum, or the murals titled "Saga of Labor" and "Treasures of Time," or the landmark inscription of "Sura-e-Rehman" in Sadequain's distinct calligraphic style, directly links these works to his name. He is not considered just an ordinary muralist, but the one with unique distinction of having painted the mural on the ceiling of the Lahore Museum, or he was not simply a calligrapher, but a calligrapher, who inscribed, for the first time, the Sura-e-Rehman in his own distinct script. His name is permanently associated with several other famous works. Sadequain's portfolio has been partially cataloged in newspapers,

magazines, and art books. His chronological biographical data included in the largest art-book ever published in Pakistan, titled, *SADEQUAIN: The Holy Sinner*, clearly provides the total count of the paintings that should have been included in this book of illustrations based on the poetry of Ghalib, Iqbal and Faiz. But the whereabouts of most of these significant pieces of Sadequain's portfolio are unknown. A few exceptions are saved at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts in Islamabad and the Lahore Museum. In addition, one illustration of Ghalib's poetry and three illustrations of Faiz's poetry were discovered by the SADEQUAIN Foundation at private residences.

In its edition of August 2007, the English magazine *Herald* published a list of 60 heroes of Pakistan in 60 years of Pakistan's existence. Sadequain was included in that list. He, however, personified the statement of F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Show me a hero and I will write you a tragedy." Sadequain was indeed a true Pakistani hero and also a tragedy of Shakespearian proportions. He is the only artist from the sub-continent whose murals and calligraphies are on public display across the border in the two warring countries. How significant it is that no other Pakistani artist is on public display in India or no Indian artist is on public display in Pakistan. Private collectors are a different matter — money can buy anything for sale — but to be on display at public places demands different dynamics of a higher order. On the part of the public institution, it is an acknowledgement of the artist's prestige, imagination, skill, stamina, resources, and a lot more. In his lifetime, Sadequain painted more than 45 large murals, but more than 15 of these masterpieces have disappeared without leaving a trace. Similar is the case with his calligraphies. He used to say that if he placed his calligraphies end-to-end, they would stretch for miles. But where have they all gone?

This book is an attempt to salvage what is available at the moment. The SADEQUAIN Foundation regularly receives requests from scholars, professors, doctoral candidates, university and college students, as well as school students, who are engaged in research about Sadequain's life and work. Pirzada Qasim, Vice Chancellor of Karachi University, stated in the newspaper *DAWN* in 2005 that, Sadequain's poetry should be the subject of research at the highest scholarly levels. Hameed Haroon of the newspaper *DAWN* also made a similar statement about Sadequain's art. If art captures the pulse of the nation, then Sadequain had his finger on this pulse. During the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, in foreign lands, Sadequain's art was considered one of the most effective ambassadors of the nation. Though Sadequain is no longer with us, his work still is. He used to say that he did not want his work to be locked in institutions, palaces, or residences. He wanted his art to be displayed in public for all to see. But that is not the case now, not even close. His labor of love is locked behind closed doors and is decaying rapidly. If not preserved physically and cataloged professionally, the fear expressed in November 2009 by the prominent art personality may indeed come true.

Since its inception in 2007, the SADEQUAIN Foundation reached out to many institutions and countless individuals through all possible means of communications, to seek the whereabouts of Sadequain's work. The focus of the search was always to discover anything and everything, wherever possible. The most effective source of outreach was the Foundation's website. The visitors to the website were placed on the mailing list of the Foundation's monthly news page, which was regularly e-mailed to thousands of recipients. Many volunteers provided useful clues, which helped the Foundation to collect the records of more than 1,800 pieces of Sadequain's works by the time this book went to print. This figure of 1,800, although being large, only represents about 15% of Sadequain's total output. So the search goes on.

The SADEQUAIN Foundation plans to publish a major portion of this collection in a retrospective catalog raisonné in the future. But out of the records that have so far been collected by the Foundation, only a fraction constitutes the work pertaining to the subject of this book, i.e. illustrations of the poetry of Ghalib, Iqbal, and Faiz. This book consists of 81 images (illustrations of Ghalib, Iqbal, and Faiz), but this total could easily have been 300. The Foundation made a decision to proceed with what was available at the moment, and in the future, if other relevant pieces became available, they will be added in the later revisions of this book.

This publication contains a retrospective essay, titled *Mystic Expressions*, which provides an insight into Sadequain's meteoric ascendancy to an iconic artist and a poet. This essay also attempts to explain why Sadequain was gravitated to illustrating the poetry of Ghalib, Iqbal, and Faiz, the most esteemed poets of the Urdu language. Being an accomplished poet himself, Sadequain could relate to the literature with equal ease as he did to the arts. He was a born artist and a natural poet.

There are four sections in this book dedicated to the three poets; Ghalib, Iqbal and Faiz, and the fourth section dedicated to Sadequain. Each section includes the corresponding paintings by Sadequain.

The section on Ghalib's poetry contains 25 verses, each inscribed in Urdu by Sadequain, along with its transliteration, translation, and illustration. The corresponding paintings are shown on the opposite page of the text. Sadequain painted a total of 50 illustrations based on Ghalib's poetry, but only 25 were located by the SADEQUAIN Foundation that are included in this book.

Iqbal's section is comprised of 16 paintings and 14 sections of each of the two murals, each section of the mural measuring 4 x 9 feet, based on Iqbal's poetry. For each of the paintings and murals, their transliteration, translation and illustration are inscribed on the opposite page of the corresponding painting.

There are 12 paintings included in this book based on Faiz's poetry. This section also includes transliteration, translation, and illustration corresponding to each painting. Sadequain painted total of 45 illustrations based on Faiz's poetry. However, the whereabouts of the missing paintings are unknown.

The section on Sadequain is a retrospective essay that highlights his palette over the course of his career. This section includes 35 images of murals, paintings, and drawings.

Mystic Expressions

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Mystic Expressions

Welcome to mystic expressions by Sadequain — an exalted state that transcends within each of us. The extraordinary collection of interpretive paintings and murals by Sadequain included in this book, based on the visions of the greatest poets of the Urdu language, Ghalib, Iqbal, and Faiz, reminds us that renouncing the seduction and eschewing the allurements of material entrapments can help levitate mankind to an exalted state. This collection of paintings constitutes a singularly unique and extraordinary rendition of complex attributes of human nature at the highest level.

Pablo Picasso said that a true artist “paints not what he sees, but what he feels.” The sumptuous collection of paintings in this book represents Sadequain’s perception, in which he draws inspiration from the ancient wisdom of Sufi traditions, which for centuries have represented some of mankind’s purest instincts. As archetypal expressions of mystic vision, these paintings transcend our latent susceptibilities. They hold a beacon to the path of enlightenment, guide through the gateway of spiritual freedom, and provide a conduit to transpersonal truth.

As we gaze at the extraordinary imagery we are transported to the core of our subliminal state. This visual journey through a blissful odyssey is an unadulterated experience of heightened awareness, allowing our senses to process these mystic images and nurture our experiences for a meaningful life. In the process, these paintings reflect various states of self-realization and consciousness. When we are not in control of our intrinsic potentialities, they may stray off the course. But if we reach down and attain awareness of our innermost sentiments, then they manifest themselves in rapturous passion.

Painting, like other art forms, is an expression of feelings and perceptions of personal experiences achieved through a creative process. Artists seek to share their observations, experiences, and interpretations of the truth, and their relationship to the world around them and beyond, through the medium of their choice. These works embody preferred idioms of the artist, such as imagery, composition, theme, and tone. All forms of art are meant to connect human beings to each other and to the environment, and thus allow them to share their emotions and experiences. A gifted artist is capable of capturing in a

creative way what most people can only feel but cannot express. Human beings are endowed with the ability to think and are blessed with the power to express their emotions by means of speech, writing, drawing, and various other forms of the arts and literature. But it can be argued whether everyone who could write, deserves to be called a writer or everyone who could paint, qualifies to be called an artist.

What is the relationship between the arts and life? This is a question that scholars seek to answer relentlessly. In general, this relationship is defined as the basic human instinct to achieve harmony, balance, and rhythm through universal communication. Man's communication with each other and with the environment lies at the core of all endeavors in arts and literature, and all artistic endeavors are a reflection of the truth about life. If we postulate that life has a purpose, which is to perpetually seek knowledge, development of self, and paving the path of creative pursuits in the service of mankind, then all arts and literature must serve this goal in one way or another. Therefore, it can be said that art and life cannot be divorced from each other.

In an interview Sadequain famously said:

People ask why I don't paint flowers, butterflies and landscapes. I tell them that I seek the truth and I am after reality. I am not inspired by someone posing against the backdrop of roses in a vase or pink curtains. What inspires me is a person who has gone hungry for hours and is struggling for survival. The expression that lights his face at the end of the day when he has finally found some scraps, that is what touches me. I am a painter of the expression of reality.

Thus, while he followed his instincts, Sadequain was also critiqued for painting grotesque and unpleasant imagery depicting cobwebs, rodents, crows, and other creatures devouring the daylights of living beings. But these same critics are known to enjoy Urdu poetry that is replete with recitations of miseries heaped upon mankind; slaughtered human bodies drowned in their own blood, bright cities, but their citizens longing for their own demise, and seemingly lush green fields, which can only grow hunger and death. Why this gross contradiction? The answer lies in the fact that, in our society, art and literature exist in parallel universes, which traditionally do not converge. In contrast to Western culture, where art is primarily meant to provide visual pleasure or record history, and literature is based upon realistic perceptions, the East follows Western trends when it comes to the realm of visual arts by drawing pretty faces — which trace their lineage to the Mughal miniature portraiture drawings — or alternatively, depicting lush landscapes and bright city scenes, which are mostly realistic imitations. However, in literature, we are accustomed to the themes of long established vagaries of forbidden love and enjoy them to the hilt. And what is more, even the exaggerated metaphors describing the miseries of the perished lover or referring to the object of the lover's affection as "a ruthless assassin" seem to garnish our appreciation.

Sadequain was a painter-poet, whose creative pursuits, both in the realm of arts and poetry, found their expressions from the same source. His paintings read like his poetry and his poetry conjures images of his paintings. He expressed the singularity of his inspiration in one of his quatrains:

Ek Bar Mein Sahiri Bhi Karkey Dekhoon
 Kia Farq Hai Shaeeri Bhi Karkey Dekhoon
 Tasveeron Mein Ash-aar Kahey Hein Mein Nay
 Sheron Mein Musawwiri Bhi Karkey Dekhoon

Once I would want to serenade for pleasure
 To experience the difference, I would now compose poetry
 My paintings recite the poems that flow within them
 Now I compose poetry to compliment my painting

This quatrain can partially explain why the common public found difficulty in relating to Sadequain's paintings, but a discerning eye like that of poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz had no trouble in explaining the intensity of "the suffering without the pity and the agony without the ecstasy appear too enduring to depart." Faiz further wrote:

Sadequain has once more reverted to direct social comment to depict a loveless and macabre world — a world of the scarecrow acting as the lord of the blood-thirsty crows, of the haridan decked out as a beauty queen, a world of trapped tongues and cobwebbed hearts, of debased flesh and servile manners.

Searching for new expressions, Sadequain gravitated to illustrate the most complex concepts expressed in the poetry of the stalwarts of Urdu language, Ghalib, Iqbal and Faiz. A tall order for the ordinary and mundane, but it was simply natural for him to engage in one of the most significant bodies of his work. He did not complete the marathon of illustrating the select poetry of Ghalib, Iqbal and Faiz in one stretch, but he delved into the intellectual discourse at regular intervals when he heard his calling.

In October 1968, long after Sadequain had established himself as the leading modern artist of Pakistan, and to add to the luster, had also attained international fame through his achievements in Paris, he illustrated 25 verses of Ghalib to eulogize the great poet of the Urdu language on the occasion of the poet's anniversary. To enhance his creations, Sadequain wanted to append the individual paintings with the inscription of corresponding verses, but after searching unsuccessfully for an acceptable calligrapher, he decided to inscribe the verses himself. The 25 illustrative paintings of Ghalib's poetry and the appended inscriptions of the corresponding verses were displayed with great fanfare in November 1968 at Ghalib Academy in Karachi. Later, a large-size portfolio of the paintings and their corresponding inscriptions was published to commemorate the occasion. Later, in February 1969, Sadequain painted additional 25 paintings based on Ghalib's couplets and exhibited them in March 1969 at the Arts Council in Karachi. The exhibitions were sponsored by Idara-e-Yadgare-Ghalib.

Subsequently, the United Bank of Pakistan printed 12 images of Ghalib's illustrations in its annual diary and a fancy desk calendar, which were distributed around the world as a public relations exercise. The response to this fabulous piece of stationery was so overwhelming that the Arts Council of Pakistan in Karachi compiled the congratulatory letters from the recipients of the diary and published them in another classic publication, aptly titled after the names of the three legends: Ghalib, Sadequain, and Agha Hasan Abedi.

These 50 paintings, which Sadequain dedicated to the Urdu language's greatest poet, constitute a prized collection, a reflection in the mirror of two stalwarts of their respective genres. This collection is worthy of being declared a literary masterpiece, a pride of national identity, and perhaps deserves the merit to be declared a National Heritage. But Sadequain unwittingly acted to his own detriment and carelessly gave away the paintings to who-so-ever managed to garner his attention. With the exception of a few paintings, which were found in the custody of the Lahore Museum and Pakistan National Council of the Arts, the rest remain untraceable. Despite desperate efforts by the SADEQUAIN Foundation, the opportunists remain anonymous and not many of the missing lot of the 50 paintings could be located. The imagery included in this book is that of the first batch of 25 paintings, which were cataloged in a large portfolio by Sadequain himself.

The great Sufi Saint, Rumi, inspired Iqbal. He adopted Rumi's conceptual definition of self-realization and extrapolated it into his inspirational poetry. Sadequain took the page from Iqbal's poetry and illustrated it in his monumental paintings during the months of August through October of 1977 in the city of Lahore. Sadequain also interpreted Iqbal's poetry in several of his monumental murals.

Sadequain emulated Sufi lifestyle and spoke the language of Sufism. To understand Sufism, there is a need to understand the balance between internal and external being, which is in essence the balance between nature and the limitations of mankind. This book is not about a scholarly discourse on Sufism and whether Sadequain's art embodies Sufi concepts. But it suffices to state in support of Sadequain's claim about his leanings toward Sufi mystique that his lifestyle, his art, and his poetry speak for themselves. If Sufism means a divorce from worldly greed, then Sadequain was a living example. His famous depiction of decapitated bodies was homage to Sarmad Shaheed and Mansur-ul-Hajjaj (alternate al Hallaj) two famous Sufi saints.

Sadequain's paintings based on Iqbal's poetry were exhibited in November-1977 at the historic Lahore Museum. The number of these large paintings was approximately 20 and they measured close to 10 x 8 feet each. The exact number of these paintings is not known because soon after the exhibition at Lahore Museum, several institutions and individuals snatched them, and in most cases now their locations are unknown. Sadequain never kept an inventory of his work and in the case of these paintings, there is no record to account for most of them. In a tribute to Sadequain, Pakistan Television Corporation made a long documentary movie titled, *Moujiza-e-Fun*, which showed him working on Iqbal's illustrations. This movie was nationally televised over the course of several weeks. In spite of repeated attempts by the SADEQUAIN Foundation, by the time of the publication of this book, it was not able to retrieve a duplicate copy of the documentary from the Pakistan Television Corporation. Because of the ill fate of Sadequain's paintings, that paid tribute to the Poet of the East, Muhammad Iqbal, the rare collection of 16 images in this book lends it a rare and precious quality, making it a first-ever retrospective confluence of the two geniuses. In addition, this book catalogs for the first time, individual sections of two murals based on the poetry of Iqbal, each mural consisting of 14 sections, measuring 56 feet, which were painted to be on display at the Islamabad Sports Complex in 1976. The theme of these murals was the struggle for emancipation and fight for freedom for the nations of Asia and Africa.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Sadequain were contemporaries. Although Faiz was several years his senior,

both were intellectually on the same page and held each other in high esteem. Both were rule-breakers and had successfully carved their places in history. Their work addressed the plight of the downtrodden and both upheld the ideals of human dignity. If Faiz complained about *dast-e-qatil* (murderous hand) in his poetry, then Sadequain appropriately painted decapitated bodies holding their severed heads in their hands. Faiz wrote several articles to pay homage to Sadequain, and Sadequain was inspired to illustrate several of Faiz's most potent works of poetry.

In February 1971, Sadequain executed the first set of 25 drawings, paintings and calligraphies based on the poetry of Faiz as a tribute to the poet on his 60th birthday. These paintings were exhibited at the PECHS in Karachi in 1971. Later, to eulogize Faiz after he passed away, Sadequain executed 30 more paintings in 1985. These paintings were exhibited at *Markaz-e-Sadaat-e-Amroha* in Karachi. However, out of the total of 45 paintings that Sadequain executed based on the poetry of Faiz, none is in the collection of Sadequain or Faiz's families. The SADEQUAIN Foundation has been able to locate only a handful of them, but the rest are not traceable. As a result, this book contains images of only 12 paintings based on the poetry of Faiz. The Pakistani English language newspaper, *The Nation*, reported in its edition of May 18, 2008, about the theft of four paintings from Gallery Sadequain located at the upper level of the historic Frere Hall in Karachi. Two of the stolen paintings were presumed to be the illustrations of Faiz's poetry. The publication also reported that no police report was filed against the robbery and neither did the responsible authorities conduct an enquiry. As a matter of record, one illustration of Faiz's poetry was sold in New York and another in India for hefty sums of money.

Being a social commentator, Sadequain was not satisfied with painting ordinary images of men and women or landscapes. He adapted strong symbolic idioms to impart a universal message cautioning the threats and recognizing the opportunities for mankind and its environment. For example, he was impressed with the resilience of the cactus plant that defies all odds and endures the sandy soils and scorching sun to grow in the harshest environmental conditions and it grows straight and upward as a symbol of hope and triumph over natural forces. Sadequain said: "To me it symbolizes the triumph of life over environment. Once I used to identify it with myself. Then I started identifying it with the whole community." Thus, Sadequain's cacti became people and his people became cacti.

Sadequain can be called a painter-poet, but he could have easily been a poet-painter if it was not for the time and place where he was born and raised. It is said that he composed his first poem when he was nine years old. By the time he was 17, he had composed more than 400 pieces of poetry. His parents, Syed Sibtain Ahmed Naqvi and Fatima Khatoon belonged to a respectable middle class. Their ancestors populated a small town named Amroha in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh for over 600 years. With time, the family and extended family grew in numbers to thousands, but most stayed in their ancestral town.

The women of the families were primarily housewives and the men, in most cases, were absent farmland owners. They leased their farms and mango orchards and lived from the income of the leases. Their favorite pastime was to engage in scholarly pursuits, like composing

poetry, calligraphy of poetic scripts or the Quranic verses, and practice of classical music to the extent of composing religious psalms for the observation of the solemn month of Moharram. A number of Sadequain's forefathers inscribed complete Qurans in impeccable writing styles, with intricate designs around the borders, and glorified by the use of gold ink. Children were tutored at home and encouraged to participate in scholarly pursuits. Sadequain, like many other children of the family, inscribed popular poetic verses on tablets of wood, which were prepared for writing by plastering a layer of clay, and by using a writing instrument made of bamboo shoot with one end sharply cut in the shape of a nib and suitably slanted for calligraphic script.

In the prologue of his collection of *Rubaiyyat-e-Sadequain Khattat*, Sadequain wrote:

In the cultural environment I grew up, the art of composing rubai was an expression of cultural refinement. As children, we were encouraged to memorize *rubaiyyat* in praise of God, his Prophet (PBUH), and his descendents. Stylized calligraphies of *rubaiyyat* used to be framed and hung on the walls for decor. As a common practice, I often inscribed these *rubaiyyat* with permanent ink on wooden tablets. Thus composing and inscribing of *rubaiyyat* became my childhood passion.

I have always appreciated the presence of an innate beauty and a sense of seriousness in *rubai*. In my perception of an elegantly executed calligraphy, a *rubai* has both a balanced form and proportional dimension, and it appears to rest more comfortably when inscribed onto a wooden tablet. From the age of 18, I began to compose *rubaiyyat* regularly, and managed to complete a number of poetry manuscripts. Later, some of these manuscripts were irretrievably lost, others were destroyed and the balance burnt, some intentionally.

At this juncture, Sadequain composed the following quatrain to express his dilemma, his reservation, his apprehension, and his resignation:

Afsoos Keh Mein Nay Nah Banayeh Woh Naqsh
Halaat Nay Khakh Mein Milayeh Woh Naqsh
Ab Harf Kay Bhaes Mein Howay Hein Nazil
Jo Naqsh Ki Surat Mein Nah Aay Woh Naqsh

How sad I did not compose those images
 They were perished in the dust of time
 Now those images are transformed into words
 Those shades that could not emerge as images

While indulging in poetic expression, Sadequain also carried a passion for drawing. In Sadequain's biography, a future publication planned by the SADEQUAIN Foundation, *The Saga of Sadequain*, the following is noted:

Sadequain started drawing before he was 10. He started composing poetry in his early teens, and on a number of occasions, inscribed his entire textbooks; books on classical literature and even the world atlas with complete details. He also manually bound most of his inscribed books.

He drew drawings in the sand, charted World War II troop movements of the allied powers and axis powers by drawing world maps on the outside walls of the homes in his neighborhood, and often, when he was attending classes in school, he would sit in the back so he could draw sketches unnoticed by the teacher, who would be in front of the class busy on the black board. On one such occasion, in an arithmetic class, the teacher noticed that Sadequain had kept his head down for an unusually long period and was not paying attention to the teacher's presentation. The teacher walked up to Sadequain and caught him drawing a sketch of an imaginary street corner in his notebook. The teacher proceeded to admonish him and warned in a boisterous tone, "I bet you will not pass unless you changed." Sadequain replied in an equally charged tone, "*Ho gai munshi gee*" (you want to bet).

Sadequain's cousin and a close companion, Saiyid Ali Naqvi, recalls a hot mid-summer day of 1935 when everybody in the house, except Sadequain and him, was taking the usual afternoon nap. The two boys were six at the time. They had stolen a few sheets of paper and some pencils from the cabinet of the elder brother, Kaz-e-man Naqvi. They snuck into an empty room and started to reproduce their dreams of the previous night on pieces of paper. It was Sadequain's idea, Saiyid Ali recalled. Saiyid Ali followed Sadequain's lead like a loyal companion, but could not draw anything. He vividly remembered the picture that Sadequain made, which was indeed very horrible. A horrible creature with large sharp teeth, fiery eyes, and big bony hands with long and sharp nails descending from a ventilator into the room with the intention of devouring the lonely boy lying on the bed. That was the mid-summer night's dream of a young boy. All that summer, almost daily, Sadequain reproduced the dreams — pleasant and unpleasant — on paper. Saiyid Ali never could learn to draw his own dreams so he would narrate them and Sadequain would draw them for him as well.

When Sadequain was of school age he attended family school in Amroha, Imam-ul-Madaris, founded by his grandfather and other members of the family. Traditionally, most of the family members started their schooling at the same family-owned school and later went on to finish their education at the Aligarh Muslim University. Saiyid Ali wrote that it was at an early school age that Sadequain along with him would frequently visit a local clay pot maker in the neighborhood. The process of a glob of clay turning into a beautiful pot fascinated Sadequain. He started to draw the picture of the newly made clay pot on the ground or on the walls. In the beginning, the pot maker would ignore him but later realized that the child had an unusual talent. The pot maker showed interest in Sadequain's drawings in the sand and occasionally worked with Sadequain to perfect his pictures. Sadequain practiced long and hard and in a few weeks mastered the skill of drawing the pots to such perfection that the pot maker started asking him to design the pots from imagination, a complete reversal of roles, and he would then use Sadequain's pictures to mold the pots.

This was Sadequain's first commissioned work. Of course he did not charge for his work, a practice he followed for the rest of his life.

In another episode, Saiyid Ali wrote that on one occasion, the long neglected walls of an old house had just been painted white. The smooth surface of the freshly painted walls was too inviting for Sadequain who could not restrain himself. He brought a big piece of charcoal from the kitchen and started to draw a large picture of a majestic lion with a full beard and a long curly tail in one smooth motion without once lifting the charcoal off the surface of the wall. As soon as the large picture was completed, Sadequain was caught and severely scolded for the transgression. He was ordered to wash the wall clean and warned to never repeat the act or else he would be so severely punished that he will not be able to draw again even if he wanted. Sadequain fetched a soaked cloth to clean the wall under the watchful eyes of his detractors and once the wall was clean to their satisfaction he was walked to his home and handed over to his mother. But the next day, many more drawings were found on several walls, and of course, he was caught again and scolded promptly. This anecdote is documented solely to emphasize the intense passion he harbored within himself that would manifest all his life in untiring pursuit of ideas, subjects, and mediums.

Why was Sadequain a rule-breaker and a trend-setter? As discussed earlier, Sadequain's poetry conformed to established practices, but his paintings were a radical departure from what common people were accustomed to viewing. He was not a purveyor of decorative art and did not believe in art for entertainment. In his prologue to rubaiyyat he wrote:

My self-styled critics desire to decorate the walls of their drawing rooms with my paintings matching their outrageous and ostentatious colors and décor. They wish that I painted colorful portraits of those harlots who service these oppressors, and who have no qualms about inflicting harm to humanity. The deceitful and artificial smile of a concubine seated in the ornate drawing room of a black-marketer is meaningless to me. However, what inspires me is a person who has gone hungry for hours and is struggling for survival. I am not an artist who resides on marble minarets, but I am an artist of the dustbin. I seek truth in the ugliness of the dustbin and not in the overly decorated and perfumed chambers of the rich.

In his *rubaiyyat* he wrote:

Hai Zouq-e-Jamal Ko Jaganey Kay Liey
Yeh Cheese Diloon Mein Hai Samaney Kay Liey
Kiss Say Kahoon Tasveer Naheen Hoti Hai
Ishrat Gahey Zardar Sajaney Kay Liy

It is meant to enrich the esthetic senses
It transcends the spirit and resides in the hearts
Who should I let know my painting does not belong
Amidst the decor of the ostentatious palaces

Self proclaimed *Faqir*, Sadequain was outside society's worldly greed or hypocrisy and called himself "speaker of truth." He spoke about his motivation in the following translated piece of his writing:

When I open my heart to hand out nuggets of wisdom
 They respond by calling them but superfluous fragments
 When I serve my life-blood at the banquet
 They drench in only the fizzled drinks
 Against all odds, but with resolve and sincerity
 I am at war against rampant disparity
 I know the fight would not end soon
 For hypocrisy surrounds in pervasive lagoon
 But it has to be unmasked of all hypocrisy
 By eliminating all forms of duplicity
 You may laugh at my vision, but so what
 I laugh at the lords and my obscenity is great
 It laughs in the face of the kings and dances in naked state
 I dance naked in the city square
 I am the embodiment of selfish needs
 I am the face of evil deeds
 If the banquet of life is a bath, then my friends
 I am the reflection in the mirror on the wall
 Who is hatching conspiracy against us all
 The walls surrounding us are getting too tall
 Is someone buried under the foundation
 Why is the wall of tyranny in fixation
 Let us not be afraid of the gallows
 Whatever happens don't get mellow
 And, when I hang at the end of the rope
 Still I would not give up the hope
 My chocked breath will shake the cross
 That will open up the mountain pass
 The river of truth would run down the valley
 And it will choke the tyrant's alley

A paragraph from SADEQUAIN: *Strokes of Picasso — Scale of Michelangelo* reads:

Sadequain's fury in his work is a sight to behold. He was seldom seen without a supply of painting material and he painted relentlessly while socializing, eating, or even waiting for transportation. The only time he was not painting was when he was sleeping; but he did not sleep much. With no consideration for using the conventional painting materials, he painted on canvas, paper, hard boards, walls, and even on newspapers. India's painter M.F. Husain claims to have in his collection a piece by Sadequain on a newspaper.

intellectual content of the painting that can only be achieved by an artist who is inquisitive, a thinker, and is capable of portraying his own interpretation of the scenery onto the canvas.

In contrast to the Eastern painter, a Western painter has an opposite approach and applies a different technique to accomplish his task at hand. The ultimate object of the painter in this case is to capture every element in the scenery and paint every little detail of each object until the painting appears as an exact replica of the actual. If the artist succeeds in matching his painting with the actual, only then his work is considered acceptable. However, in doing so, the artist finds that he is bound by the limitations of the subject and does not have the liberty to experiment with form or the ability to impart an intellectual component into his work.

To illustrate further, if a European artist has to paint at night, then he would limit himself only to portraying the night scene. In case that he succeeded in doing so, then only it will be considered a successful accomplishment. The objective of the two schools is diametrically opposed and it is for such reasons that we find a contrast between the Eastern style and the Western style of painting. Another important difference between the two approaches is that, the Western school of thought thrives on portraying the vanity, where as the Eastern school believes that its foremost responsibility is to serve the humanity, and it achieves that by illustrating the religious teachings or documenting historic facts in its work. Some fine examples of this approach are found in the historic Mandirs spread all over the Indian sub-continent.

about poetry
X

Eastern poetry, and specifically poetry from the Indian sub-continent, may be understood as a poetic expression of both the pain of loss or separation and the beauty of love in spite of that pain. Or in other forms, Indian poetry is a continuous chronicle of a historical event or expression of ideas and philosophical thoughts. The most popular of the Indian poetic forms is called the *ghazal*. In its style and content it is a genre which has proved capable of an extraordinary variety of expressions around its central themes of love and separation. It is one of the principal poetic forms which the Indo-Persian-Arabic civilization offered to the Eastern world.

The *ghazal* has a specific form and traditionally deals with one dominant subject: Love. And not just any kind of love, but specifically, an illusive and unattainable love. The *ghazals* of the subcontinent, in some cases, can also have an influence of Islamic Mysticism and the subject of love in such cases can be interpreted for a higher being. The notion of love is always viewed as a quality that will complete a human being, and if attained, will elevate him to a higher order.

Therefore, it is not possible to fully appreciate *ghazal* without at least being familiar with the basic concepts of Sufism. All the major historical post-Islamic *ghazal* poets were either avowed Sufis themselves, or empathized with Sufi concepts. Most *ghazals* can be viewed in a spiritual context, with the object of attention being a metaphor for God, or the poet's spiritual guide.

Western poetry by definition can assume various forms and it is less constrained in style compared to its Eastern counterpart. A Western poem can rely on imagery, precise word choice, and metaphor. It may emphasize patterns of stresses or of patterns of syllables of varying lengths, and they may or may not rhyme. However, one cannot precisely characterize Western poetry. Because, unlike Eastern poetry, it can not be defined to predominantly stress one theme and style, but it is unrestricted and free-flowing in subject and form.

The next three sections represent the illustrations and interpretations by Sadequain of select stanzas of famous poems by the three revered poets of the Urdu language: Ghalib, Iqbal, and Faiz. Each painting is accompanied with the transliteration, translation, and illustration / interpretation of select stanzas of the poetry.

Each section starts with a one-page primer on the poet for the benefit of non-Urdu-speaking readers who may not be familiar with the poets.

The details listed under the paintings are purposely kept to a minimum for the sake of confidentiality.

A special mention is made of the two large murals included in the section of Iqbal. The murals were painted for the Islamabad Sports Complex, but now they are stored at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts.

Section four is a retrospective essay on Sadequain's vast palette, supported by representative paintings and drawings.



Illustration / Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal, sections of two murals in storage at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts. Each mural has 14 panels, each panel is 4 x 9 feet, oil on board

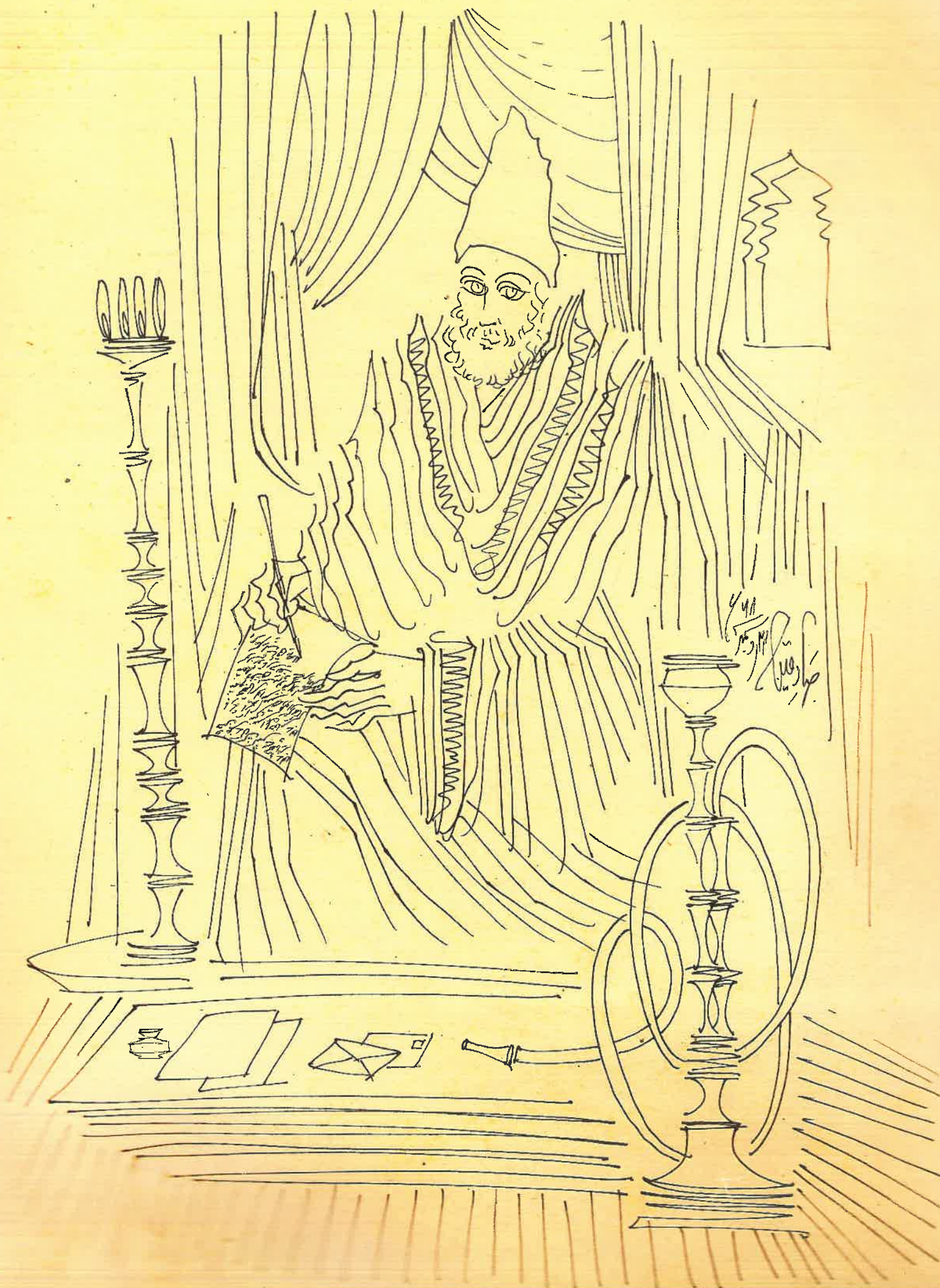
Ghalib (1797-1869)

Ghalib is regarded as the most revered of Urdu poets. He composed poetry in Persian and Urdu, but he is most famous for his *ghazals* written in Urdu. *Ghazal*, arguably the most popular form of Urdu poetry, conforms to a specific format and in retrospect, predominantly deals with one subject: an expression of anguished and unattainable love. Ghalib, however, redefined its composition and imbued it with philosophical discourse, pondered on the mysteries of the universe and lamented about the travails of life. He composed *ghazals* to address many more subjects and vastly expanded the scope of the genre.

Ghalib's *ghazals* have an influence of Sufi Mysticism, and therefore, the expression of love can either be interpreted as directed toward a higher being or for a mortal beloved. This expression, in either case, is intended to lift the believer to the ranks of the higher order and provide satisfaction to the soul. In keeping with the traditions of the classical *ghazal*, the gender of the beloved in most of Ghalib's verses is elusive. It has thus been argued that his *ghazals* consist mostly of "sonnets about eternal love" in the traditional sense of the term.

In most cases, Ghalib's *ghazal* is written from the point of view of the hopeless lover whose beloved is portrayed as unapproachable and unattainable. Most often, either the beloved does not reciprocate to the poet's overtures with affection or responds with utter indifference. In other cases, social barriers would not be conducive for the love to bloom. However, the lover stays passionate, accepts his fate and continues to shower his affection. This tension of unattainable love provides the captivating impetus to the lyrics of the *ghazal*. To accentuate the intensity, sometimes the lover's hopeless situation is portrayed even through poetically exaggerated violence, expressed by extended metaphors about the "arrows of his eyes" and by referring the beloved as a "callous assassin."

In another form of deviation, Ghalib often digressed from the traditional *ghazal* metaphors and occasionally questioned old dogmas, which in Ghalib's opinion, result in stagnation of critical thinking. His questioning of the existence of the heaven and hell would be one example of such digression.





غالب



سابقین

Calligraphy by Sadequain inscribed in the *Collection of Ghalib's Illustrations*, 1968.
Top illustration spells "Ghalib" and bottom illustration spells "Sadequain"

گنجِ معانی

غالب کے گنجینہ معنی کا طلسم تو کس کے ہاتھ لگا ہے لیکن گزشتہ ایک صدی میں کون صاحبِ نظر ہے جو اس کی تلاش میں سرگرداں نہ رہا ہو۔ میری ناقص رائے میں اس طلسم کا بھینہ غالب کی ایک اصطلاح میں پوشیدہ ہے اور وہ اصطلاح ہے ”تصوّر و تصوّر جو گرمی نشاط بھی ہے گنجینی خیال بھی۔ جو نافرینِ گلشن کی جھلک بھی ہے فراقِ صحبتِ شب کی کسک بھی تصوّر دی روز کی یاد بھی ہے، امروز کا کرب بھی ہے، فردا کی اُمید اور ہر اس بھی تصوّر جس سے خیال کی شرعیات میں جذبات کی رو سے سیراب ہوتی ہیں اور جذبات کے شعلوں کو خیال کا نور عطا ہوتا ہے۔

اسی تصوّر کے طلسم سے غالب نے تاریخ کا ایک ایسا لمحہ ایسا کیا جب یارِ اغیار دونوں ایک ”بنائے نو“ کو آباد کرنے کی خاطر ایک بنیادِ کہنہ کی ویرانی کے درپے تھے۔ عیسیٰ غالب کی ولادت سے قریب قریب ایک صدی پیشتر شروع ہوا اور اس کی وفات سے ایک صدی بعد تک جاری ہے۔

غالب کے تصوّر میں اس شکست و ریختِ حسرت و تعمیر کے وہ سب نقوش متشکل ہوئے جو اسے کبھی اپنے دُشمنِ گہر میں نظر آئے کبھی بہارِ صفتِ دُشمن میں۔ ان میں ایک صدی پہلے کا رد و محال بھی تھا، ایک صدی بعد کا تجسّس اور خروش بھی۔ ان میں عمرِ گریزِ پاک کا تاشف بھی تھا، حیاتِ انسانی کے دوام کا یقین بھی حقیقتِ عالم کی تلاش بھی تھی، آرائشِ خمِ کاکل کے اندیشہ ہائے دور و دراز بھی۔ غالب کا تصوّر اس لمحہ کی اُس تہ تک پہنچا جہاں فردا و دی کا تقصیر و کجبار مرٹ جاتا ہے۔

جس طرح غالب نے تصور کے اس آبگینے کو کچلا کر الفاظ کے ساغر میں اُنڈیا، مابادہ تلخ تر شود و سیت ریش تر، اسی طرح صائقین نے الفاظ کے آبگینے کو گداز کر کے رنگ و خط کے ساغر میں ڈھالا ہے۔ ہم ان دونوں کے شکر گزار ہیں کہ دونوں کے

”معجزہ فن میں ہے خونِ جگر کی نمود“

سید احمد فاضل

۹ فروری ۱۹۶۹ء

نقش فریادی ہے کس کی شوخی تحریر کا
کاغذی ہے پیرہن ہر پیکر تصویر کا

Transliteration

Naqsh Faryadi Hai Kiss Ki Shokhi-e-Tahreer Ka
Kaghazi Hai Pairahen Her Paikare-e-Tasveer Ka

Translation

Whose mischief is the cause of protest by the written word
Strange that every image is draped in paper dress

Illustration / Interpretation

Sadequain has rendered abstract imagery to illustrate an abstract thought expressed in Ghalib's verse, which bears the distinction of being the opening of the *Diwan-e-Ghalib*. Ghalib ponders upon a question and in a sarcastic tone queries about the identity of the one whose inscription bears a mischievous slant. It is customary in Urdu or Persian literature to open a literary piece of work with a devotional message, usually reserved for the Creator. If this is assumed to be the case in *Diwan-e-Ghalib*, then Ghalib could be questioning the motive behind the creation of the universe. The second stanza alludes to a dress made of paper, a symbol of humility on one hand, but it could also signify that a blank piece of paper offers a surface on which one can apply the label of his choice. The choice of the word, *Faryadi*, in the opening line is quite significant because it could imply that the gist of the verse is to register a protest against the less than perfect conditions in God's creation — the universe.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ▶



کہ مرتے کے بعد اُس نے جفا سے توبہ
ہاے اُس زود پشماں کا پشما ہونا

Transliteration

Ki Meray Qatel Kay Baad Us Nay Jafa Say Tauba
Hae Us Zood Pashema Ka Pashema Hona

Translation

What good was her repentance after I was perished
Alas, her repentance was not timely enough

Illustration / Interpretation

In this verse, Ghalib defies the logic behind the old adage, "It's never too late." Sadequain illustrates the first line of this emotionally-charged verse defining the extraordinary circumstances, under which one individual, presumably the beloved, has vanquished the lover, but after the dreadful event, realizes the severity of the action. The second line is uttered by the victim, in which he laments about the irony of repentance for the crime by the perpetrator after it was too late. The second line is a melancholy sigh, O' the admittance of crime, what good is the belated admittance now. This emotion is embodied in the gesture of the ruthless assassin, who is holding in her hand the severed head of the hopeless lover.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ▶



در دِلِ لکھوون کتبِ جاوون اُون کو دکھلاوون
اُنکلیان فگار اپنی، خاںِ خوں چکان اپنا

Transliteration

*Dard-e-Dil Likhun Kab Tak Jayuun Un Ko Dikhlayoon
Ungliyan Figar Apni Khama Khoon Chukaan Apna*

Translation

How long do I count the number of heartaches before I go and confront her
By now my fingers are bleeding and my pen is worn out too

Illustration / Interpretation

There is a sense of frustration flowing through this couplet. The beloved is presumably away from the lover, that is causing distress and countless heartaches to the lover. In the first line, he questions: "How long do I have to write about my heartaches before I go and show her the long list?" Implied in the line is the realization that the list is too long and he is on the verge of giving up hope. The second line further elaborates this point, by describing that the list of hardships is so long, that the writer's hand and fingers are cut up and even the writing instrument is worn out and has gotten bloody. The focus of the painting is on the bloodied hands and the writing instrument, which Sadequain accentuated in the imagery. The convoluted hands are drawn large to attract the attention of the viewer. The nib of the quill is pierced in the flesh to draw blood, which the anguished lover is using for ink to write on the writing surface.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ▶



بلا سہیں جو تیشہ پشہ نظر درو دیوار
نگاہ شوق کو تیرے بال و پر درو دیوار

Transliteration

Bala Say Hein Jo Yeh Pesh-e-Nazar Dar-o-Deevar
Nigah-e-Shauq Ko Hein Bal-o-Par Dar-o-Deevar

Translation

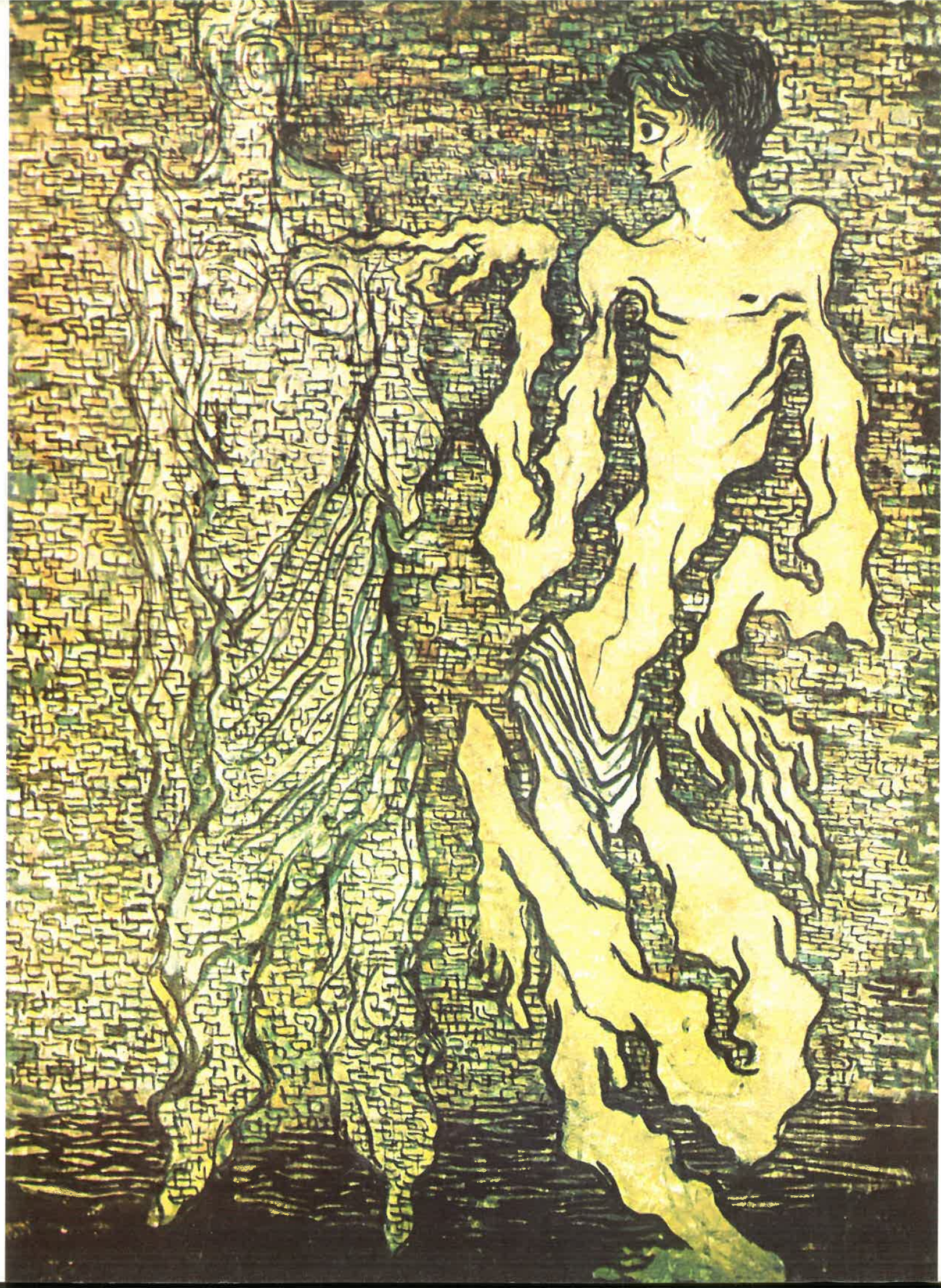
To hell with the obstacles of doors and walls in front of me
To my longing desire they are soft as feathers

Illustration / Interpretation

Sadequain illustrates the concept: I could care less for the obstructions, such as the doors and walls, which are between my beloved and me. For a true lover like me, such blockades do not pose a serious deterrent. If I am a true lover then the hard walls and solid doors (with locks) are not blockades, but rather they are soft as the wings (of a bird) and in fact they become my wings and take me to the one I long for.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968

A-9316



اے ابلوئے پائوں کے گھر کیا تھا میں
جی خوش ہوا، گراہ کو پر خار دیکھ کر

Transliteration

In Aabloon Say Paoon Kay Ghabra Gaya Tha Mein
Gee Khush Hua Hai Rah Ko Pur Khar Dekh Kar

Translation

How frustrating had become the blisters on my feet
What a relief is the sight of the path full of thorns

Illustration / Interpretation

Ghalib implies that the rigors of life have dragged him from place-to-place and this drudgery has caused painful blisters on his feet. He is now exasperated by the excruciating pain, but does not see any relief in sight. However, at one point he comes across a path, which is full of thorny growth. Normally, a person would avoid walking on thorns, but in case of Ghalib, he opts to walk on the thorny path and bear the pain of the sting of the thorns, because according to him, the thorns would puncture the blisters and that would in turn provide badly needed relief in pain. It can be argued that Ghalib is suggesting rejoice; if one is offered a choice between two evils, then choose the lesser of the two.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ▶



تُو اور ارا خشم کا کل
میں اور اندیشہ ہا دور و دراز

Transliteration

*Tu Aur Aaraesh-e-Kham-e-Kakul
Mein Aur Andesha Hai Dur Daraz*

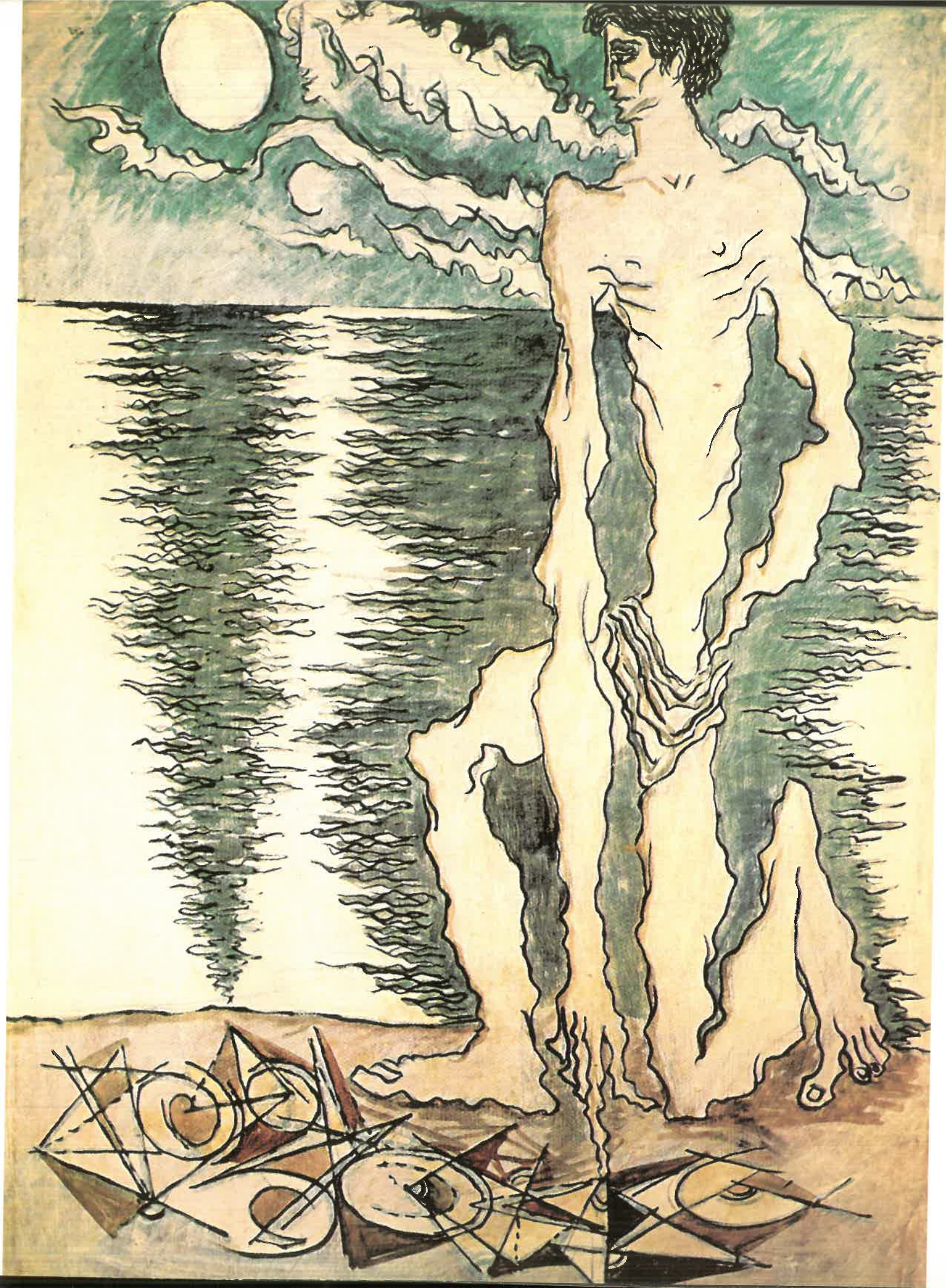
Translation

You and your obsession with the curls of your hair
But I am concerned of the unexpected surprises that await us

Illustration / Interpretation

This couplet can be read as though a lover is contrasting the difference between him and his difficult-to-please beloved. The first line, in the words of the lover, describes the beloved as only absorbed in self-adulation, such as total obsession with his hairdo. The second line is a soft complaint by the lover, in which he admits his preoccupation with the burden of proof on his shoulders to solve the mysteries of the universe. Sadequain's imagery is simple but clearly depicts the illusionary muse floating up in the sky with its hair flowing freely in the air. One character is kneeling on the ground, carelessly attired, but absorbed in solving the geometric diagrams drawn in the sand.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ►



تُو اور ارا عشقِ کاکُل
میں اور اندیشہٴ دور دراز

Transliteration

*Tu Aur Aaraesh-e-Kham-e-Kakul
Mein Aur Andesha Hai Dur Daraz*

Translation

You and your obsession with the curls of your hair
I am concerned of the unexpected surprises that await us

Illustration / Interpretation

This painting is a second rendition of the same couplet on the previous page. The text on the previous page is repeated here. This couplet can be read as though a lover is contrasting the difference between him and his difficult-to-please beloved. The first line, in the words of the lover, describes the beloved as only absorbed in self-adulation, such as total obsession with his hairdo. The second line is a soft complaint by the lover, in which he admits his preoccupation with the burden of proof on his shoulders to solve the mysteries of the universe. Sadequain's imagery is simple but clearly depicts the illusionary muse floating up in the sky with its hair floating in the air. One character is kneeling on the ground, carelessly attired, but absorbed in solving the geometric diagrams drawn in the sand.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ▶



ہم نے مانا کہ تغافل نہ کرو گے، لیکن
خاک ہو جائیگی ہم، تم کو خبر ہوئے تک

Transliteration

Ham Nay Mana Keh Taghaful Na Karo Gay Lekin
Khakh Ho Jaengay Ham Tum Ko Khabar Honey Tak

Translation

I trust that you would not neglect me intentionally
But what if I perish by the time you acknowledge your neglect

Illustration / Interpretation

This couplet is a soft complaint by the lover after realization of the potentially dreadful end. The first line states: "Well, let's assume that you are right, and that you will not forget your commitment." The second line expresses the fear that if the promise is not kept, that would result in great deal of bodily and mental discomfort to the lover, which by the time is conveyed to the beloved, could be too late for the lover's good. The essence of the couplet is an expression of extreme devotion of the lover, who lives only for the beloved and cannot endure separation, for that could be fatal. Sadequain, in his depiction of the concept, paints the lover reduced to a skeleton in a sitting position, being consumed by blackbirds, which are picking on its vital remains. It is said that it is sometimes hope that keeps one alive by providing the will-power to fight against the odds. And even if one loses the battle, he leaves the world with a flare and a sense of fulfillment.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ►



سلطنت دست به دست آئی ہے
جامِ مے خاتمِ ہمشید نہیں

Transliteration

*Saltanat Dast-ba-Dast Aai Hai
Jaam-e-May Khatim-e-Jamshed Nahi*

Translation

The empire has been handed down through inheritance
A goblet of wine cannot be the cause of its downfall

Illustration / Interpretation

The first line declares that the speaker has apparently been handed down an empire through legitimate inheritance. It is implied that the speaker is not someone who has acquired it illegally or by the luck of a draw in a lottery. This statement helps establish his lineage to royalty, which has presumably maintained its status through the highs and lows of times. It is interesting to note that the term empire may be used as a metaphor for the wealth of knowledge and skill that Ghalib had inherited from his ancestors. The second line is in defiance of those who admonished him against intoxication and warned that it could cause irreparable damage and may even result in total loss of what had been handed down (to someone who does not deserve it). Ghalib, it is known, used to indulge to the consternation of many, but it is also a fact that some of his most beautiful poetry was composed while he was under the influence.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ▶



تماشا کر اے محو آئینہ داری
تجھے کس سے منا ہے ہم دیکھتے ہیں

Transliteration

Tamasha Kar Aey Mehway Aaena Dari
Tujhey Kiss Tamanna Say Hum Dekhtey Hein

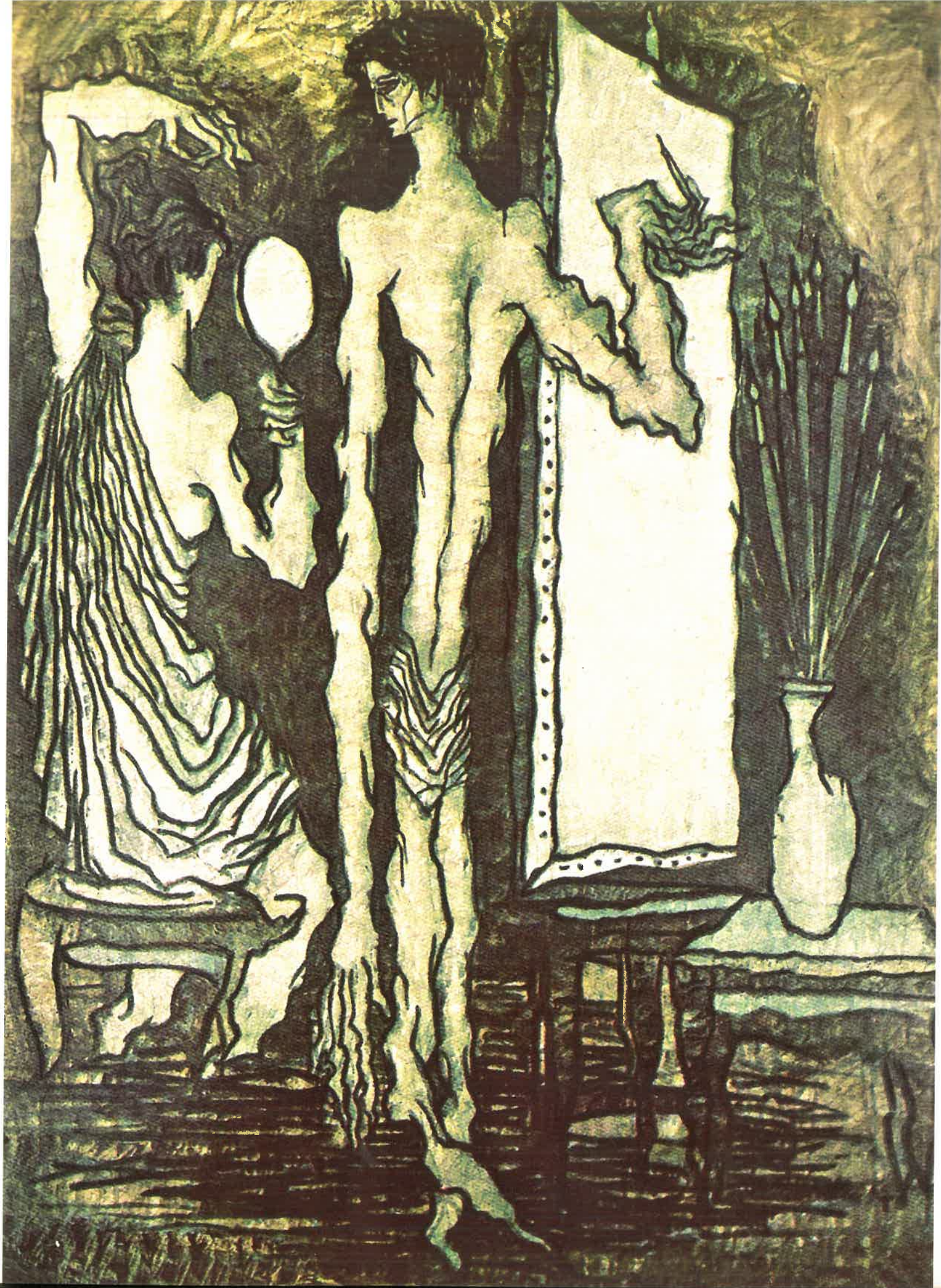
Translation

Absorbed in admiration of your vanity in the mirror
Can you sense the longing in my eyes that are focused only on you

Illustration / Interpretation

This illustration epitomizes the spirit of Urdu *ghazal*, which literarily means talking of the opposite sex, talking to the opposite sex, praise of the opposite sex, or the chant of the lover to lament the indifference of the beloved. Sadequain portrays the female character of the verse as apparently absorbed in self-adulation and continues to view herself in the mirror while showing utter disregard for her admirer, who is gazing at her with affection and devotion, and desperately hoping to draw her attention. The hopeless lover is disappointed but resigned to his fate and cannot help but to continue loving nonetheless. The image of the hopeless lover is a self-portrait of Sadequain, equipped with his painting supplies and preparing to pay the ultimate tribute by drawing a portrait of the object of his desire.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ▶



ہے تیوری پڑھی ہوئی، اندر لقا کے
ہے اک شکن پڑی ہوئی، طرفِ لقا میں

Transliteration

*Hai Taeveri Charhi Hoi Under Naqaab Kay
Hai Ek Shikan Pari Hui Tarfe-Naqaab Mein*

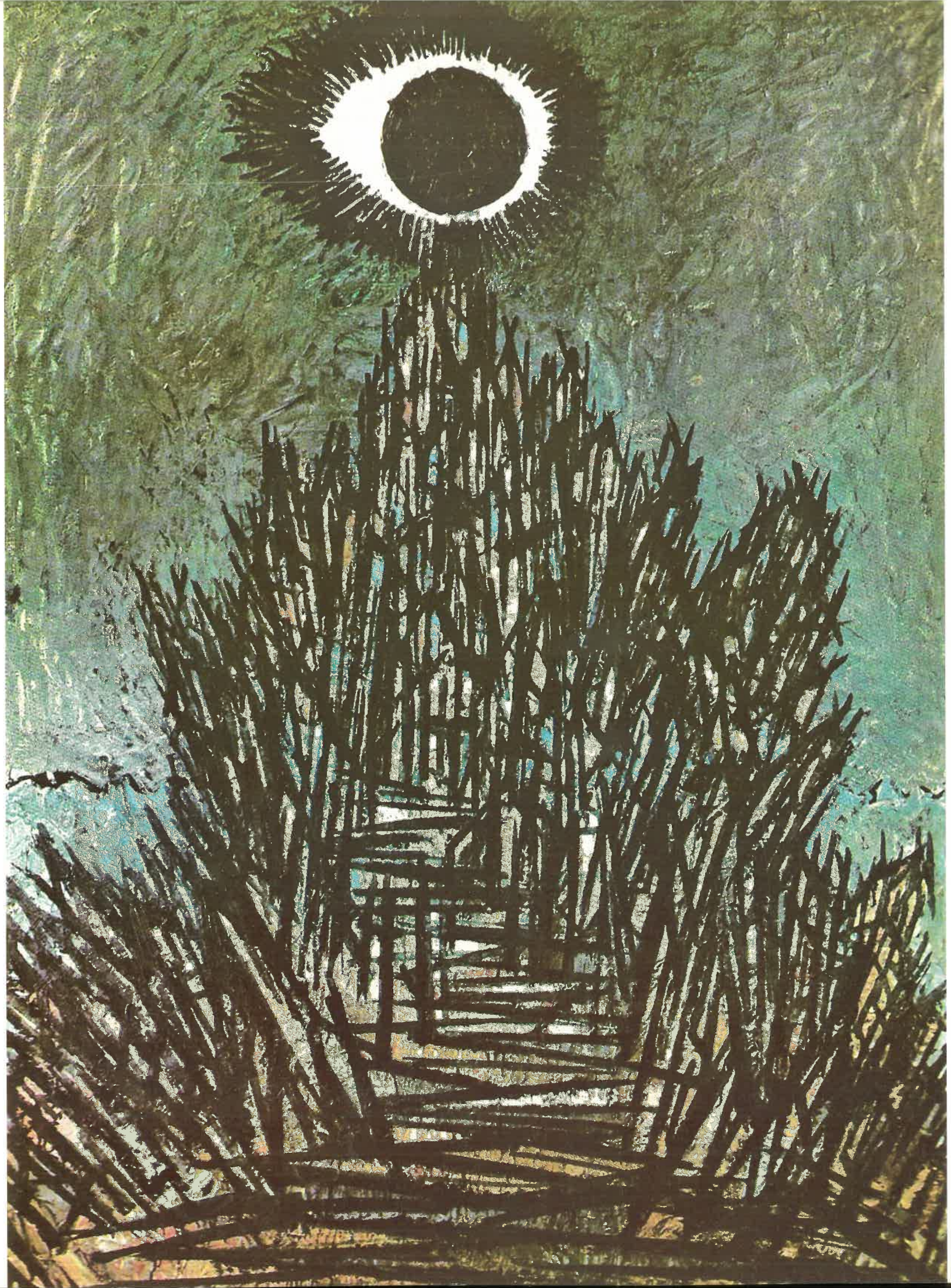
Translation

The countenance is lined with wrinkles of deep tension
Tension is deep enough to cause wrinkles in the veil

Illustration / Interpretation

Sadequain's abstract imagery illustrates an abstract couplet, which speaks of tension, perhaps due to some unpleasant occurrence, that did not meet the approval of the veiled character. The severity of the tension has caused creases on the countenance with such prominence that they are even visible from outside the veil. The veil in turn has also undergone a transformation and reflects the tension through its own deep creases. It is theorized that a person can radiate his feelings and cast a shadow on his surroundings. A happy person will radiate joyous feelings where as a pensive person will cast a somber mood upon those who are in close proximity.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ▶



سب سے کہاں کچھ لالہ گل میں نمایاں ہو گئیں
خاک میں کیا صورتیں ہونگی کہ پنہاں ہو گئیں

Transliteration

*Sab Kahan Kuch Lala-o-Gul Mein Numayaan Ho Gaeen
Khakh Mein Kia Soorratein Hongi Keh Pinhaan Ho Gaeen*

Translation

Not all, but only a few can blossom in the form of daffodils
But how many prospects stay buried forever in the ground

Illustration / Interpretation

Ghalib composed this couplet to lament about his son's demise at a very young age. Ghalib had several off springs, but none of them survived beyond infancy. The couplet captures a broad subject in two lines that normally would require chapters to illustrate: the trials and tribulations of the harsh realities of life. The first line draws the attention to the fact that not all, but only a select few get the opportunity in life to reach their potential. Applying a metaphor, Ghalib argues that only a few seedlings survive and attain the colorful form of beautiful flowers, but there are countless seeds that, in spite of having potential, perish under the dirt without ever surfacing above the ground. How many among us can relate our experiences of near misses, being at the wrong place at the wrong time, and only if for a slight change in the circumstance, it would have made a world of difference? Sadequain's imagery depicts the fortunate ones by a blooming flower shrub standing tall and bushy, but underneath the surface a somber silhouette is a reminder of the dreams that never materialized.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ▶



ننید اُس کہ ہر داغ اُس کا ہی راتیں اُس کہ ہیں
تری زلفیں جس کے بازو پر لیشان ہو گئیں

Transliteration

Neend Us Ki Hai, Dimagh Us Ka Hai, Ratein Us Ki Hein
Teri Zulfein Jis Kay Bazoo Par Pareshaan Ho Gaeen

Translation

Restful slumber, peaceful mind, and tranquil nights belong to the one
Whose shoulders does your silky long hair caress

Illustration / Interpretation

This couplet represents the ultimate state of contentment a lover would experience if only the tresses of the beloved were to spread over his shoulders. The first line stresses the various forms of gratification that one can attain by enjoying a peaceful spell of slumber, ultimate mental relaxation, and pleasure of romantic nights. The second line spells out that only if the object of affection would place her head on the shoulder (of the lover), let her hair down so they would softly caress in a careless manner, would such a state be achieved. Sadequain drew the imagery based on the playing card style, which he also used in his famous playing card series of paintings. The composition is simple but expressive and conveys the emotional intensity of the verse.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ►



قفس میں مجھ سے رواد چمن کہتے نہ درہم!
گرا جسے کل بجلی وہ میرا آشیان کیوں ہو

Transliteration

Qafas Mein Mujh Say Rudade-Chaman Kahtey Na Dar Hamdam
Giri Hai Jis Pay Kal Bigli Woh Mera Aashian Kuyun Ho

Translation

O' friend, do not hesitate to narrate the travails the garden has endured
The nest that was hit by the lightening yesterday, why would it be my nest

Illustration / Interpretation

Sadequain's imagery illustrates a recurring concept in Urdu poetry, which is replete with a somber mood on one hand, hope and optimism on the other. While locked in a cage, the narrator of these two lines, metaphorically a bird in confinement, encourages his confidant not to hesitate in describing the details of the unfortunate circumstances of the garden. Simply because a lightning strike had destroyed many shelters in the garden does not necessarily mean that his shelter was among them. In the extreme set of unfortunate circumstances, the narrator shows an ultimate sense of optimism, puts up a brave front, encourages his "mate" to be bold, and stays optimistic against the odds. The couplet encapsulates a message of optimism in the face of staggering odds. It is the hope that provides impetus of sustained struggle and a will to survive.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ▶



سیکھے ہیں ماہِ رُخوون کیلئے ہم، مِصَوّری
تقریبِ کچھ تو بہرِ مُلاقاات سے چاہیے

Transliteration

Seekhey Hein Maen Rukhoon Kay Liey Ham Musawwari
Taareeb Kuch To Behre-Mulaqaat Chae-ey

Translation

I have learned to paint for the sake of beautiful people
There must be an excuse to approach the good-looking

Illustration / Interpretation

This couplet is a commentary on social mannerism and human nature. It is said that one of the most effective forms of flattery is to praise with profusion, and if the same concept is carried over to the realm of painting, then a portrait can do wonders. Ghalib confesses that he has received training in drawing because that skill lends him an excuse to meet beautiful people who enjoy being portrayed by him. Ghalib's ability to sketch and people's weakness of self-adulation thus converge to serve the egos of both parties. But of course Ghalib never took drawing lessons. He is cleverly utilizing a strong metaphor to expose the weakness of the two sides; one is laden with lust and the other with self-adulation.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ▶



سرپائے خم چہ چاہیے ہنگام بخودی
روسوعے قبلہ وقت مناجات چاہیے

Transliteration

*Sar Pa-ey Kham Pay Chahe-ey Hangaam-e-Bekhudi
Ru Suey Qibla Waqt-e-Munajaat Chahe-ey*

Translation

The head must rest in a peaceful stance at the time of indulgence
The face must turn toward *Qibla* at the prayer time

Illustration / Interpretation

The saying, "A place for everything and everything in its place," can perhaps best sum up this couplet. Sadequain also wrote a quatrain to address this concept, which can be roughly translated as, "The locks of a beloved radiate only on her head, but if they are found in the soup, then even the most devoted lover would find them repulsive." The first line of Ghalib's couplet states that one can indulge in restful intoxication at a carefree moment, but at the time of praying, one must conform and face toward the *Qibla*.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ►



گردشِ سا غصہء جلوہ زبکین تجھ سے
آئینہ داروں یک دیدِ حیرانِ مجھ سے

Transliteration

*Gardish-e-Saghare-Sad-Jalwa-e-Rangeen Tujh Say
Aaena Dari Yak Deeda-e-Hairaan Mujh Say*

Translation

Decanter of hundreds of colors moves in elegant stride for you
Astonished, I can only gaze in the mirror

Illustration / Interpretation

In an ultimate ode, Ghalib attributes the poetic movement of the decanter of hundreds of colors to serenade the beloved. In the second line he pleads modesty and admits that he is overwhelmed and can only cast a curious gaze. In the true spirit of Urdu *ghazal*, Ghalib heaps praise upon the beloved and declares his own humility, which renders him in an acute state of awkwardness, and only allows him with the ability to stare in wonderment. Sadequain's abstract imagery focuses upon the emotions of the verse and depicts its objective in a masterful stroke.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ►



میرے غم خانے کی قسمت جب رقم ہوئے گی
لکھ دیا منجملہ اسباب ویرانی مجھے

Transliteration

Maerey Gham Khaney Ki Qismat Jab Raqam Honey Lagee
Likh Diya Minjumla Asbab-e-Weerani Mujhay

Translation

When the fate of my abode was scripted
All kinds of miseries were heaped on me

Illustration / Interpretation

At the moment, when the fate of my house of sorrow was cast in stone, all possible miseries were heaped on it. In a reflective mood, Ghalib ponders that it was perhaps he who brought about the misfortune to the unfortunate abode. He implies that no matter what the unfortunate man does, calamity would follow his track and bring about misfortune, misery and suffering. He reluctantly admits that fate is predetermined and it will not alter once it is cast in stone.



گو ہاتھ کو جنبش نہیں آنکھوں میں تو دم ہے
رہنے دوا بھی ساغر و مینا مرے آگے

Transliteration

Go Hath Ko Junbish Naheen Aankhoon Mein To Dam Hai
Rehnay Do Abhi Saghar-o-Meena Marey Aagey

Translation

Though I cannot move my hands, my eyes can still see
Do not move the decanter and goblet, but leave them beside me

Illustration / Interpretation

Ghalib, knowingly or unknowingly, makes a medically correct statement in a poetic expression. The lover is portrayed in the final state of worldly existence. He states that although he has lost movement in his hands, he can still see. In the second line he pleads with the attendant not to remove, but leave the decanter and the wine glass in front of him. Even if he can not hold the wine glass and raise it to his lips, he can still draw satisfaction from the sight and from the knowledge that they would be available if he could only afford them.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ►



سُہنے لے پروا خریدار متا، جَلوہ ہے
آئینہ زانوے فکرِ اخترانِ جَلوہ ہے

Transliteration

*Husn-e-Bay Parwa Kharidare-Muta-e-Jalwa Hai
Aayena Zano-e-Fikre-Ikhtera-e-Jalwa Hai*

Translation

Careless beauty wants to show off at any cost
But the mirror is in search for sensibility in the show

Illustration / Interpretation

In an ingratiating gesture, the careless beauty is intent on acquiring, at any price, the magnanimous allure to enhance its regal stance. The mirror, on the other hand, to draw esthetic pleasure from the sensuous sight, patiently waits for the moment of reckoning.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ►



سُورِ بے پروا خریدارِ متاعِ جلوه ہے
آئینہ زالوئے فکرِ اختراعِ جلوه ہے

Transliteration

*Husn-e-Bay Parwa Kharidare-Muta-e-Jalwa Hai
Aayena Zano-e-Fikre-Ikhtera-e-Jalwa Hai*

Translation

Careless beauty wants to show off at any cost
But the mirror is in search for sensibility in the show

Illustration / Interpretation

Sadequain illustrated this verse in two different styles. The illustration is repeated for reference. In an ingratiating gesture, the careless beauty is intent on acquiring, at any price, the magnanimous allure to enhance its regal stance. The mirror, on the other hand, to draw esthetic pleasure from the sensuous sight, patiently waits for the moment of reckoning.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ►





Transliteration

*Bharam Khul Jae Zalim Tarey Qamat Ki Darazi Ka
Aagar Is Turra-e-Pur-Pech-o-Kham Ka Pech-o-Kham Niklay*

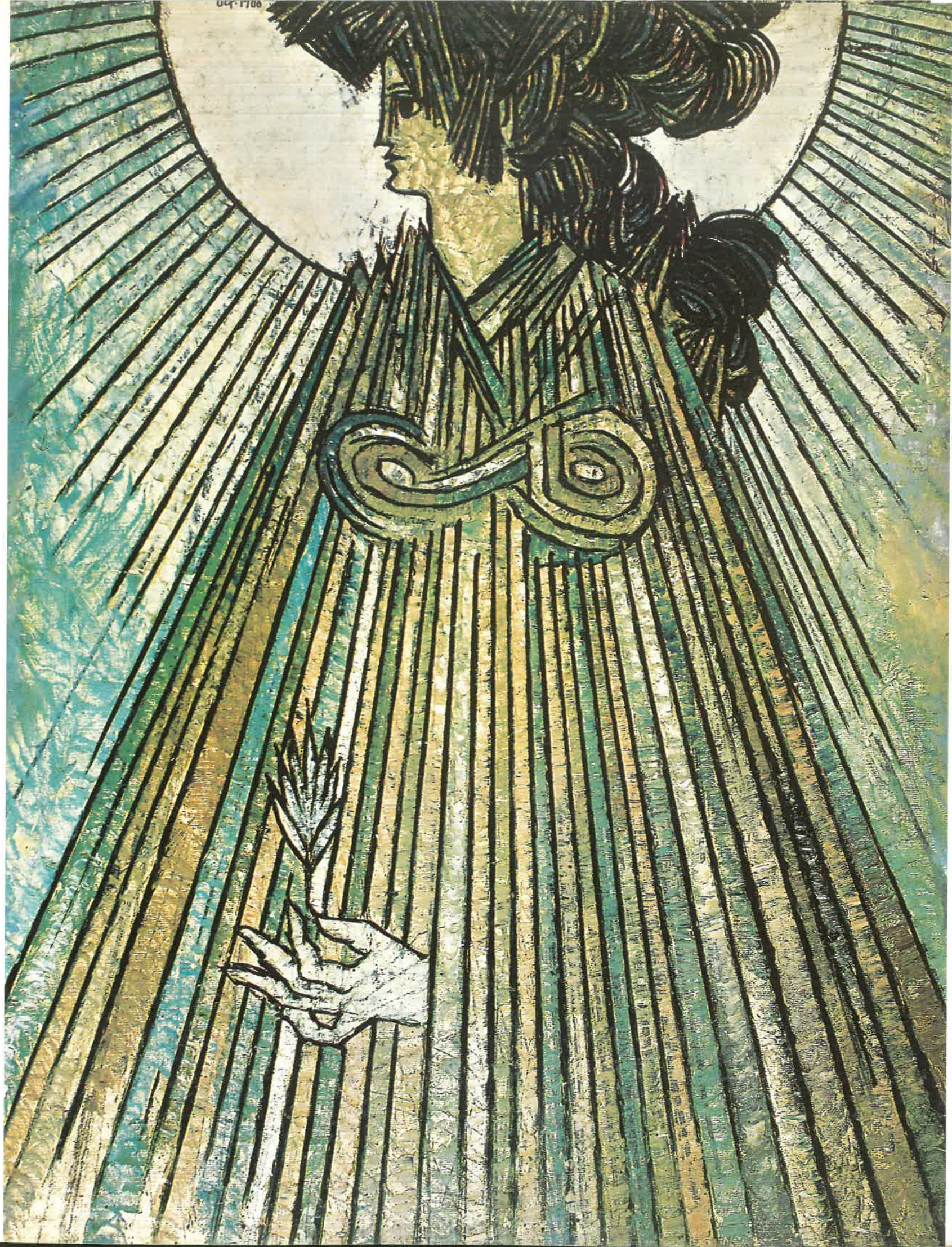
Translation

The secret of your façade, O' assassin, will be exposed
Only if the curls of your locks were undone

Illustration / Interpretation

The best way to illustrate this couplet is to borrow from the old adage, "Do not judge a book by its cover." The first line states, that the illusion of the regal stance of the subject will be exposed. The second line, in a wishful manner, states that only if the curls, the swirls, and the tangled locks of the subject were untangled that would cut him down to size. Sadequain has captured the conjecture by drawing the hairdo of the character in an elaborate style and wraps an ostentatious gown to project a pompous image. Ghalib has commented on the fake facade, which many wear to pose as someone they are not. Perhaps posing as an imposter would allow them access to what they otherwise would not have. In another couplet, Ghalib said about himself, that he sometimes pretends to be a beggar only to witness first hand the pretentious games people play.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ▶



تج آپری، ودا دل ارکے مجھے
وہ آئے یا نہ آئے یہ پاں انتظار ہے

Transliteration

*Pech Aa Pari Hai Wada-e-Dildar Ki Mujhey
Woh Aayeh Ya Nah Aayeh Pa Yan Intezar Hai*

Translation

Her promise to visit is the cause of my dilemma
Whether she would come or not, but I must wait for her

Illustration / Interpretation

This complex painting illustrates the abstract lyrical impetus of the poem derived from the devotional attachment of the lover who cannot let go of his hope that his beloved would turn up as promised. The possibility still exists that she may not turn up at all, but it is not enough to deter the lover from hoping against hope that she just might surprise him. He seemed to have no choice but to continue his vigil and wait for her to come and reward his undeterred love. The image of a man impatiently gazing at the hour glass, the flickering flame of the candle placed in the niche, while the brightly shining stars in the sky allude to the long hours this man has endured, but he is patiently maintaining his vigil.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ►



ہیں کواکب چمکے نظر آتے ہیں چمکے
دیتے ہیں دھوکہ یہ بازیگر کھلا

Transliteration

Hein Kawakib Kuch Nazar Aatey Hein Kuch
Detay Hein Dhoka Yeh Bazigar Khula

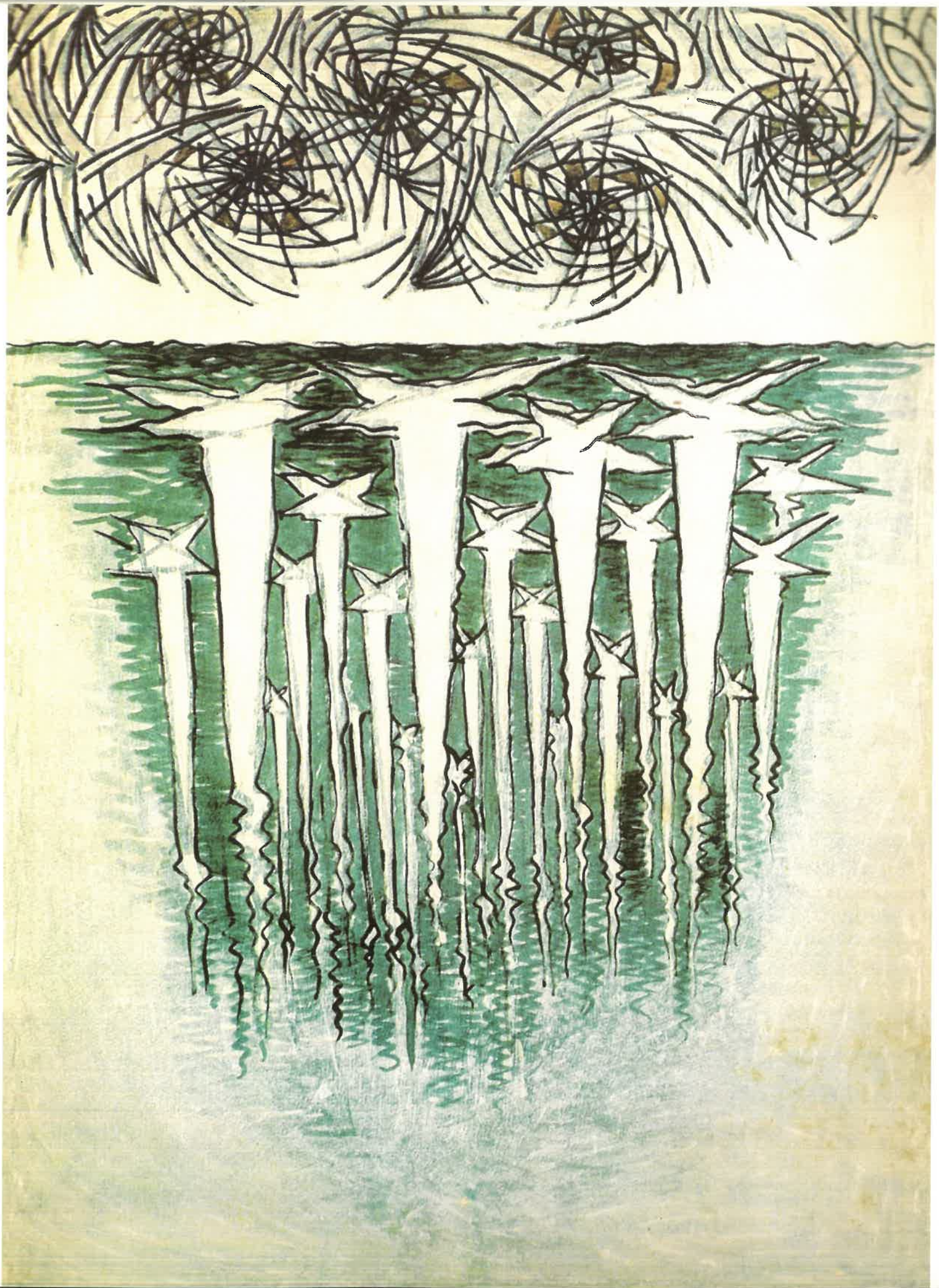
Translation

The sparkling stars are not what they appear to be
These illusionists openly deceive us all

Illustration / Interpretation

The stars are not what they appear to be, declares the first line of this couplet. How true, that the romance attached to many stars and the moon, is predicated upon a perception, that the twinkling wonders in the sky sparkle in peace and tranquility, where as the truth can not be any further. Ghalib equates the illusion cast by the stars to betrayal of trust, which could result in disappointment at minimum and even dangerous in the worst case. Ghalib has addressed this theme in other couplets as well, in one of which he wondered why those celestial bodies up in the sky, which were veiled during the day, had a transformation during the night, when they opted to reveal and started to sparkle.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968 ►



کنج میں بیٹھا رہوں یوں پر کھلا
کاش کہ ہوتا قفس کا در کھلا

Transliteration

Kunj Mein Baitha Rahoon Yun Par Khula
Kash Keh Hota Qafas Ka Dar Khula

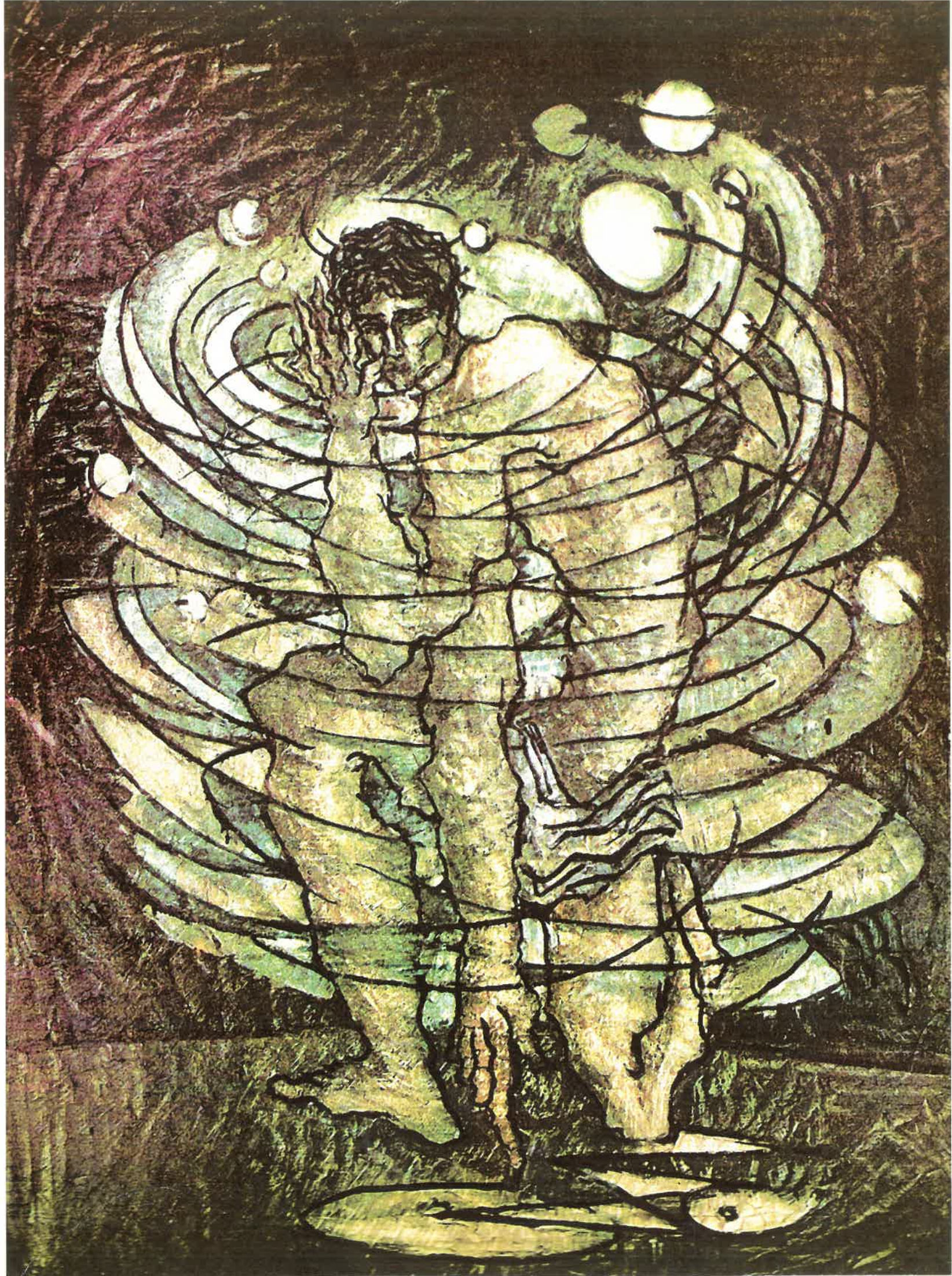
Translation

My wings are ready for flight, but I am confined
How I wish the door of the cage was open

Illustration / Interpretation

The couplet poses a question in the first line. How long do I have to sit and wait? My wings are poised to take a flight (but I can not launch into the free air, because the door of the cage is locked). The second line laments: I wish the door was open so I could escape from the cage to my freedom. There have been many interpretations of this couplet by many scholars, and such has been the case with most of Ghalib's poetry because of its deep philosophical contents. Out of the multiple interpretations of this couplet, Sadequain illustrated one possible explanation, alluding to the prevailing conditions of dismay and mistrust, the cage being a metaphor for confinement. The essence of the seemingly simple couplet is that many, who are disadvantaged, long to take a flight to freedom, but find they are confined to suffocating circumstances. They feel trapped in a manner similar to a bird which is condemned to confinement in a cage.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Ghalib. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1968



Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938)

Iqbal is one of the preeminent scholars of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. He has in fact been called as the most serious Muslim writer, poet and philosopher of modern times. He is held in high esteem as a poet and philosopher by his admirers around the globe. Iqbal's poetry and philosophy are mutually inclusive; they do not exist in isolation from each other, but as an integral part of each other. His poetry serves as a vehicle for his philosophical thought.

Iqbal's message took a three-pronged approach: His Urdu and Persian poetry represents the most compelling example of enlightened thought, an exquisite collection of motivational lyrics exemplifying the richness of Islamic literature. On a different plane, through his probing prose, he maintained a balance due to a paradigm shift in the religious approach to modernism. And as a political and social reformer, he rose to his civic responsibilities, which are documented in the annals of socio-political history.

A reader of Iqbal's poetry is awe-inspired by its sheer thematic depth and variety. Iqbal was engaged in the intellectual probes that have intrigued the best of inquisitive minds of mankind for ages — the issues of the secrets of life, evolution, survival and freedom of the body and soul. In his poetry, he deals eloquently with these and many other issues that concern the human race.

In a frequently occurring motif, Iqbal's poetry and prose continuously exhort human beings to a sustained quest to achieve perfection. "There are more universes that exist beyond the stars," he wrote in one of his famous poems. Iqbal wished human beings to embark on a never-ending journey of exploration and discovery, and to this end he emphasized the importance of relentless action.

Iqbal authored *Bange-Dera*, *Bal-e-Jibreel*, *Zarb-e-Kaleem*, *Reconstruction of Islamic Thought*, *Khudi*, and *Rammoz-e-Khudi*.



Portrait of Iqbal by Sadequain

Transliteration

Digar Dana-e-Raz Aayad Keh Na-Aayad

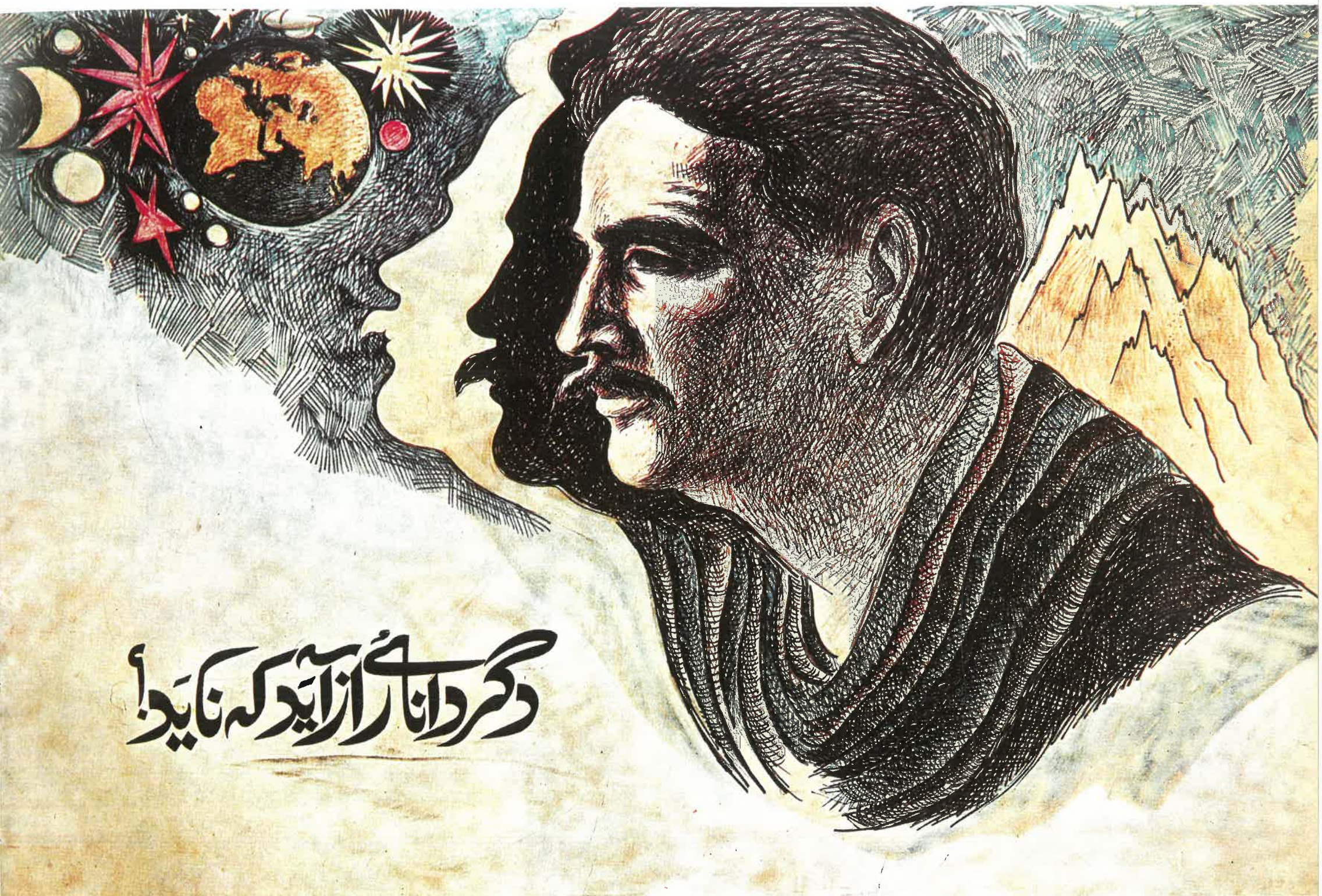
Translation

A genius, who can decipher the mysteries of life, may or may not be born again

Illustration / Interpretation

The singular line enquires if someone (like Iqbal), an all-encompassing educator, motivator, philosopher, poet, scholar, thinker, visionary, writer and a lot more things to a lot more people, will ever be born again. Iqbal addressed in his poetry many facets of life which challenged the Muslim Nation.

This portrait is a unique painting in Sadequain's portfolio. Although most capable, he did not do many portraits by choice, because imitation did not inspire him. A few exceptions to this rule included the portraits of his mother, brothers, other family members, Josh Malihabadi, and a few acquaintances. This portrait of Iqbal is not a replica of the countless images that are in common circulation. This is strictly Sadequain's unique interpretation of Iqbal's persona. The likeness of the character apart, this profile in repose is strictly Sadequain's own interpretation. This is Sadequain's personally defined profile; contemplating eyes are focused and the multiple shadows probably define the complex multi-dimensionality of Iqbal. In the background can be seen where it all began; the Himalaya Mountains were the topic of the first poem he composed and recited in a gathering in Lahore at the age of 18. Now in the role of a visionary, Iqbal has his eyes set on the stars shown in the foreground. His shadow is turned toward his intended destination, which he pointedly alluded to in his poetry, when he said, "There are more universes that exist beyond the stars." As a matter of art history, this is Sadequain's second rendition to pay homage to Iqbal, the first being Iqbal's portrait in the mural, "Treasures of Time," which he executed in 1961.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Transliteration

Suraiyya

Translation

Name of a bright star

This painting symbolizes the concepts of quest for knowledge and power of expression bestowed upon mankind, lending color and movement to the universe.

Illustration / Interpretation

Iqbal was a poet-philosopher. Having traveled the world during his studies in Europe, and later visits to Spain and the Middle East, he contemplated the history of the Muslim Nation and it saddened him to observe its poor state. The defeat of the Mughal Empire in the East and the demolition of the Ottoman Empire in the West, and other unfortunate incidents weighed heavily on him. A critical thinker, he consistently reminded the Muslims about their glorious past, encouraged them to follow the examples of their past generations and prodded them to regain their old glory. The foundation of success is built upon knowledge, he would exhort, which Sadequain has symbolized in the painting by the image of a book held by a distinguished looking man. Iqbal reminded that knowledge would lead to wisdom, power and higher aspirations, which Sadequain has symbolized in the painting by the figure of a female floating out of a picture frame.

If the collection of Iqbal's illustrations by Sadequain were compiled in one book, this painting would be its title. Sadequain has comprehensively captured Iqbal's message in this untitled painting in an ingenious stroke. Not congested with unnecessary imagery, he portrayed the concept of "quest for knowledge" in the form of a dignified figure, draped in simple Grecian attire, devoid of all accessories including shoes on his feet, holding high the book of knowledge. The image of a female emerging out of a picture frame is a concept borrowed from the illustration of Ghalib's poetry, which Sadequain painted in 1968. In this version, Sadequain has refined the features of the figure, which were left in an abstract form in Ghalib's illustration and he has draped the figure in garments rather than a paper dress. The concept of the paper dress alludes to humility and temporary nature of the state of affairs. The long and curly tresses of the female figure blend into the surrounding forms of the composition as one, which are wavy and curly, in circles and semi-circles, moving freely in the surrounding space in vibrant colors. The movement of the lines guides the eyes of the viewer on an ecstatic journey, stimulating the senses, reaching to the far corners of the universe, where the exploding planets appear so close. The female figure seems to be stepping out of one of the planets, *Suraiyya*, which was part of Iqbal's lexicon.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Untitled

Illustration / Interpretation

Those familiar with Sadequain's work can recognize this composition, which he repeated on at least one other occasion. In this painting, he captures the mysteries of the universe, man's purpose on Earth and all that lies ahead of him. However, he can be excused for the repetition, because the subject he is addressing has also come full circle.

Three male characters, representing three generations, presumably define mankind. If this was indeed Sadequain's intention, then the absence of a female character is prominent, and raises the obvious question about the omission.

The three characters are depicted traversing through the space, exploring new frontiers, moving forward and onward. The senior most of the three is shown pointing and directing the efforts of the other two. The imagery is repetitious and carries Iqbal's recurring theme, in which he exhorts mankind to rise for the occasion and think creatively to explore the unknown.

If we were to relate one of Iqbal's verses to this painting, there are many viable candidates, of which one could be the following:

Transliteration

*Meh-o-Sitaray Say Aagay Maqaam Hai Jis Ka
Woh Musht-e-Khak Aabhi Aawaregan-e-Rah Mein Hai*

Translation

The one, whose destiny lies beyond the stars
That creature of clay, is yet wandering on the pathway



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Transliteration

*Mehr-o-Mah-o-Anjum Ka Mahasib Hai Qalandar
Ayyam Ka Murkeb Naheen Rakib Hai Qalandar*

Translation

Qalandar commands the company of the sun and the moon
He is not driven by the turning of the day or night

Illustration / Interpretation

Sufism or *tasawwuf*, as it is called in the Persian language, is generally understood by scholars and Sufis to be the esoteric, inner, mystical, or psycho-spiritual dimension of Islam. It literarily means surrender to God, which involves embracing with devotion the content of one's consciousness, as well as one's sense of physical self as manifestations of God.

One of the challenges to illustrate this verse is to have a comprehension of the concepts of Sufism and belief in the Sufi order. Sadequain, in his writings and drawings, has abundantly paid homage to Sarmad, one of the leading Sufi figures of the sub-continent. The imagery in this painting captures Iqbal's assertion that Sufi is the master of time and space and the act of turning of the day and night does not control the life of a Sufi saint, or a *Qalandar*.

Sadequain's imagery is captivating. The character is absorbed and focused, looking straightforward. He does not pay much attention to vanity, glittery attire or ostentatious appearance. What matters to him is the inside and not the outer appearance. He has in his control the turning of the day and night and the elements are wrapped around his finger, depicted by the cloud of an elliptical orbit above his head. He is shown riding the horses, the time machines, stepping over the planets, leaving in his dust the nine planets of the solar system, clearly shown with their respective names inscribed on them. The caption of the painting is inscribed in the lower left hand corner, in front of the man riding the horse with a head of a time machine.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Transliteration

HAQ

Translation

The ultimate truth

Illustration / Interpretation

This painting elaborates upon the ultimate truth in a time capsule. Literature and poetry, influenced by Sufi mystique, have existed for centuries, enriched by the wealth of intellect that not every man can fathom. Iqbal, inspired by the Sufi saints of the past, vociferously eulogized their teachings in his poetry. He believed their perception was deep, their knowledge was vast, and their teachings were in accord with divine law. Sufism, according to him, embodied the inner dimension of Islamic archetypes and has its own theocratic symbolism. Iqbal, in his search for truth, took the teachings of Sufism and used them to define the essentials of a way of life for the believers and equated them to complete devotion to the Creator. To a believer of the Sufi order, both the ritual of worship and the practice of a craft with honesty are akin to answering the call of the Creator. And thus, Iqbal's poetic interpretation of the mysteries of the universe became the vehicle of conveying the teachings of Islam.

Sadequain's imagery is meant to ponder the age-old questions; what is the truth, what is the meaning of life, what is the answer to the mysteries of life and death, and what is the purpose of the planets and stars? This painting carries forth the Sufi traditional belief in the wealth of knowledge; a traveler seemingly on a theosophical plane above the tangible, demonstrating control of total mental discipline. By extension, Sufi interpretation of diverse elements, such as geometry of time and space, and intellectual expression provide intuitive understanding of the common thread between spirituality and life. The word *Haq* carried a special meaning to Sadequain. A non-practicing Sufi, but deeply influenced by the concept, he acquired deep knowledge of the teachings of Sufism. He profusely spoke of *Haq*, fervently wrote about it and illustrated it with abundance in his paintings.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Transliteration

Untitled

Theme

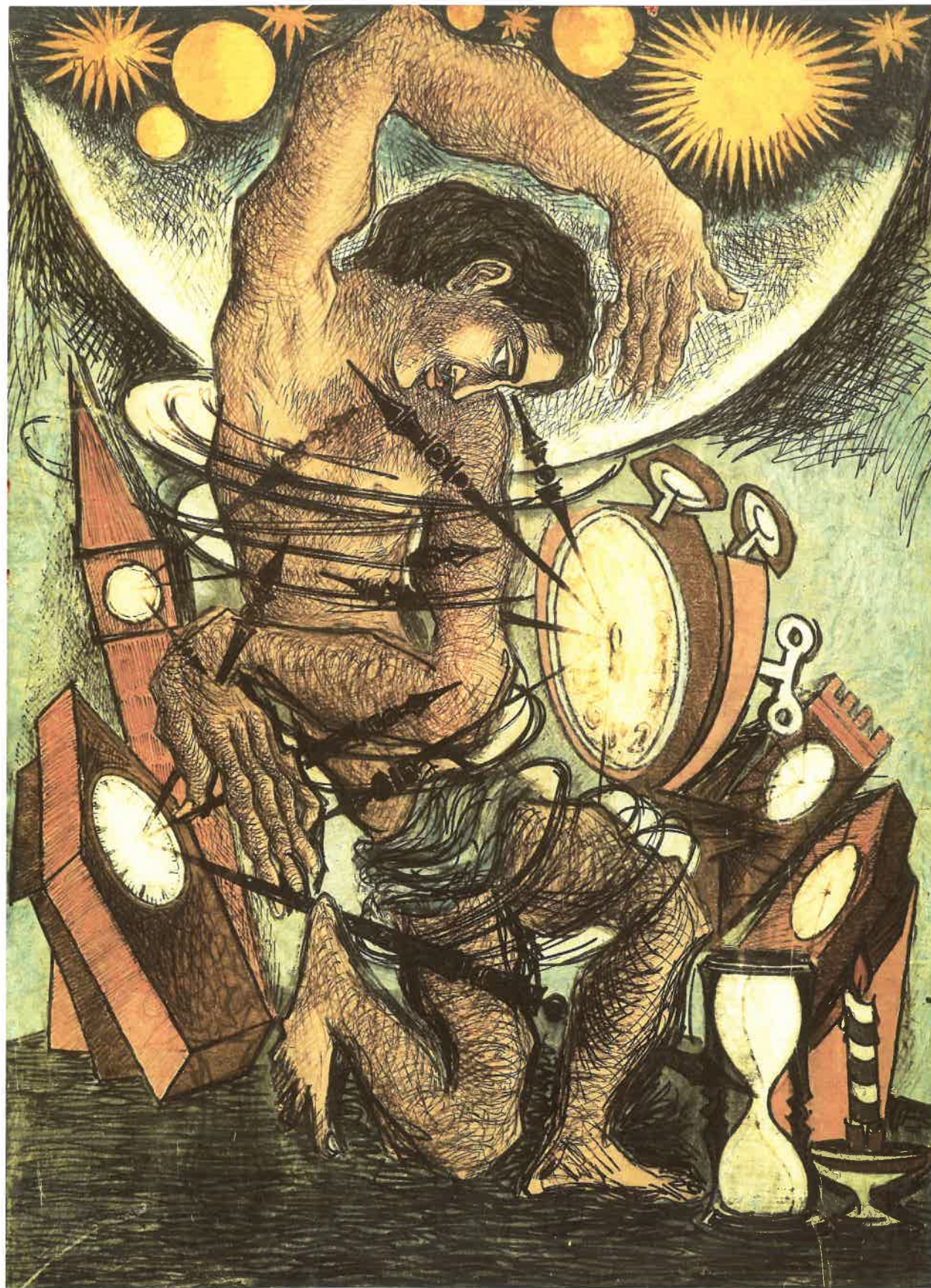
The universe, time and space

Illustration / Interpretation

Sufi beliefs lead to sublime devotion to a higher order faith. Apart from its spirituality, Sufism guides one on the path to an unexplored plateau through the exalted gateway of self-examination and helps reach the pinnacle achievement that culminates in a deep devotional trance. Mysticism can influence a Sufi and elevate him into a mystical transfixion, which may bring him to a close spiritual encounter with the Creator. This condition may lead to a direct dialogue and seek answers to the mysteries of the universe; the relationship between time and space.

This painting is a Sufi's exploration; seeking the truth about the universe and the existence of God, expressed through Sadequain's artistic interpretation. The result is an extraordinary rendition. Sigmund Freud explored the surreal, the subconscious, and postulated the importance of dreams. Sadequain is known to have traced on paper his dreams in his childhood. He cited interpretations of dreams that allowed him to reflect on life. In this painting, his rational and conscious symbolism, derived perhaps from his dreams, represents a fusion of art, psychology and the incomprehensible, which he used to search for the true meaning of existence. His interpretation, as viewed by a person locked into thinking in the ordinary domain, could appear out of the ordinary and perhaps incoherent at times. But just as with the countless prophecies of the past, it would take an introspective look to fathom the deeper meaning of the interpretation.

At first glance, the piece may appear grotesque, but on closer inspection, however, it proves to contain artistic and philosophical complexities far beyond the expected. Whether portrayed as delusional or reasonable, Sadequain used his faculties to explore the mind and produced an imagery, which only he could have truly created to explain the mystical connections with an ethereal existence.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Transliteration

Aalam-e-Rang-o-Boo

Translation

This universe is composed of color and fragrance (A Sufi's interpretation)

Illustration / Interpretation

The gist of this illustration suggests that a finer dissection of Sufi mysticism defines a process that enables a person to attain a deeper understanding of himself and his soul. Although Sufism involves a great deal of spirituality, it is still an introspective look within, the result of which can only truly be understood by the individual himself.

In this illustration, the singular character shown in the painting has his eyes focused on the higher order, pointing with his index finger toward the expanse of the cosmos and almost reaching far enough to touch it. The imagery is not the literal representation of "universe of color and fragrance," yet it encapsulates the essence of the phrase. Sadequain himself didn't limit his Sufi approach to his paintings; it was applicable to all creative media. His poetry, prose, calligraphies, and even his lifestyle knew of no creative boundaries. He believed that our understanding of the purpose of life and its perceived goals is crucial in guiding us to our true realization. Therefore, the brutal truth illustrated in his paintings, although being real, seemed unorthodox and almost unimaginable to the naked eye.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Transliteration

*Tamanna Aabru Ki Ho Agar Gulzare-Hasti Mein
To Kanton Mein Ulajh Kar Zindagi Karney Ki Kho Karley
Isi Mein Dekh Muzmar Hai Kamale-Zindagi Tera
Jo Tujh Ko Zeenat-e-Daman Koi Aaeena Ru Karley*

Translation

If life was a bed of roses and you desired the respect of your peers
Then dare to endure the agony of walking on the thorns
Mind it; the key to happiness lies in this secret
If a nymphet consents to keep your company

Illustration / Interpretation

This verse is written from the point of view of a flower. It has used the metaphors of a garden to reflect upon the luxuries of life and the thorns to portray the hardships. A paradox, a tenet seemingly contrary to the perceived notion, Iqbal states that if you cherish a rosy life then you must also learn to live among the thorns. Life is not a bed of roses and to succeed in life you should aim high; do not look for shortcuts or easy ways out, and with sustained effort, tread your path forward. For your dedication, you will earn respect and in the end, hardships will give way to peace and comfort. Iqbal admonishes not to deviate from the principles even if one has to walk on a bed of thorns.

The verse points out that happiness means caring. It alludes to the proverbial sweetheart, a fair maiden, who ensures proper countenance by occasional glance at the mirror. Love will prevail and life will prosper. This metaphor may also be interpreted as Iqbal's advice to lead a purposeful life by aiming for an ideal as desirable as a fair maiden.

Sadequain has depicted a young man treading through a field of thorns, wearing a thorny crown. His hands, arms and legs are stung by thorns and begin to bleed. Hidden behind the brown and dry cactus plants, is a greenish bush bearing colorful flowers. The young man spots the flowers surrounded by a nest of thorns and reaches out. In the process, he sustains more scratches and the bleeding continues. He can see a flower, which appears close, but he cannot reach it. Beyond the flower bush is a beautiful maiden crowned with colorful flowers in her hair, holding a mirror in her hand, who attracts the attention of the young man. But how can he reach her; he cannot even reach the flower, which is closer of the two. If only he could overcome the obstacles, then only he would cherish the love and comfort of the company of the fair maiden.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Transliteration

*Dev Istabdad Jamhoori Qaba Mein Pae Kob
Tu Samajhta Hai Yeh Azadi Ki Hai Neelum Pari*

Translation

The evil face of occupation masquerades in the veil of democratic mask
But you are naive and mistake it for an innocent nymph, symbol of promise of freedom

Illustration / Interpretation

Iqbal admonishes those nations, which suffer under the iron fist of the imperial powers, to exercise caution and avoid being trapped in the net of connivance, weaved around them by the usurpers. What the occupiers are plotting, he warns, is to deceive the occupied into a false sense of security under the guise of promise for freedom. They preach equality, but in practice, show total disregard for even basic human dignity. What they are falsely claiming to be the fairy of freedom is in fact the devilish plot of occupation in disguise.

It is infinitely more complex to paint a conceptual subject than to imitate an object. Sadequain was a thinking artist, who illustrated in his paintings, the mysteries of life, socio-economic challenges, the struggles of downtrodden masses, and illustrated with his brush what eminent scholars have done with their pens. Searching for new forms and subjects, he often looked up to those, who provide guidance in the understanding of the mysteries of the universe, such as Sufi scholars Rumi and Iqbal. This painting is rich in symbolism of projection of power portrayed by the domed buildings in the background. The kneeling man, his head kissing the ground, apparently has been in the submissive posture for so long that a crow mistakes his leveled back for a stationary fixture and comfortably lands on it. The *Dev* of the verse is illustrated by a repulsive creature, which is shown trampling over one severed head with his foot and hanging another head in his hand by the hair, the gesture perhaps suggesting decapitation of the ideals of freedom. The weapon with which the crime was committed is in open view of all with impunity, and a mask carried by the perpetrator signifies the irony of his masquerade. The *Dev* is also covered with ostentatious accessories; garlands around the neck, crown on the head, and huge earrings in a shameless exhibition of unbridled access.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Transliteration

Arz-o-Samawat - Aalam-e-Aab-o-Khak-o-Baad, Sere-Ayan Hai Tu Keh Mein

Translation

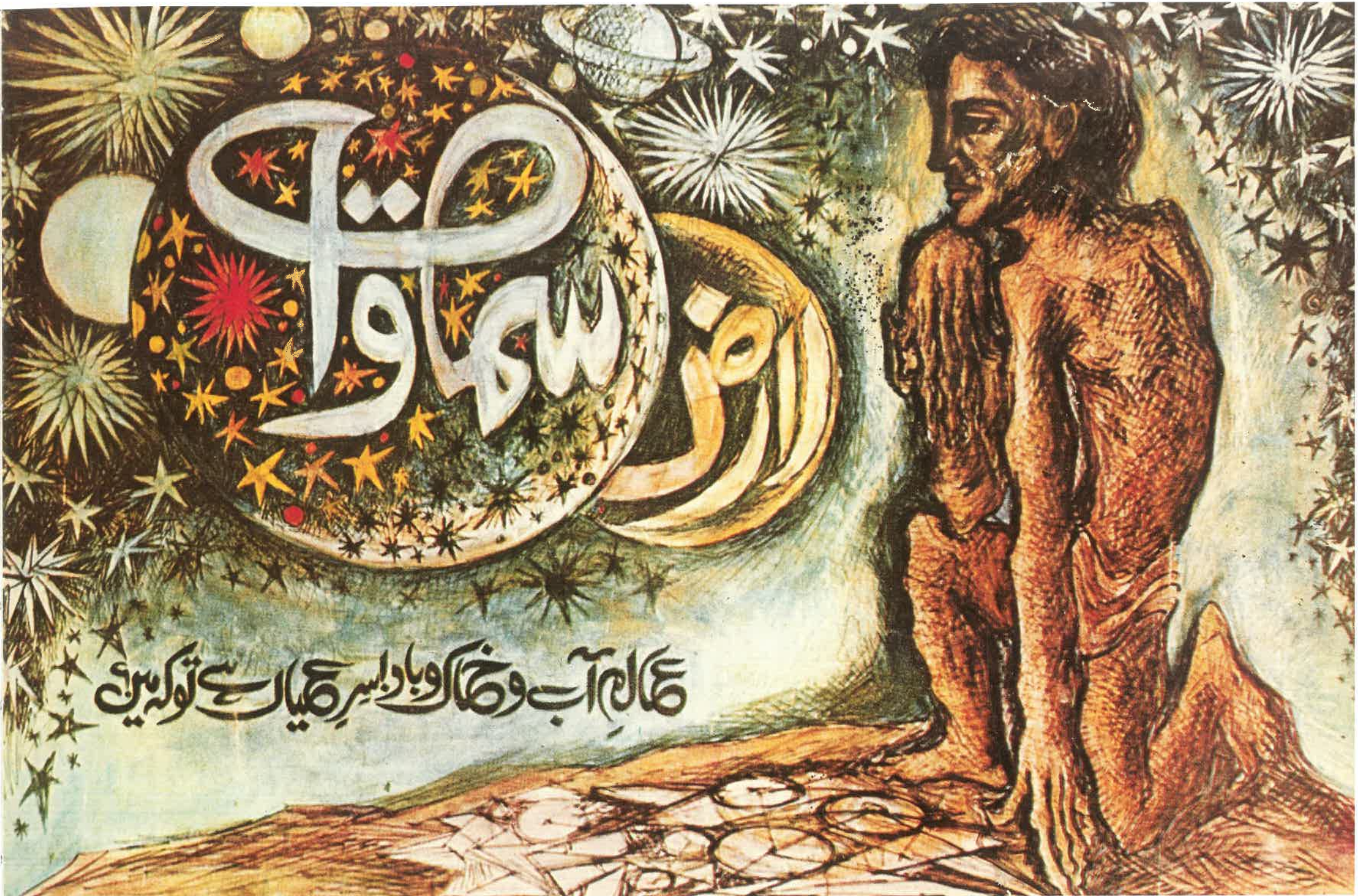
The universe — the water, earth and air — are to serve you or me?

Illustration / Interpretation

Iqbal, ever so persistent, ponders and explores the mysteries of the universe, the Earth and the heavens, and profusely opined about them. It is a recurring theme in Iqbal's poetry, which he keeps examining from different perspectives. On one occasion, he pointedly raised the question if the universe — the Earth and the heavens — was created for man or the man was created for it. In another instant, he declares that mankind was not created merely as an ordinary ornament of the universe, but to the contrary, the universe was created for the service of mankind. What is the universe, what is life and what is the purpose of mankind in this universe? These age-old questions have haunted scholars and philosophers, who have been pondering upon them for centuries, but have yet to agree on a conclusion. Iqbal places mankind on a higher pedestal from where it can take charge of its own destiny by applying its powers of reason.

Although the old adage goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words," sometimes, a concept which can be clearly explained in words is difficult to capture in a picture with clarity. Sadequain's challenge is to portray an abstract concept, which is essentially a question mark, onto a canvas. The imagery is aimed at painting the vision of a question, without using a question mark. In a masterly stroke, Sadequain imbeds this question mark in the eyes of the main character, a no-frills rugged embodiment of mankind. He is shown in repose, in contemplation, his eyes focused at finding answers to the purpose of mankind on Earth, secrets of the twinkling stars, and the vast span of the blue sky. Geometric figures and complicated formulas to solve the mysteries of the complex universe are inscribed on the sand in front of this thinker.

At a distance in space are two huge spheres with the words Earth and heaven inscribed on them in big bold letters. Sadequain painted the Earth in uniform colors and studded the heavens with stars and planets. But he did not want to confine the universe in only one sphere; therefore the open space on canvas is plastered with exploding stars, alluding to the constantly expanding and infinite nature of the cosmos. At the bottom of the canvas, a single line of Urdu script sums up the imagery by posing the question, "The universe — the water, earth and air — are to serve you or me?"



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Transliteration

Apni Joulangah Zaere-Aasman Samjha Tha Mein
 Aab-o-Gil Kay Khel Ko Apna Jahan Samjha Tha Mein
 Bay Hijabi Say Teri Tota Nigahoon Ka Tilism
 Ek Rida-e-Neelgon Ko Aasman Samjha Tha Mein
 Karwaan Thak Kar Faza Key Peech-o-Kham Mein Ruk Gaya
 Mehro-Mah-o-Mushtiri Ko Ham-Ina Samjha Tha Mein
 Ishq Ki Ek Jast Nay Tay Kardia Qissa Tamam
 Is Zameen-o-Aasman Ko Baikaran Samjha Tha Mein

Translation

Vast space under the sky was my playground I believed
 The play between the Earth and water defined my universe
 Your unveiled face holds no more mysteries for my eyes
 I mistook the blue spread above for an endless sky
 Tired caravan came to a halt in the midst of space
 I came in proximity of moon and Mars and became part of the system
 It took only one lunge of trust to expose the illusion
 This Earth and sky, I thought were infinite

Illustration / Interpretation

The ability to draw a still life image is an acquired skill and so is portraiture or landscape drawing. But to interpret the imagination of a genius takes another genius. To fathom Iqbal's genius and realize his quest to explore man's purpose with respect to the Earth and the heavens is a demanding exercise — a spiritual and intellectual odyssey. Accordingly, Sadequain represented mankind by a larger-than-life figure; his spread-out wings compliment his flight of imagination in pursuit to explore the cosmic mysteries. The composite imagery conjures a vision that mankind is constantly evolving and the universe is constantly expanding. This transformation can be taxing and requires an occasional repose. The allure of decanters in the foreground provides a hospitable ambiance for the conquerors of the stars.

But the journey must continue and the eyes of the explorers are set on destinations beyond the stars. Mankind is shown to have its finger firmly on the geometric calculations to chart the course of its flight; its destination is beyond the faraway galaxies. Twinkling stars, exploding planets, shining moons, and the mother Earth are shown in the background, whirling through space, leaving behind footprints in curling, swirling and gyrating forms. In the background is blue sky stretched to infinity. Mankind has now moved on far from its original habitat. From this vantage point, the Earth and its water, which at one time were thought to be the final destination, now seem like child's play. Sadequain has stamped this rendition with his unique symbols including his ultimate symbol of struggle against all odds, an anthropomorphized cactus plant, with strong branches rising towards the heavens, executed in rapid brush strokes creating the thorny outline as a precaution to protect against the unwelcome intruders.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Transliteration

Sultani-e-Jamhoor Ka Aata Hai Zamana

Translation

Liberty will prevail soon, that day has arrived

Illustration / Interpretation

The literal translation of this stanza implies that it is the dawning of the age of democracy. It is adopted from a poem which carries this theme through its composition. Iqbal prods the underprivileged masses to rise up and shake the foundations of the mighty structures that stand guard to those who have usurped power and use it to suppress the powerless, poor and meek. The greed of the dark forces knows no bounds and the common man on the street is deprived of even the basic human rights. In a powerful statement, Iqbal incites the downtrodden to even torch the crops they have reaped themselves, if those crops are not sufficient or not available to feed the poor. The poem questions the absence of transparency and demands that all secrets be exposed, so no one would be left in the dark, irrespective of his status. The poem preaches the basic principles of equality, which require openness and equal participation in a democratic process by all, irrespective of their class.

This painting is dense with symbols and imagery. The center of the painting represents the problem at the core; subjugated humans in shackles rise to revolt against their oppressors, and when they begin their struggle, even the angels fly in to lend their support. A winged angel is shown to give a hand to the character in the center of the composition and two figures are shown sitting on the ground waiting to move into action. One character appears to be walking away from the shackles and two liberated characters raise the banners proclaiming liberation. While the crops that were denied to the poor are set on fire, the majestic structures of power and the mighty factories — the symbols of abuse — come crumbling down. The loose rings from the broken shackles are spread on the ground, sandwiched between the symbols of hard-working masses, their manual tools and damaged pots and pans, the basic utensils that feed the poor.





Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Transliteration

*Khool Aankh Zameen Dekh, Falak Dekh Feza Dekh
Mashriq Say Ubhartey Huey Sooraj Ko Zara Dekh*

Translation

Open your eyes, observe the world, the sky and the environment
Observe and enjoy the majesty of the rising sun from the east

Illustration / Interpretation

Iqbal admonishes mankind to explore the wonders of the endless universe and the benevolence of its Creator. The universe was created for the benefit of mankind so it would explore and harness its bounty. Most painters can draw figures, pictures of the world, sun or the blue sky. But to illustrate the imagery of these entities in harmonic motion and illustrate Iqbal's counsel to discern the blue sky with open eyes, cherish the environment, and observe the majesty of the rising sun from the east is an image that only a visionary can illustrate.

Sadequain's rendition is a study of time and three-dimensional motion in space. Starting from the left, one character shown in the foreground is holding a magnifying glass and intently examining through it the rare treasures that lie ahead. Another character is shown holding a globe firmly in his hands and diligently exploring it. The third character in this cluster keeps his eyes fixed on an hourglass and tracks the time — the fourth dimension that defines space. The center of the canvas is filled with instruments of knowledge and fruits of contentment. There is a quill in the frame, the writing instrument to record the thesis, geometric instruments, a writing tablet, and of course to maintain a cheerful ambiance, a flower bouquet. The right side of the canvas is devoted to the exploration of space; one man is gazing upwards through the binoculars and is able to see the vastness and colors across the expanse of the cosmos, the stars, the planets, the new frontiers and the new destinations. Three characters in this group are keeping watchful eyes in multiple directions. Sadequain, to accentuate the purpose of the characters, has deliberately made their eyes wide open and bulging with amazement.





Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Transliteration

*Ho Halqa-e-Yaran To Baresham Ki Tarha Narm
Razm-e-Haq-o-Batil Ho To Faulad Hai Momin
Masaf-e-Zindagi Mein Seerat-e-Foulad Paida Kar
Shabistan-e-Mohabbat Mein Hareer-o-Parniyan Ho Ja*

Translation

In the midst of friendly company, soft like silk
In the struggle of right and wrong, hard like steel
Face the challenge of life with an iron will
With loved ones, act gently and speak softly

Illustration / Interpretation

If you are in friendly and congenial company, then you must be polite and treat everyone with humility. But in the battle between right and wrong, a believer must not compromise on principles and stand strong like an iron wall.

When facing the challenges of everyday life, Iqbal exhorts man to have a backbone of steel. He advises to face adversity head-on, to analyze the situation and act with a steely resolve to overcome the obstacles. But if someone showers you with love and affection, then show your softer side and act with humility.

This painting portrays two sides of a coin — right and wrong. On one side it portrays mankind as accommodating, caring, principled and polite. These characteristics are epitomized by the main character in the painting on the left-hand side next to the lone female figure on the canvas. The manly figure carries a big stick, which is extended to annihilate the dark force, depicted in the shape of a huge grotesque skull holding the blood-dripping head of its victims in one hand and a blood-stained dagger in the other. The grotesque head is hoisted on a serpent's body, which curls up and down and holds a globe and a ship — symbols of imperialist might — in its grip. Two manly figures hammer a mask made of gold, which is now cut in half and a golden crown still in one piece next to it, but soon to be destroyed.

Two men in the middle of the canvas are shown examining the finer things that life has to offer; silk fabric, garland, jewelry, a quill with a couple of wooden panels, which are meant for writing, and many other articles are shown scattered around. The main character, drawn as the most imposing of all, is on one hand attacking all that can be defined as evil, and on the other hand, shows his softer side by offering a flower to presumably his child, cradled by the mother.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Transliteration

Aah Yeh Marg-e-Dawam Aah Yeh Razm-e-Hayat
 Khatam Bhi Hogi Kabhi Kashmakash-e-Kaenat
 Aqil Ko Milti Naheen Apnay Butoon Say Nijat
 Aarif-o-Aami Tamam Banda-e-Lat-o-Manat
 Khwar Hua Kiss Qadar Aadam-e-Yazdan Sifaat
 Qalb-o-Nazar Par Giran Aisay Jahan Ka Sibbat
 Kiyun Nahi Hoti Sahar Hazrat-e-Insan Ki Raat

Translation

Oh the dreadful end, Oh the struggle of life
 Is there no end in sight in this contentious universe?
 Logic is not able to rid of superstition and powerless gods
 Scholars and the ordinary are influenced by the black magic
 How humiliating for the man, made in the image of the God
 Existence of this world is a burden on the sight and the heart
 Why is there no end or sunrise after the dark night?

Illustration / Interpretation

This verse illustrates what can be described as the cry for help by the downtrodden masses of the world. The painting depicts people suffering and struggling to find scraps for basic sustenance. Life could not be more miserable. This subject is a recurring theme in the realistic literature and poetry. The bold inscription at the bottom in the Urdu language asks the obvious question, "For mankind, why is there no end or sunrise after the dark night?"

Sadequain, through his entire career, employed powerful imagery to illustrate complex concepts rather than draw mundane objects. The central figure in this painting is a skeleton symbolizing annihilation, which can inflict living beings and even their ideals. In extreme cases, when stagnation sets in and decadence rules, established and flourishing civilizations have been wiped out in the past. In such circumstances, cobwebs, as symbols of stagnation, start to surround the immobile bodies. Sadequain illustrated the dreadful conditions, symbolized by the serpent as a universal symbol of misery, crawling out of a human skull. Humans are shown worshiping man-made gods, and duly punished by crawling rodents on their bodies, and flocks of crows finding immobile figures to carelessly perch on them. Masks which hide the identity of the perpetrators are in abundance. Ghastly creatures, representing the dark forces of society, trample the skulls, which are the only remains of the perished human society. One skull appears to be a fresh victim as blood drips from it. One creature is crowned with what looks like a replica of a factory, an obvious symbol of power and tyranny, and the other has a large ship crowning his head, a symbol of projection of power to portray the far reaches of the diabolical powers.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Transliteration

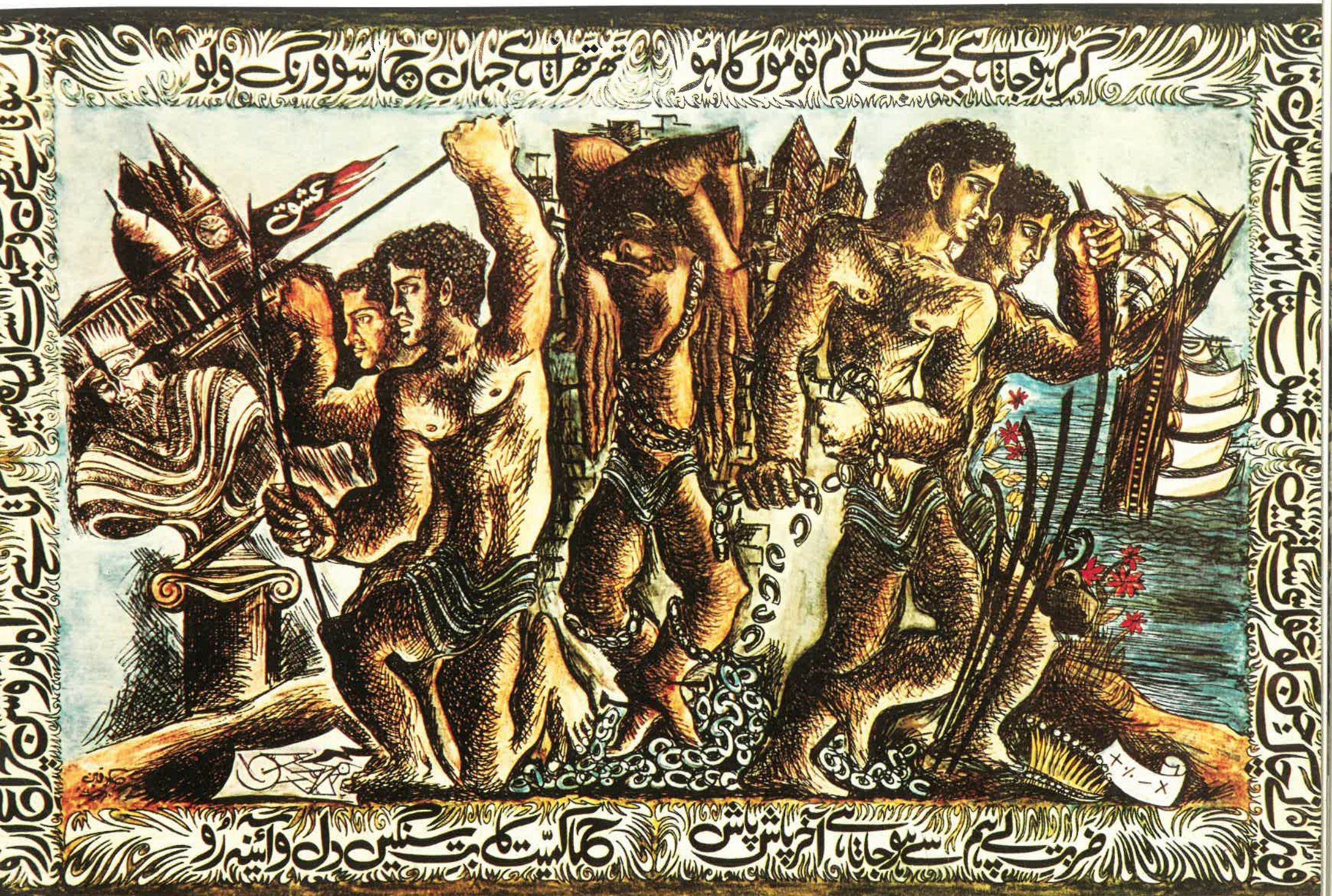
Who Puraney Chalk Jin Ko Aqil See Sakti Nahein
 Ishq Seeta Hai Unhein Bay Suzon-o-Tare-Rafu
 Garm Hojata Hai Jab Mehkoom Qomoon Ka Laho
 Thar Thrata Hai Jahan-e-Char Su-o-Rang-o-Boo
 Pak Hota Hai Zano-Takhmeen Say Insan Ka Zameer
 Karta Hai Har Rah Ko Roshan Chiragh-e-Aarzo
 Zarat-e-Paiham Say Hojata Hai Aakhir Pash Pash
 Hakimeeyat Ka But-e-Sangeen Dilo-Aaena Ruu

Translation

Those old chasms that would not mend logically
 Love can mend them without the needle and thread
 When the blood comes to boil of the subjugate nations
 Four corners of the world begin to tremble
 Clear conscience does not vacillate between distractions
 A fierce desire to succeed illuminates many avenues
 Sustained strikes will eventually make a mark
 On a tyrant's grip or the heart or the soft image in the mirror

Illustration / Interpretation

Iqbal is vociferous in his contempt of tyrants, and he insists that the iron grip around the helpless masses cannot succeed in bending their resolve. He warns that when the masses reach the boiling point of their tolerance and eventually resolve to rise against the tyrants, they gain strength, capable of eliminating them against all odds. Sadequain captures this complex concept in the imagery, which elaborates on the poetic expression of Iqbal in a comprehensive manner. The image at the center of the canvas portrays the epicenter of the struggle. The shackled man is held in place by chains and his arms and legs are nailed down, inflicting maximum pain. The image of a cross is not visible, but the composite imagery conjures the agony of crucifixion. Marching outwards from the epicenter are the comrades, resolve in their eyes, determination in their strides; they succeed in breaking the chains and now take aim at the symbols of power. At one end of the canvas are the mighty fortresses, the protectors of the powerful. The time clock is ever present, perhaps a reminder that it is the moment of reckoning. Their sight focused on time and eyes on the oversized statues, the masses march toward their destiny. One character carries in one hand a banner with the word "love" inscribed on it and a weapon in the other hand, which is positioned to uproot the symbols of tyranny. The imposing statue is toppled and its crown is hammered in half. The geometric figures on a piece of paper perhaps symbolize the calculated move. The uprising spreads in the opposite direction too, setting its eyes on the menacing symbols that extend the tyrannical powers beyond the borders. As the broken chain-links fall to the ground, the liberators take confident strides toward the armada docked in the sea. Sadequain was conscious of history and drew the features of the characters to give clues of their origins and so do the crumbling buildings by their styles of architecture. The symbolic golden crown lies on the ground next to a paper receipt, perhaps symbolizing that the account is about to be settled.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, dimensions n.a., 1977

Transliteration

*Jahad-e-Zindagani Mein Hein Yeh Mardoon Ki Shamsheerein
Jo Ho Zauq-e-Yaqeen Paida to Kat Jati Hein Zanjeerein
Ghulamee Mein Na Kaam Aati Hein Shamsheerein Na Tadbeerein
Tameez-e-Banda-o-Aaqa Fasad-e-Aadmiyat Hai
Hazr Aey CheraH Dastan Sakht Hein Fitrat ki Taazeerein*

Translation

In the struggle of life, man must equip appropriately
Those who persevere conquer the odds
But those who submit, would not win in spite of sword or reason
Discrimination is contrary to the dignity of mankind
This is the bitter truth of life

Illustration / Interpretation

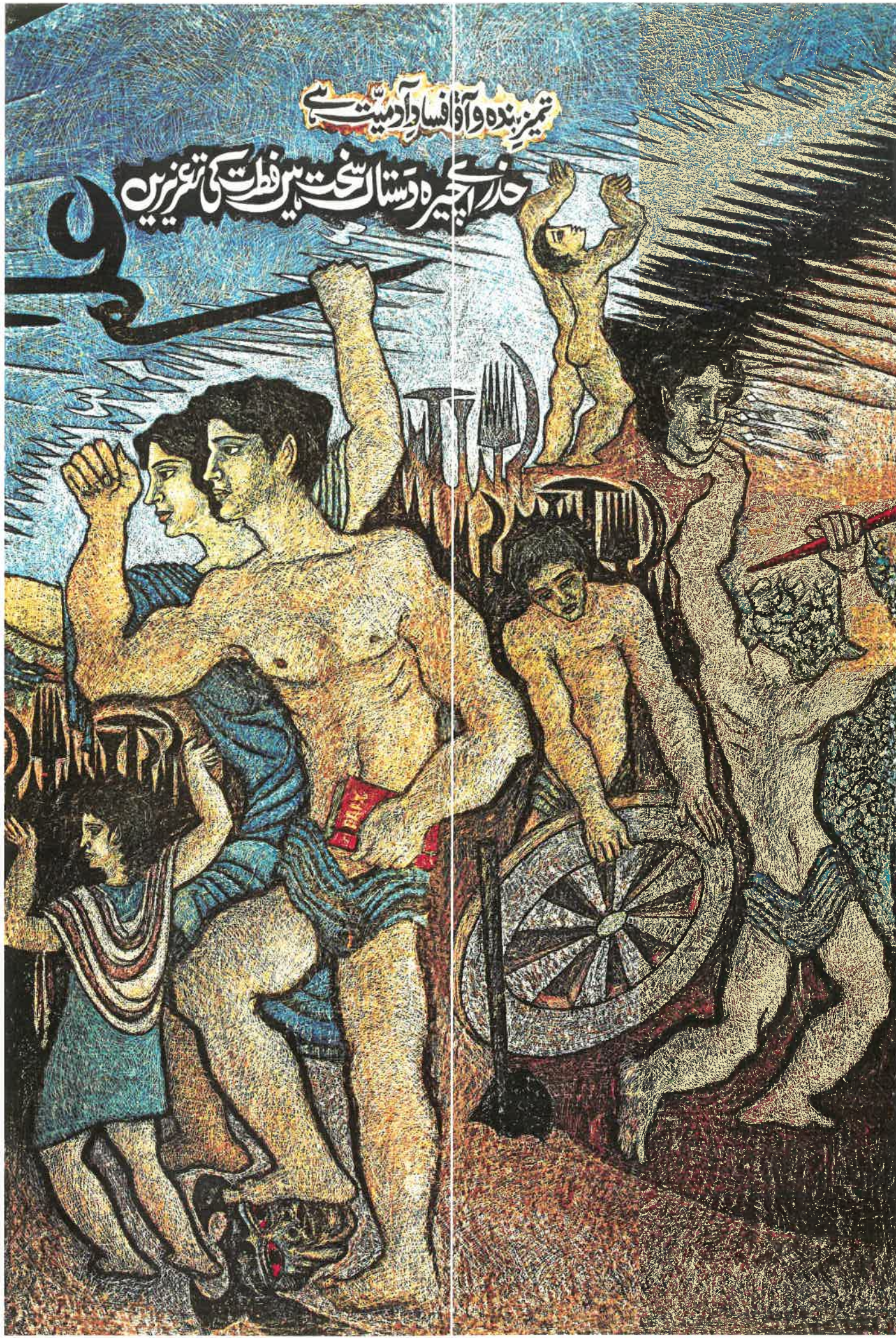
This is one of the two magnificent murals that Sadequain painted for the Islamabad Sports Complex on the occasion of the South Asian Games. It consists of 14 separate sections, each section measuring 4 x 9 feet.

This mural illustrates the message of the poet of the East. The themes of the mural consist of the equality of mankind, opportunities to explore new frontiers and threats from fellow men and natural forces. Men, when given an opportunity, would not hesitate to enslave fellow men, but only those who resolve to beat the odds succeed in shattering the shackles of subjugation. Man is endowed with endless potential, but it demands steely resolve to conquer the hurdles by staying focused and engaged in selfless struggle for the bigger cause of mankind. Sadequain illustrated the message of Iqbal by employing strong symbolic imagery to portray evil forces — challenges that mankind faces — on the two ends of the mural. Depictions of symbols of opportunities in the form of industrial structures, agricultural goods, and instruments of learning are prominently represented in the mural. Also included in the imagery are the symbols of confinement that are being pulled apart to make way for the liberated masses. In the center of the mural are two imposing figures of a man and woman; the man is carrying a banner that reads “Unity,” while the woman is carrying a bunch of agricultural produce.

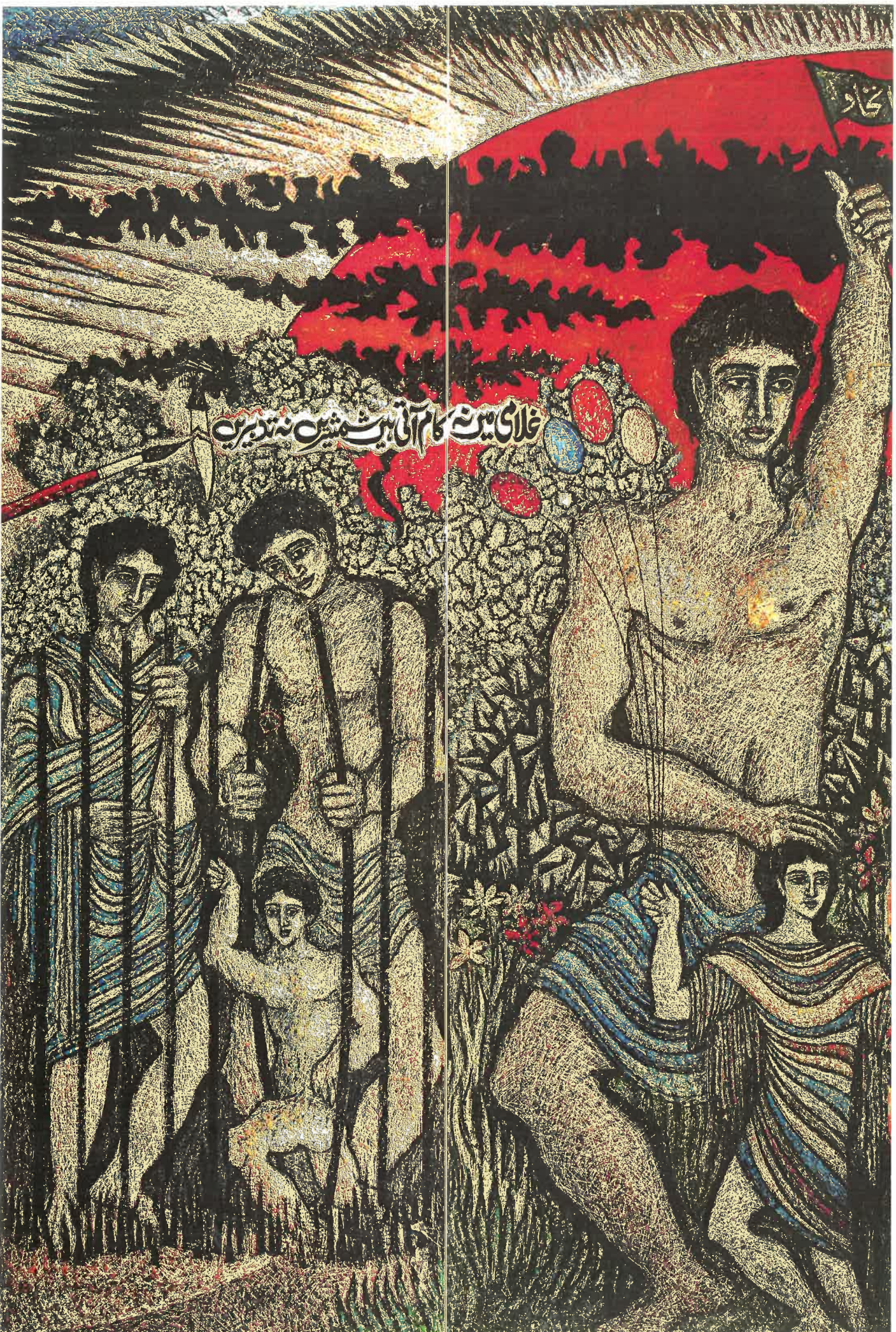
The mural does not exist at the Islamabad Sports Complex now. After searching for the whereabouts of the mural, the SADEQUAIN Foundation succeeded in locating it in storage at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. 2 out of 14 panels of the mural.
Oil on board, 4 x 9 feet each panel, 1976

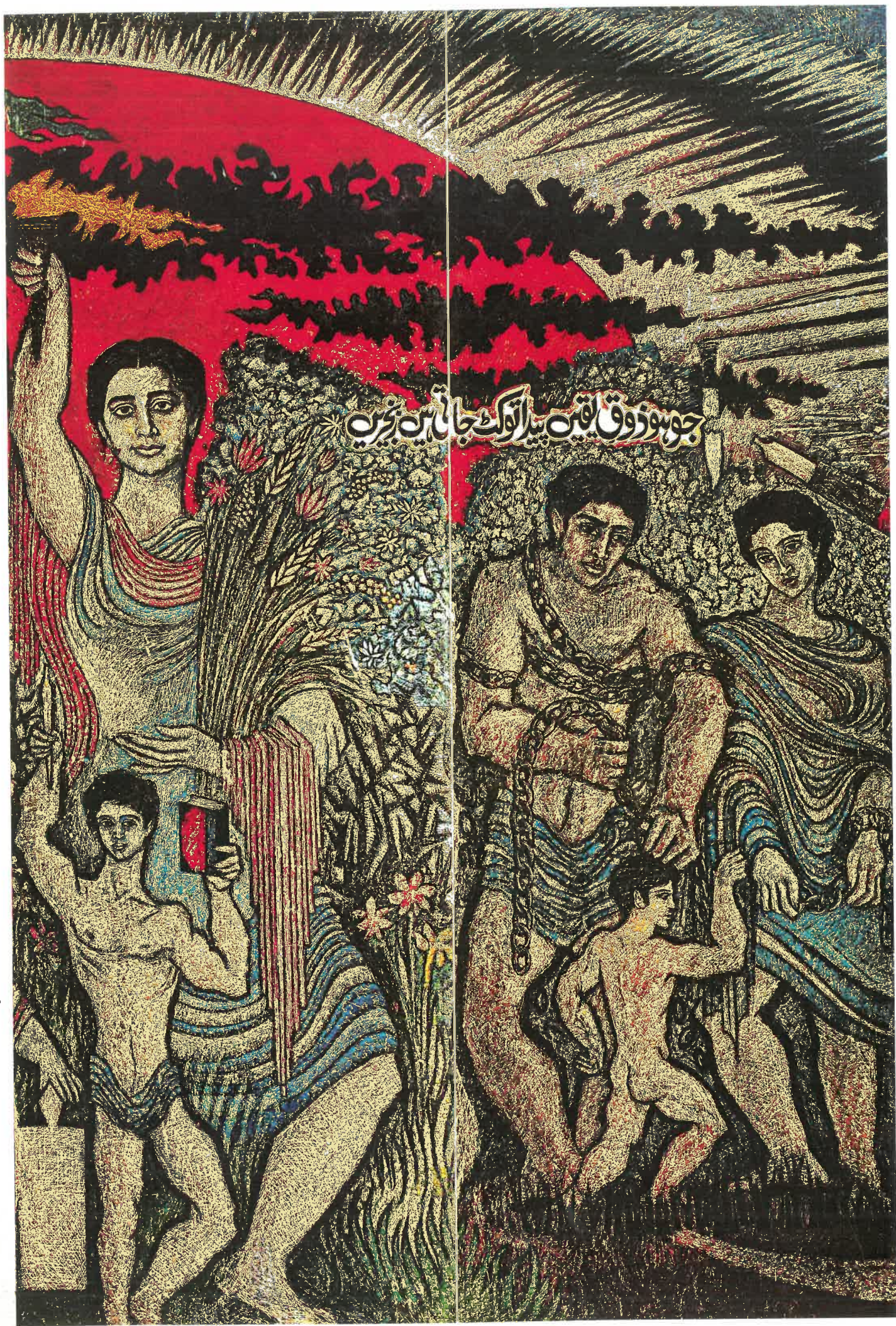




Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. 2 out of 14 panels of the mural.
Oil on board, 4 x 9 feet each panel, 1976



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. 2 out of 14 panels of the mural.
Oil on board, 4 x 9 feet each panel, 1976



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. 2 out of 14 panels of the mural.
Oil on board, 4 x 9 feet each panel, 1976



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. 2 out of 14 panels of the mural.
Oil on board, 4 x 9 feet each panel, 1976



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. 2 out of 14 panels of the mural.
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Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. 2 out of 14 panels of the mural.
Oil on board, 4 x 9 feet each panel, 1976



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, 56 x 9 feet, 1976



Transliteration

*Aaeena-e-Ayyam Mein Aaj Apni Ada Dekh
Mashriq Say Ubbhar Tey Huey Suraj Ko Zara Dekh
Aftab-e-Taza Paida Batan-e-Gaitee Say Hua*

Translation

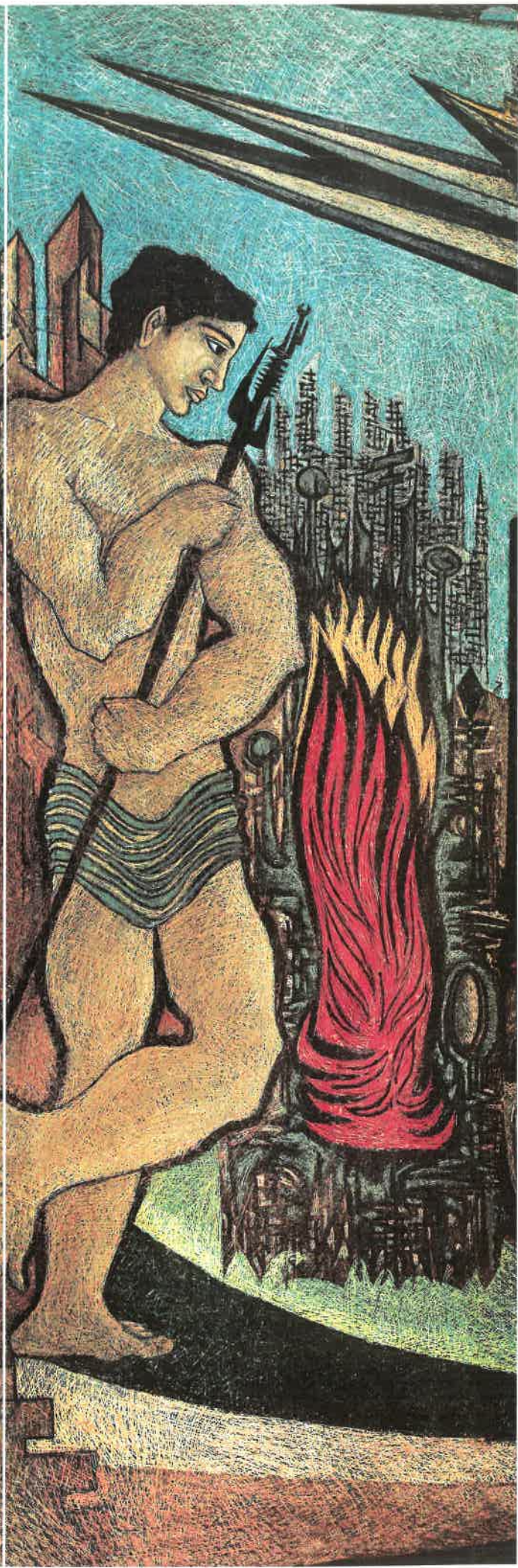
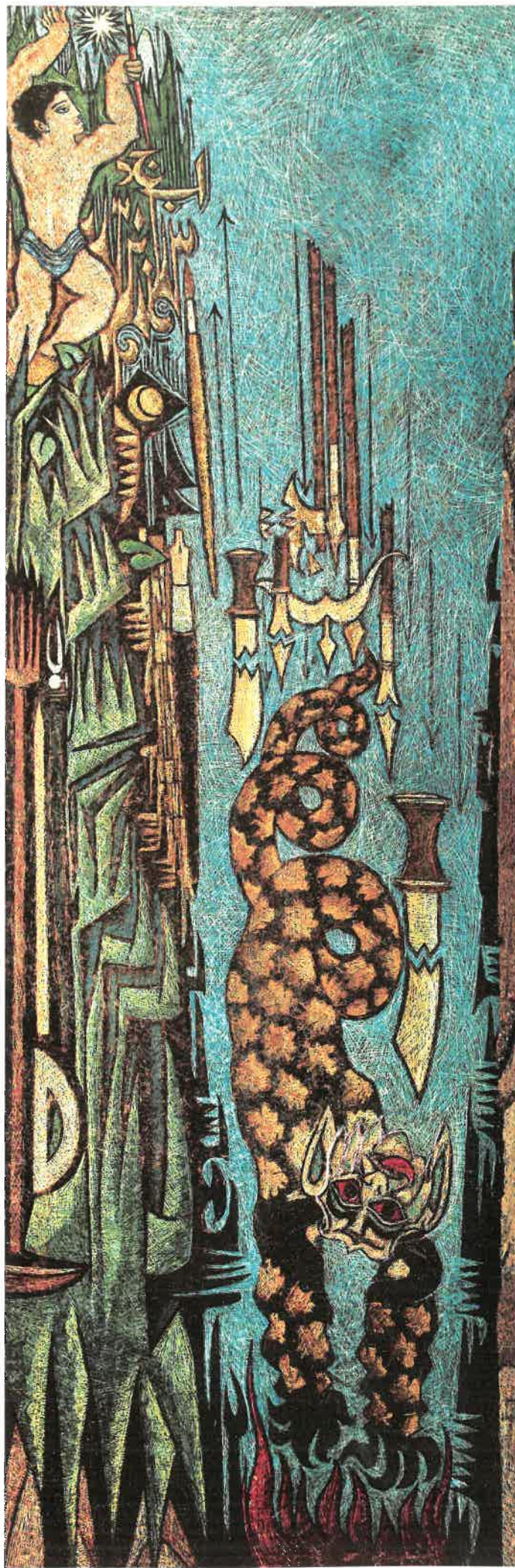
View your reflection in the mirror of the passing days
Observe the majesty of the rising sun from the east
A new sun is born from the bosom of the mother earth

Illustration / Interpretation

This is one of the two magnificent murals that were painted by Sadequain, both on the request of the prime minister of Pakistan, to be installed at the Islamabad Sports Complex on the occasion of the South Asian Games. Normally, Sadequain did not oblige to the requests of government officials, but if asked on a personal level for a national cause, he often answered the call. This mural illustrates three stanzas of Iqbal's poetry, each one challenging man's potential and exhorting him to realize the limitless possibilities ahead. Self-realization and self-assessment are essential qualities that man must possess to chart the path to the peaks of perfection, no matter how steep the pathway, or how rocky the road. The turning of day and night holds a mirror to man's endeavors of daily life and reflection of his achievements. In his poetry, Iqbal argued that the universe was created for mankind to explore and cherish. To that end, Iqbal points to the majesty of the glorious crimson hue emanating from the big red ball of fire in space that is the source of heat and energy for the Earth. He addressed man's potential, his opportunities, and his challenges. Iqbal reminds mankind that a fresh new sun awaits every turn of the day, as if reborn from the core of the mother Earth. The imagery of the mural covers the span from the invention of fire to the evolution of mega metropolitan cityscapes by human ingenuity. This mural consists of 14 separate sections, each section measuring 4 x 9 feet.

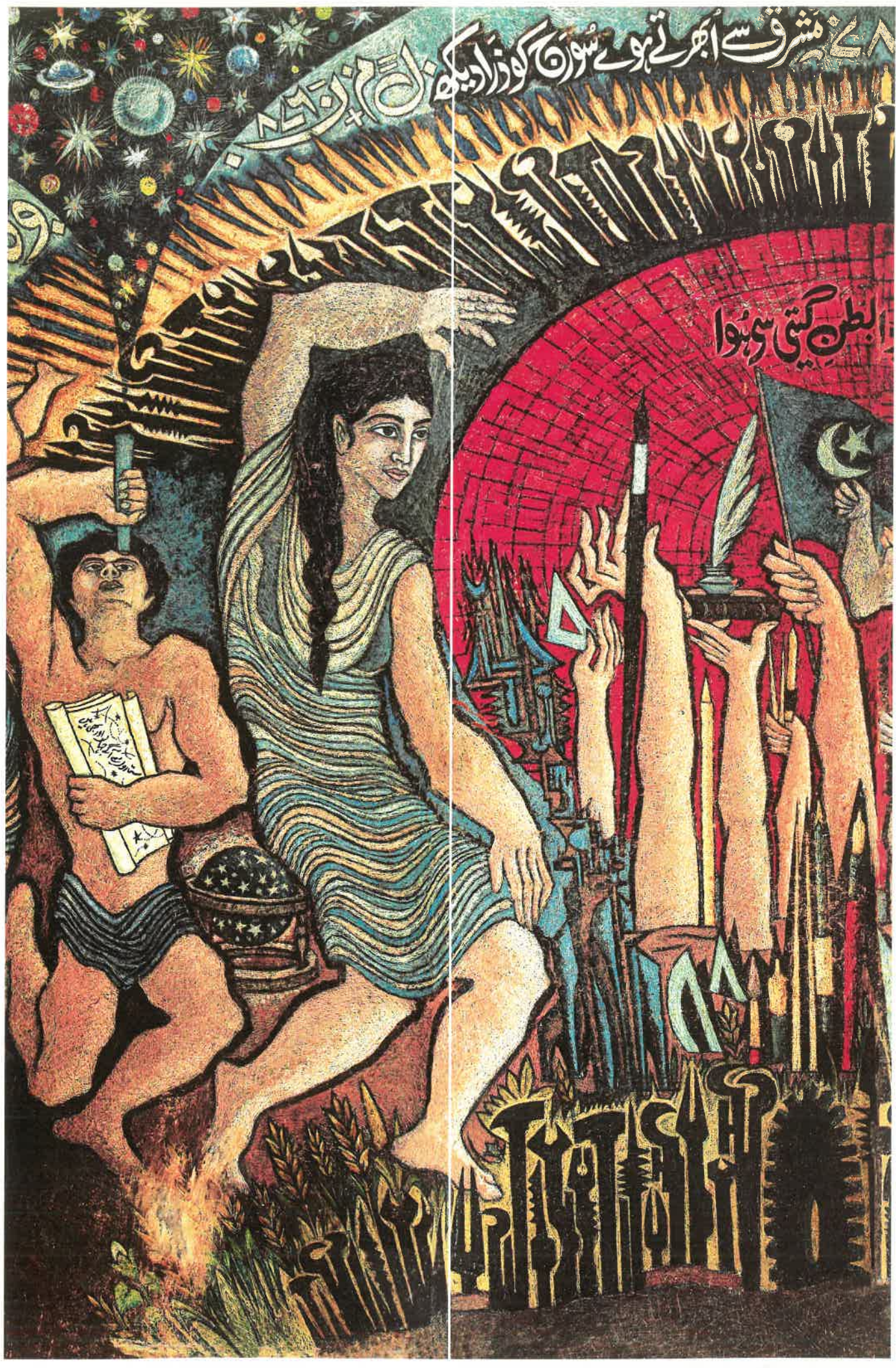
The mural does not exist at the Islamabad Sports Complex now. After searching for the whereabouts of the mural, the SADEQUAIN Foundation succeeded in locating it in storage at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. 2 out of 14 panels of the mural. ►
Oil on board, 4 x 9 feet each panel, 1976





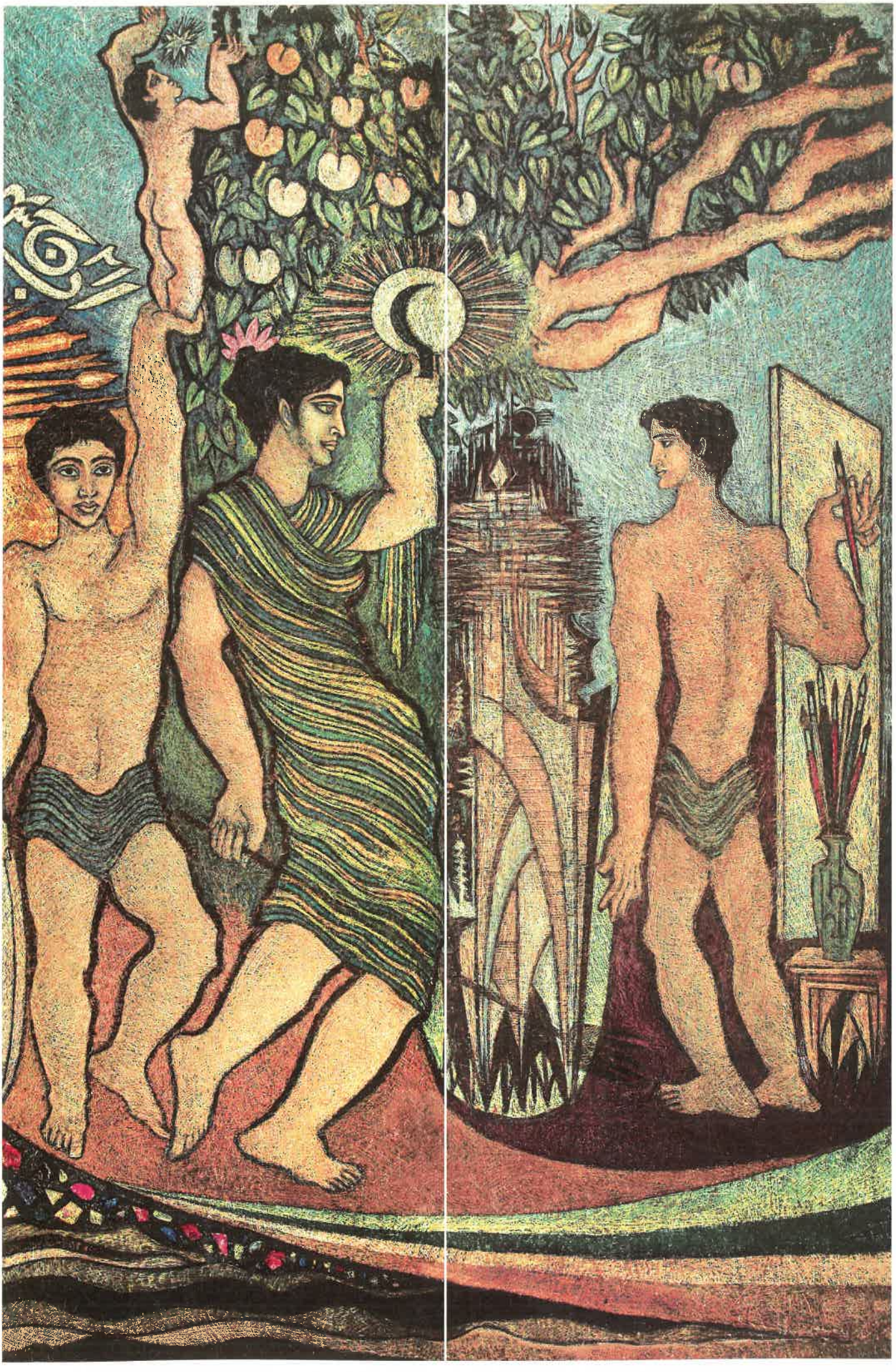
Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. 2 out of 14 panels of the mural.
Oil on board, 4 x 9 feet each panel, 1976



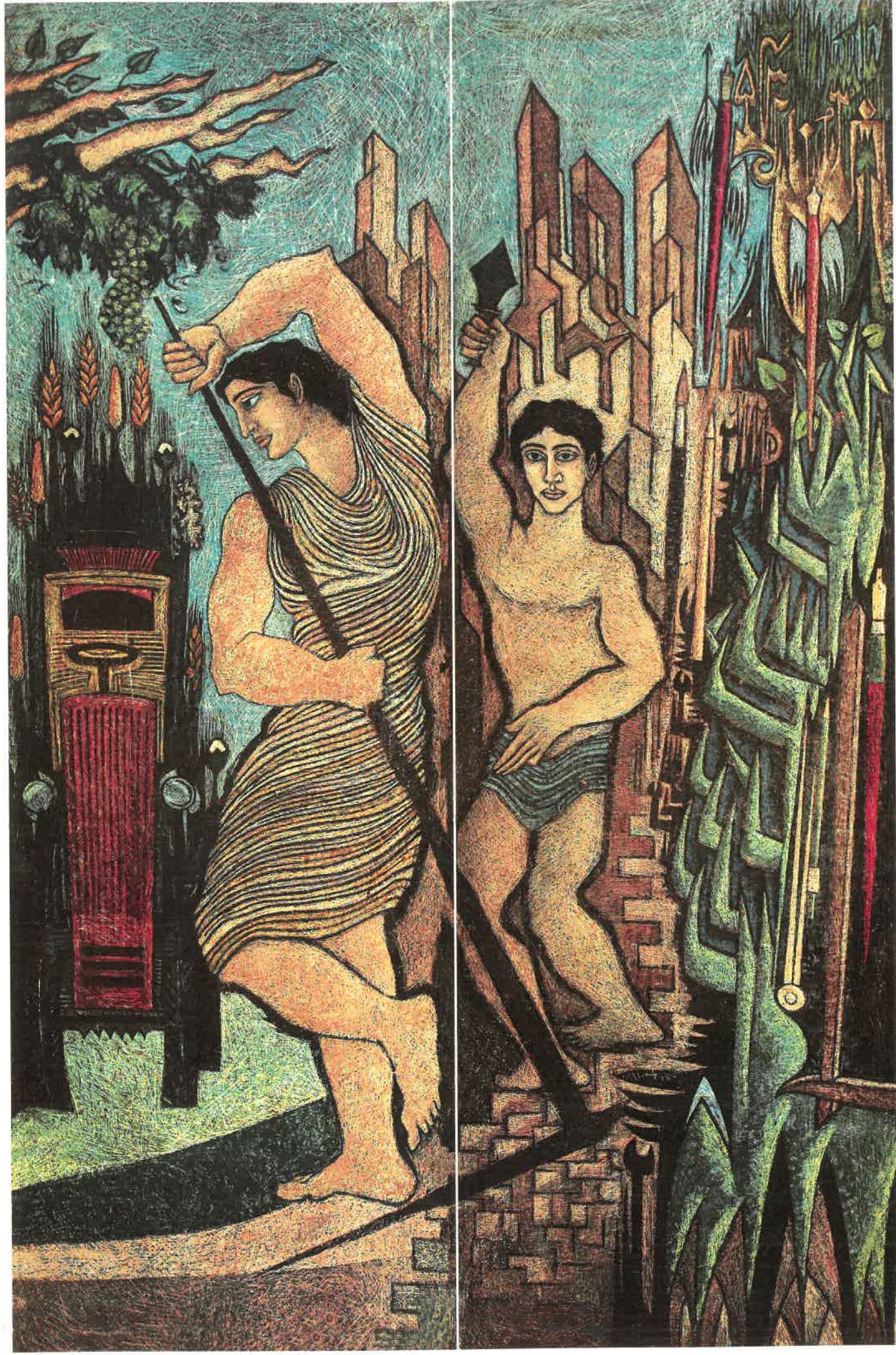
Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. 2 out of 14 panels of the mural.
Oil on board, 4 x 9 feet each panel, 1976



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. 2 out of 14 panels of the mural.
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Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. 2 out of 14 panels of the mural.
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Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. 2 out of 14 panels of the mural.
Oil on board, 4 x 9 feet each panel, 1976



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Iqbal. Oil on board, 56 x 9 feet, 1976



Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984)

Faiz Ahmed Faiz was an eminent Urdu poet and journalist who combined in his *ghazal* and *nazm*, the themes of beauty, love and affection, human dignity, and political ideals to envision and long for an ideal world. Like Ghalib and Iqbal, he too interpreted the defining theme of the Urdu *ghazal*, the theme of love: “to talk with women” or “to talk of women.”

In the 1940s, Faiz came under the influence of the leftist progressive movement. His collection of *nazm* from that period presents philosophical and political undertones. He fused in his *nazm*, the classical and traditional forms of Western political ideas.

In the tradition of Urdu *ghazal*, the audience of Faiz’s poems was his beloved. The beloved, however, was elusive which could be at times his muse, or it could be his nation, or it could be his desire for social justice. In most cases, he defined beauty as delightful to the soul, but illusive to attain. He found himself handcuffed by other pressing distractions. What can I do, he would question the nature of the world, which has no qualms in inflicting pain; it is devoid of passion for love and causes a million heartaches.

Sometimes Faiz would sound resigned to reality, and on occasions, he sounded frustrated. He opined that beyond the realm of love, his beloved could not offer the answer to human suffering and social injustice. Frustrated, Faiz would plead:

Do not expect from me, beloved, love like the yesteryears (because it brings back the painful memories). As I go down the memory lane to the old familiar places, they are now mere ruins, buried under the ashes and bathed in blood.

He found the sight too distracting to pay attention to the radiance of the beloved.

Faiz’s first three collections of poetry, *Naqsh Faryadi* (1943), *Dast-e-Saba* (1952), and *Zindan Namah* (1956), were politically motivated, and include some of his most famous poems based on his prison experience.



Faiz Ahmed Faiz (r), Sadequain (m) and a guest (l).
Photography courtesy Professor Salima Hashmi

✓
Transliteration

*Tera He Aks Hai In Ajnabi Baharoon Mein
Jo Teray Lab Naheen, Teray Bazoo, Tera Kinar Nahin*

Translation

When occasional spring sprouts, though it bears your image
But it cannot be your lips, your arms, or your countenance

Illustration / Interpretation

Sadequain illustrated these lines written from the perspective of a hopeless lover whose beloved is portrayed as unattainable. The heartless beloved either does not return the lover's affection in kind or returns it without sincerity. Sometimes the norms of the society do not allow the courtship to prosper. After relentless pursuit by the lover and unrelenting neglect by the beloved, the lover is eventually accustomed to this hopeless condition, and he is no longer heart-broken on account of the indifferent reaction of the beloved. However, when the spring approaches, the lover cannot help but long for the attributes of the beloved; her shapely lips and her soft hands, knowing perfectly well that they are beyond his approach.

Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Faiz. Mixed medium, dimensions n.a. ►



Transliteration

*Lot Jati Hai Udhar Ko Bhi Nazar Kia Keejeyey
Ab Bhi Dilkash Hai Tera Husun Magar Kia Keejeyey*

Translation

I cannot help but notice the dreadful conditions all around
Your beauty is still captivating but what can you do

Illustration / Interpretation

Sadequain's illustration of the couplet epitomizes the ultimate sense of regret and an admittance by a hopeless lover, that the sad and pathetic conditions, which pervade the environment are very distracting and do not allow his tender feelings to prevail. The lover consoles his object of affection by saying that, though he still realizes her enticing radiance, he can not help to sense the abject misery of the masses which pollutes the purity of his desire.

Faiz in this poem opens with a one-liner, in which he portrays a somber lover addressing his beloved, and urging her not to expect him to shower his affection in the same manner he did in the past. Faiz then proceeds to share his inner feelings and admits that he was wrong in assuming that if he only had won the affection of his beloved, then any measure of misery in the world would not distract him, and he could live a fanciful life. The radiance of her beauty would usher in bloom in the spring and her deep eyes would reflect the bounty of the universe.

But then Faiz realized that it was only his wishful thinking, and the world does not revolve around his misplaced pleasures. Sadequain depicts many other disappointments lurking in the unknown besides the unfulfilled longing for the romantic embrace, and that one can also draw pleasure from fulfillments other than the kind derived from the affection of a lover. Faiz then digresses and laments about the crimes of humanity against humanity, the high and mighty wrapped in fancy silk and velvet, but of weak morals, and ruthless toward the meek and hapless; human flesh for sale and innocent masses covered by hot sand and drowned in their own blood. His eyes only follow his emotions in discussing how anyone can avoid this miserable sight of helplessness.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Faiz. Mixed medium, dimensions n.a.

Transliteration

Phir Koi Aaya Dil-e-Zar Naheen Koi Naheen
Rah Ro Hoga Kaheen Aur Chala Jayega

Translation

Is someone knocking at the door again; my weeping heart, no one
 Perhaps a passerby, but he will soon go somewhere else

Illustration / Interpretation

This short poem carries an extreme sense of loneliness pervading through its entire narration. Sadequain captures the mood of hopelessness engulfing the narration of a lonely person, and projects an uneasy sense of resignation to the bleakest of circumstances. The narrator is talking to himself and senses that someone is at the door. But then he realizes that it is only his imagination or perhaps someone who is lost. Talking to himself, he murmurs that once the stranger realized he was lost, he would turn around and leave on his own. Faiz proceeds to further accentuate the feelings of depression resulting from the prevailing hopelessness in society, where the rich and mighty rule, and the meek and poor suffer and toil. He describes how the night slides into darkness, and the night lamps begin to flicker in the wind. Dejected, he resigns to put off the lamps, put away the spirits, and lock the doors, because no one is going to frequent this lonesome abode any more. The imagery captures the lonesome mood of the character that Faiz so carefully described in words. The main character in the narrative, a lonesome man, is holding the key to the door of anticipation. He takes tired steps toward the solid and featureless door, which creates an impression of unrelenting blockage and confinement. The awkward posture of the character further conveys the dejection by craning its neck in search for a pinhole in the door to view what lies on the other side. But the pinhole is not to be found in the image and neither is a door knob, implying a case of total hopelessness. To further accentuate the mood, Sadequain plastered the word *Tanhai* (loneliness) on one side of the wall and more poetry on the other side.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Faiz. Mixed medium, dimensions n.a.

Transliteration

*Jism Pay Qaid Hai Jazbaat Pay Zanjeerein Hein
Fikr Mahboos Hai Guftaar Pay Tazeerein Hein*

Translation

Physical imprisonment and chained expressions
Imagination is stagnant and protest is prohibited

Illustration / Interpretation

This couplet is adapted from the poem titled, *Jaan*. The opening couplet of the poem draws solace from the hope that the reign of tyranny is about to end and it is only for just a short period of time that we have to endure the treacherous treatment of the tyrants. We have endured the hardships for a long time, during which we were confined in cells and suffered emotional trauma. We endured physical distress, but could not complain. The trauma has affected our ability to reason. The imagery has painted a depressing but true picture of a subdued society which hopes to be set free soon because of its selfless sacrifice and sustained struggle for freedom.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Faiz. Mixed medium, dimensions n.a.

Transliteration

*Aaj Tak Surkh-o-Siyah Sadyoon Kay Saye Kay Taley
Adam-o-Hawwa Ki Aulad Pay Kia Guzri Hai*

Translation

To this day, all through the centuries past
How the children of Adam and Eve have suffered

Illustration / Interpretation

It is a poignant commentary on the socio-economic and cultural order of the day. Faiz opens the poem in a somber and disheartened mood by declaring that this particular evening, laden with melancholy and charred with burning sensation, is about to transform into a moon-lit night, when the longing eyes of the lovers would meet, and their hands would extend out to caress. He wonders if it would be her drapes or the countenance that would illuminate the darkness of the night. Then his mind wonders if she would still be wearing that particular earring, perhaps a gift from him, at some opportune moment. His imagination wanders off to visualize the beautiful eyes, defined by the eye shadow, the luminescent cheeks and shapely arms.

Sadequain has illustrated the section of the poem when Faiz laments about the limitation of our imagination and that our world revolves around self-serving lust. In spite of the never-ending suffering through the dark and bloody centuries, during which the children of Adam and Eve have endured hardships, the end of drudgeries does not seem near yet. The shining cities are still full of hungry masses, and the seemingly lush pastures only grow hunger and poverty. Faiz concludes by saying that such is the sad situation of our circumstances that prevail. The imagery depicts the children of Adam and Eve; two young men with one's hands tied behind his back to the dry stub of a tree. His head is severed by the other character, who is visibly sucking the blood, while still holding the murder weapon in plain sight of all. The other two characters are shown helpless; the man is resigned to a sitting posture and the woman rushes with a bouquet, but to no avail. Sadly, this drama is repeated daily all around us.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Faiz. Mixed medium, dimensions n.a.

Transliteration

*Bala Say Ham Nay Na Dekha Tou Aur Daekhaen Gay
Farooqh-e-Gulshan-o-Saute-e-Hazaar Ka Mousam*

Translation

So what if we could not enjoy, but others will
Blooming of the spring and music in the air

Illustration / Interpretation

Sacrifice is the word. Faiz reminds the reader that noble people do not live only for themselves, but they strive to make the world a better place for others as well, especially the future generations. Sadequain illustrates this quest, which requires sacrifice and discipline. The imagery depicts the passion: so what if he was not able to taste the fruits of hard work? But the sacrifice has ensured so others would benefit and finally reap the fruits of labor. Employing rich metaphors, Faiz says that others will enjoy the lush green gardens, which will flourish with fruit-bearing trees, fragrant flowers blooming with rainbow colors, and scintillating music will bring the place alive. It is implied that in the end, the place will be tranquil, peaceful, and justice will prevail so everyone will be treated as equal and all will be held accountable. Two sacrificial bodies are shown to protect the precious, delicate, and vulnerable. Both protectors have their hands severed, but they demonstrate their resolve and courage by holding the severed heads up high in their hands, and not blinking in spite of the rain of arrows aimed at them. Between these valiant characters are seen expectant mothers, symbolizing what Faiz addressed as "others" in his stanza. Also seen in the image is an infant's dress, a dove fluttering for space, and a hint of a flower bed, that are all sheltered from the onslaught by the sacrifice of the protectors.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Faiz. Mixed medium, dimensions n.a.

Transliteration

Hadees-e-Yar Kay Unwan Nikhar-nay Lagtey Hein
To Her Hareem Mein Gaisoo Sawar-nay Lagtey Hein

Translation

When she delivers in refined eloquence
 It initiates everyone to strive for the best

Illustration / Interpretation

Sadequain illustrates an abstract thought expressed in the couplet, which offers an ode to the beloved. It could be a soft complaint, or perhaps a touch of sarcasm. The word spoken by the beloved is so precious that it should be treated like a sacred decree. Accordingly, when a new word is expected or a new subject is about to be addressed, it initiates — as a show of respect — a robust activity in all quarters where the bold and beautiful engage in extreme makeover in an attempt to look their best.

The setting is a well-appointed dressing room, equipped with lotions, perfumes and other paraphernalia. Colorful and expensive drapes, made of heavy velvet, frame the main characters, two women. But a careful examination would reveal that it is the same character that is shown first at the beginning of a makeup session, and the second image is the final made-up version. The character on the left unfurls her hair, brushes it to bring out the luster, and then wraps it carefully in a neat artistic bunch, shown in the second image. The clothing of the second image is now properly draped around her proportional body and accentuates the shapely curves of the statuesque figure. A final look in the mirror receives her nod of approval.





Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Faiz. Mixed medium, dimensions n.a.

Transliteration

*Rang Perahan Ka Khushbu Zulf Lehraney Ka Naam
Mousam-e-Gul Hai Tumharey Baam Par Aaney Ka Naam*

Translation

Your attire is reflection of rainbow colors, your hair dispenses fragrance
Your stroll on to the rooftop ushers in the blossoms in spring

Illustration / Interpretation

Sadequain's colorful interpretation of the verse eulogizes the beloved and serenades her attributes — the precious gifts of nature. Accordingly, her attire simply defines the rainbow colors; her locks are fragrant, and when she appears on the rooftop, her foray ushers in an ocean of blooming flowers. Faiz, in the ensuing verses, even urges his friends to appreciate her eyes and lips, which according to him, are the secrets behind the radiant colors of the flowers and lend credence to the good name of the tavern. Even a chance possibility of frequenting the congregation, which might result in an encounter with the beloved, can cause the eyes to vision flowers and the heart to feel the warmth of her touch. But toward the end, the poem digresses and laments about the unpleasant turn of events that have sowed the seeds of mistrust, so much so that the beloved does not even consider stepping on the rooftop, and in consideration of the bleak circumstances, the dwellers of the garden hurl unrelenting taunts daring to select a false and misleading name for the deserted abode.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Faiz. Mixed medium, dimensions n.a.

Transliteration

*Teray Hotoun Kay Pholoun Ki Chahat Mein Ham
Dar Ki Khushkh Tehni Pay Warey Gaye*

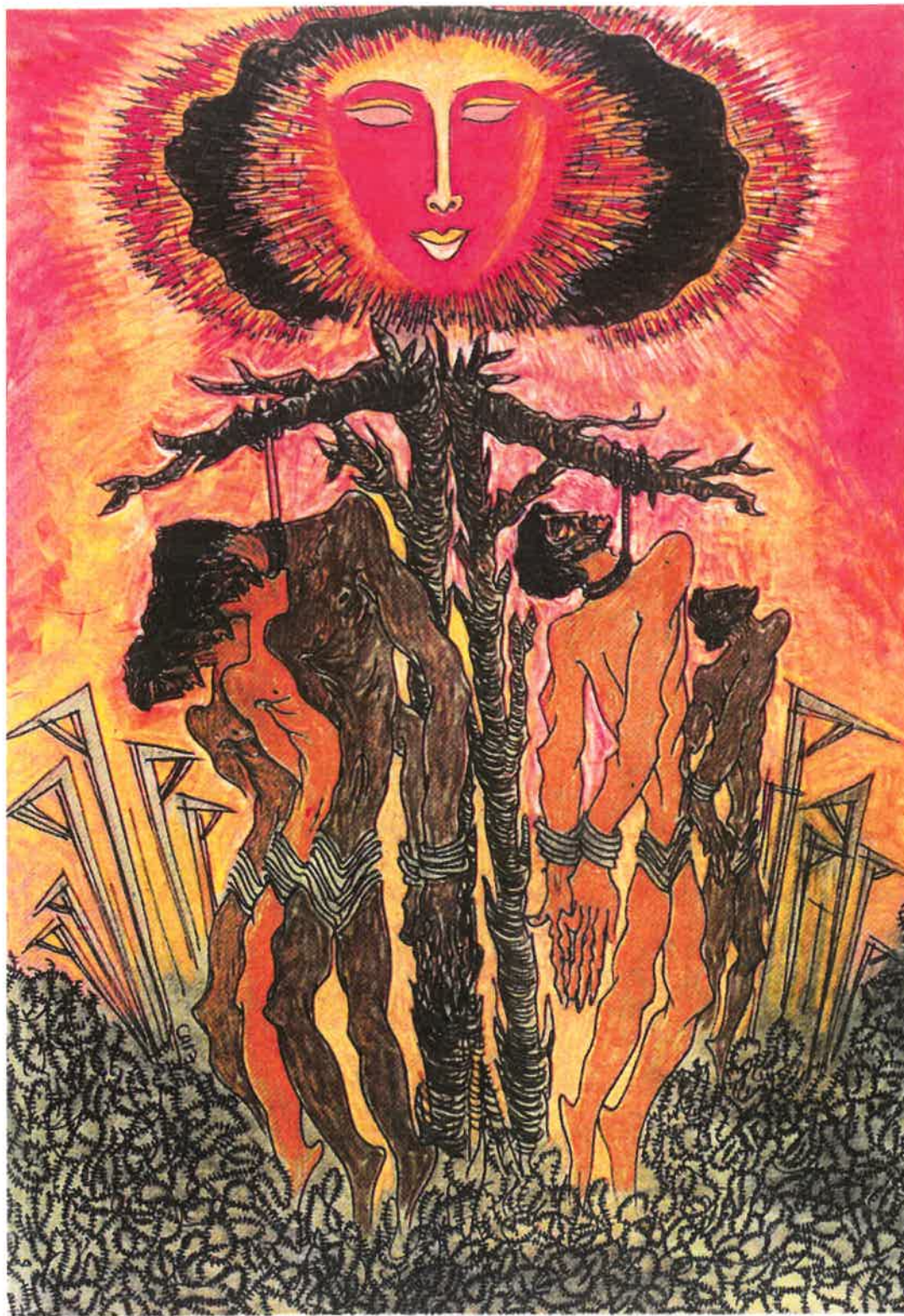
Translation

For the desire to caress your soft and reddish lips
We were hanged from a dry branch

Illustration / Interpretation

Inspired by the letters of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, this poem was written in a Montgomery jail in 1954. Faiz draws the disparity between what he wished for and what he received instead. If he longed for the flowers, he was rewarded with thorns, and if he desired light, he was pushed into darkness.

Sadequain focuses on the irony: when he was hoisted on the crucifix, he could see up close the lips and sense the softness of the locks of his beloved, but he could not reach out and touch them. He is resigned to his ill fate now, but takes solace that he remained faithful until the end and wishes that his sacrifice will keep hope alive and would motivate others to follow in his footsteps.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Faiz. Mixed medium, dimensions n.a.

Transliteration

*Gari Hein Kitni Saleebeen Maerey Dareechay Mein
Her Eik Apnay Maseeha Kay Khoon Ka Rang Liye*

Translation

How many crosses are visible from my window?
Each one colored by the blood of its own sacrifice

Illustration / Interpretation

A potent message alludes to the ceaseless injustice meted to the innocent and helpless masses, which suffer at the hands of the high and mighty, but the perpetrators manage to elude accountability. The metaphor of a crucifix is utilized to accentuate the sacrifices by the masses as the image of a crucifix represents a potent symbol of sacrifice. Sadequain paints a picture of fields of crucifixes dotting the horizon, which Faiz said were ubiquitous to the extent that he could see them even from his window. Each of these crucifixes is carrying its own burden and colored red with the blood of its own victim.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Faiz. Mixed medium, dimensions n.a.

Transliteration

Dasht Kitnay Abhi Rah-e-Manzil Mein Hein
Teer Kitnay Abhi Dast-e-Qatil Mein Hein

Translation

How many more pitfalls along the way?
 How many more arrows in the arsenal of the enemy?

Illustration / Interpretation

Faiz, in a pensive mood, expresses dejection because of the dismal state of affairs. He feels great grief because of the gloomy prospects that do not cease to persist, leading to further depression and dejection. This calamitous situation gives way to injustice and violation of personal liberty. There is no redress in sight.

This painting targets the theme of unjust sufferings and hardships, meted out to the meek and poor and denial of their rights, unfortunately found in many societies. The circumstances translate into exasperation because of the continuous barrage of hardships and the never-ending obstacles, which seem to have no redress in sight. After this gloomy state has persisted for long, and the struggle to ward off the tyranny has continued without success, Faiz senses deep dejection, accounting for the question posed in the couplet: how many more hurdles are still left before we reach the cherished destination and how many more weapons are still left in the arsenal of the enemy? These questions also imply that, on one hand, there is always a limit to everything, but on the other hand, if we persist and continue the struggle and continue to sacrifice, we will eventually prevail. The imagery depicts a heavily-robed ruthless power-monger who, armed with a threatening bow in one hand and a load of arrows in the carrying case, has severed the head of an unarmed freedom seeker, who is carrying the flag of freedom in one hand and a torch of burning desire in the other. The tyrant stares at the decapitated freedom fighter and raises his freshly severed head on the murder weapon, the blood-stained dagger, but that does not deter the rhythm of the fighter's forward stride. He is riddled with arrows, but they do not seem to slow down his pace either. The background is painted in red and orange hues of flaring flames that are a prelude to total destruction of the pillars of power, which are now doomed and it is a matter of any day that the rule of tyranny would be over.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Faiz. Mixed medium, dimensions n.a.

Transliteration

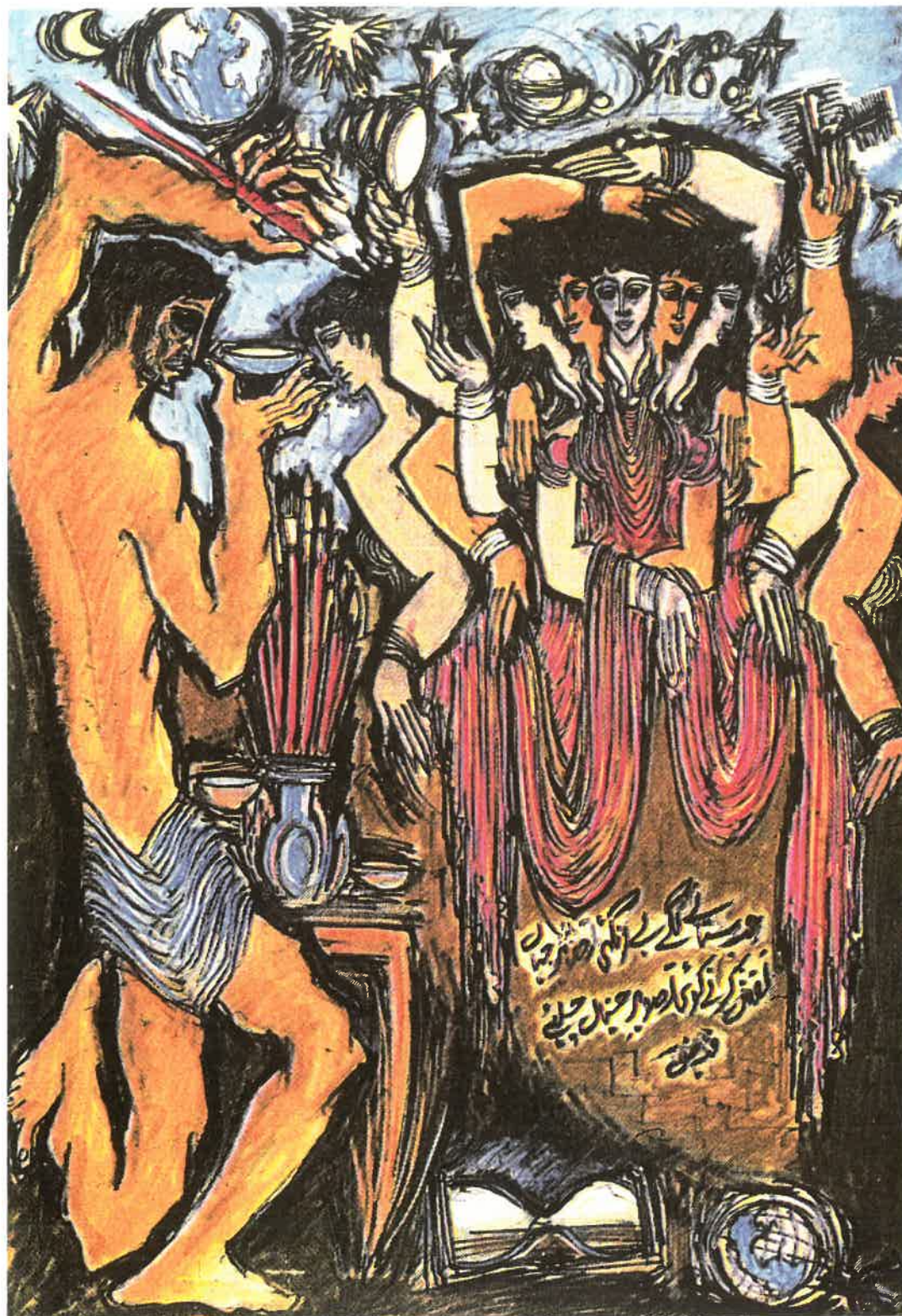
Jab Sataney Lagey Bay Range-a-Tasveere-Jahan
Naqsh Karney Koi Tasveere-Haseena Chale-ey

Translation

When the treacheries of time become overbearing
Let's settle in a quiet corner and paint a colorful image of the muse

Illustration / Interpretation

When the somber shades of the world become too depressing and start to cast a burdensome shadow on the senses, let's shake off the boredom and paint the images of ravishing nymphs. Faiz wrote most of his poetry either in jail or under duress for one reason or another. This melancholy mood pervades through most of his poetry. He does not see the world radiant with color or as a place endowed with treasures for the good of mankind. In his typical stance, "you cannot but notice the misery around you," he consistently reminds of the suffering of the masses. Sadequain illustrated the poem as a prescription to escape the miseries of everyday life.



Illustration/Interpretation, poetry of Faiz. Mixed medium, dimensions n.a.

SADEQUAIN (1930-1987)

— Excerpts from *The Saga of Sadequain*

Poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz complimented Sadequain as follows: "He is a preeminent artist, but more than that he is a thinker." Faiz further added, "Sadequain attained this distinction because he operated at a higher stratosphere with total command over the fundamental tenets." It has been said that, "When Sadequain's pen moved, not only the universe, but also the past, present and the future moved with it." If art measures the pulse of a nation then Sadequain had his fingers on this pulse and he recorded it for posterity. Sadequain was arguably an embodiment of the spirit of Picasso, grandeur of Michelangelo, poetic prowess of Omar Khayyam, and calligraphic skills of Yaqoot. This essay examines the preeminence of Sadequain, defines and explores the stratosphere Faiz pointed to, and follows the movement of Sadequain's pen that made the time move with it.

In the October 16, 1962 edition, newspaper Le Figaro of Paris stated that, "Sadequain adds up the impression of space, density, volume and the reality of matter, which transforms an abstract thought into a material fact in plastic." Two years later, when Sadequain had established his footing in French art circles, Le Monde et La Vie, Paris, reported in the edition of April 1964, "The multiplicity of Sadequain's gifts is reminiscent of Picasso." A comparison of a young Pakistani artist to a giant like Picasso, and that too on the home turf of Picasso, said it all, a unique distinction indeed. While residing part time in Paris during the 1960s, he was chosen to illustrate the novel, *The Stranger* by noble laureate Albert Camus - a significant achievement for a Pakistani artist by any measure and he was also awarded Laureate Biennale de Paris for his painting, titled, "Last Supper." Sadequain never looked back, and while shuttling within Europe and to Pakistan during the mid 1960s, created the most significant body of work in about five years, that alone should place him among the most significant artists of the era.

Self proclaimed "faqir," Sadequain was outside society's worldly greed or hypocrisy and called himself "speaker of truth." He donated most of his work to public institutions, friends and strangers at no cost. In an interview he said, "People ask why I don't paint flowers, butterflies and landscapes? I tell them that I seek the truth and I am after reality. I am not inspired by someone posing against the backdrop of roses in a vase or pink curtains. What inspires me is a person who has gone hungry for hours and is struggling for survival. The expression that lights his face at the end of the day when he has finally found some scraps, that is what touches me. I am a painter of the expression of reality."

Prodigiously prolific, Sadequain in his lifetime is reported to have painted over 15,000 pieces, comprised of gigantic murals, figurative art, drawings, calligraphies, and he composed several thousand pieces of poetry. Turning down offers of commissioned work from the royalties and heads of state, he chose to paint unconventional images drawn from his experiences and observations based on his own visual vocabulary.

Sadequain was a social commentator. Not satisfied with painting ordinary images of men and women or the landscapes, he adapted strong symbolic idioms to impart a universal message addressing the threats and the opportunities for the mankind and its environment. For example, he was impressed with the resilience of the cactus plant that defies all odds and endures the sandy soils and scorching sun to grow in the harshest environmental conditions and it grows straight and upward as a symbol of hope and triumph over natural forces. Sadequain said, "To me it symbolizes the triumph of life over environment. Once I used to identify it with myself. Then I started identifying it with the whole community." Many of his paintings depicted anthropomorphized cactus plants, the ultimate symbol of survival against the odds.

45 murals

Sadequain's monumental murals represent unparalleled body of artistic genius of the region. Sadequain painted more than forty five murals over his career, spanning over 1950s through 1980s. His murals are tributes to the scholars, writers, scientists, and the hard working men and women - the backbone of a society. His characters are not the kings and queens, the rich or powerful. A muralist of great merit, his murals adorn the museum at State Bank of Pakistan, Power House at the Mangla Dam, Lahore Museum's main entry hall ceiling and Islamic Gallery, Punjab University, Punjab Public Library, Frere Hall's ceiling in Karachi, Aligarh Muslim University in India, Urdu Markaz in Delhi, Banaras Hindu University in India, National Geophysical Research Institute of India, Abu Dhabi Power House, and the Museum of Modern Art in Lusanne Switzerland are just to name a few. The murals are tributes to man's constant quest to discover and develop his endless potential. To put it in perspective, his work at Indian Research Institute of Islamic Studies, if placed side by side would cover more than 3,000 square feet of space. Out of a population of well over one billion, he is the only artist from India or Pakistan whose works are on display at public places across the border in the rival countries.

In its June 20, 1980 edition, the daily newspaper Khaleej Times of UAE stated, "Renaissance of Islamic Calligraphy: A mystic artist from Pakistan who has become a legend in his own time. The remarkable story of Sadequain, who did not seek, but was endowed with divine inspiration." Sadequain is arguably responsible for the renaissance of Islamic calligraphy in Pakistan. A review of the history of calligraphic art in the country during the decades of the 1950s and '60s reveals that there was minimal activity in this genre of art form. Syed Amjad Ali wrote in his book, *Painters of Pakistan*, that after Sadequain's first exhibition of calligraphies in December 1968, "For next fifteen years or sixteen years, a veritable Niagara of painterly calligraphy flowed from his pen and brush." He further stated that, "He (Sadequain) initiated painterly calligraphy and set the vogue for it in Pakistan." After Sadequain transformed the art of calligraphy into a mainstream art form, most of the known Pakistani artists have followed Sadequain and calligraphic art now dominates the

art scene. One of his calligraphic renditions is the picturesque verse, Sura-e-Rehman, the beauty of Quran.

Calligraphic art had enjoyed in the past, a revered status in the sub-continent, when it reached the pinnacle during the glorious days of the Mughal Empire. But after the downfall of the empire, calligraphic art became a victim of neglect, and fell so far out of favor that in post-partition Pakistan, it was considered to be a mere vocational skill and not a serious genre of creative art. Searching for a new form of expression, Sadequain commemorated Ghalib's anniversary by illustrating his poetry in 1968. In order to enhance the paintings, he chanced to inscribe Ghalib's verses in Urdu to append the paintings, and that experiment later led to calligraphic inscriptions in the Arabic language. That spontaneous occurrence opened the floodgates and paved the way to widespread adaptation of painterly calligraphy in the country and catapulted Sadequain to a national stature of prominence.

In a manner similar to his figurative paintings, Sadequain followed the same principles in his calligraphic art. His calligraphies represent the most radical departure from the established norms, which had been in place for hundreds of years. The centuries-old guarded traditions, watchful eyes of the religious police, or pitfalls of the uncharted waters did not deter him from going where not many had ventured before him. Undeterred, he invented his own iconography and produced a dizzying array of calligraphical marvels at such large scales that had not been witnessed in recent history. He brought the calligraphic art on an even level with other art forms that were at the time practiced in Pakistan. His art became the most effective ambassador for the country in foreign lands and his impact was so profound, that on a number of occasions, Pakistan was represented in international forums only by Sadequain's masterpieces.

Sadequain often stated that if he placed end-to-end all the calligraphies that he had painted, they would stretch for several miles. In addition to the countless pieces of calligraphies, special mention must be made of some of Sadequain's major works, which are spread over Pakistan, India, and the Middle East. He inscribed four versions of complete sets of the beautiful Verse, Sura-e-Rehman; the first two versions of the Verse, which consisted of thirty-one panels, have been preserved, one at Staff College Lahore and one with a private collector. Another version, consisting of forty panels was painted on transparent cellophane, of which he gave away several to his acquaintances, and the remaining were reported in newspapers to have been stolen from the Frere Hall after his death. The fourth version of the picturesque Verse was painted on marble slabs, which Sadequain gave as a gift to the citizens of Karachi in an elaborate ceremony held on the lawns of the Frere Hall in 1986. The intent was to place the complete set of 40 marble slabs on permanent display at the Gallery Sadequain situated in the main hall of the Frere Hall. But soon after Sadequain passed away, all forty panels disappeared from the premises, leaving no trace behind; what is worse, no police report was registered and neither an official inquiry was launched. During the early 1970s, Sadequain completed several large calligraphies for the historic Lahore Museum, and gave them as gifts to the citizens of Lahore. Twelve of these large calligraphic panels, each measuring approximately twenty feet in height, are on display in the Islamic Gallery of the Museum. He also inscribed Sura-e-Yaseen onto a large wooden panel measuring 260 feet long and donated it to the Islamic Gallery of the Lahore Museum. A large calligraphic mural adorns the power station at Abu Dhabi, which Sadequain completed in 1980.

From December 1981 through 1982, Sadequain stayed in India for over one year, and painted several large paintings, murals, and calligraphies. He painted non-calligraphic murals at Aligarh Muslim University, Banaras Hindu University, National Geophysical Research Institute in Hyderabad, India, Urdu Markaz, Ghalib Academy, and several other venues. One of the most significant calligraphic works was the rendition of the ninety-nine panels of Asma-e-Husna (The Beautiful Names of God) that he inscribed on the circular wall of the rotunda, which towers an imposing five stories high in the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies at Delhi. The approximate length of this calligraphic work is seven hundred feet and the surface area is close to 3,000 square feet. This rendition of 99 panels of Asma-e-Husna is one of the three complete sets he finished in his life. In addition to the calligraphic work at the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies at Delhi, Sadequain painted or sculpted several other calligraphic works in India at Aligarh Muslim University, Ghalib Academy, Jamia Millia, and the Tomb of Tipu Sultan. In his customary practice, Sadequain donated all this work to the Indian authorities. In addition to painting the murals and calligraphies in India, he exhibited his works at Delhi, Lucknow, Hyderabad, Aligarh, Banaras, and several other cities. In his own manner, Sadequain initiated "Aman ki Asha" in 1982 which later became a slogan of necessity in 2010.

Reaching back to his rich cultural heritage Sadequain illustrated the poetry of Ghalib, Iqbal, and Faiz. The illustrations of Ghalib were done in 1968; those of Iqbal in 1977, and Faiz's selected verses were illustrated in 1971 and 1985. A viewer of Sadequain's work is awed by its thematic intensity. He was deeply interested in the issues that have challenged the best minds of the human race - the questions about the mysteries of the universe, meaning of life on our planet and beyond, role of human beings in the universe, freedom and self determination, survival and progress, and the fine line between reason and emotion - even in his poetry he deals with such issues.

Sadequain composed thousands of pieces of poetry, predominantly quatrains, in his life. He personally inscribed and privately published four volumes of his poetry, the earliest of which contains his poems composed between the age of seventeen and nineteen. These collections are titled, Rubaiyyat-e-Sadequain Khattat, Rubaiyyat-e-Sadequain Naqqash, Bayaz-e-Sadequaini, and Juzw-e-Bosida. For one version of his collection of rubaiyyat, Rubaiyyat-e-Sadequain Naqqash, he illustrated the poetry by over two hundred exquisite drawings, a unique combination of composition, inscription and illustration by one master.

An exposure to Sadequain's prodigious palette is a sight to behold. In a pure poetic Indo-Persian tradition, Sadequain employed powerful symbolism and metaphoric gestures in his paintings with abundance. He painted various series of paintings, each series rich with distinct creative idioms. This body of work can be categorized as Cactus Series, Mystic Figurations Series, Sun Series, Cobweb Series, Crow and Scarecrow Series, House of Cards Series, Sar-ba-Kuf Series, and Crucifixion Series. His monumental murals exhibit sheer genius and his calligraphic work ushered in a revolution in the calligraphic art in Pakistan that cast him in a larger than life posture.

A bird's eye view of Sadequain's palette follows:

Portraits and Line Work

Sadequain was endowed with exquisite skill to execute impeccable line work and the ability to draw human figures and objects that make up the environment. In his early career during the 1950s, Sadequain painted realistic figures, still-life and portraits. But his realistic paintings detailed ordinary folks only. Contrary to the natural instincts, he avoided portraiture work in spite of invitations from the highest offices.

Portrait of main female character, Marie, in Albert Camus novel, "The Stranger" ►



Cactus Series

Sadequain experimented with ideas, with his characters, with the surroundings, and the relationship between the object and subject. One of the objects that was the source of inspiration and influenced his work was the cactus plant. This plant survives starvation by the hostile waterless soil and scorching by the punishing heat of the sun, but the resilient plant thrusts through the rugged land, always pointing upwards, and bristling with life in spite of a hostile environment. Sadequain used this imagery extensively during the decade of the 1960s.

He introduced powerful curves of the rippling muscles of sturdy workers in rough terrains into the cactus forms to show the power and energy of his characters. Sadequain said, "To me it symbolizes the triumph of life over environment."



Composition based on cactus branches



Composition from cactus series



Composition from cactus series

Mystic Figurations

In one variation of the cactus theme, he experimented with the hide-and-seek of light around the cactus plant. As the cactus branches reach up toward the light, the light beams pierce through the cactus branches and spread around the plant, casting an illusion of a delicate dance in celebration of life. In what he termed, Mystic Figurations, Sadequain made the light beams to form the impressions of existence with vigor and vogue. In this series of paintings, he captured the delicate relationship of light and dark by the judicious use of black, white, and crimson shades. He skillfully utilized the interaction of light and shadows in various shapes and forms and demonstrated how different forms would polarize, each complimenting and growing with the other, without disturbing the mystic effects between light and dark shades. Sadequain maintained that the shadows in these compositions were not merely a result of the physical phenomena, but they were an integral part of the composition.



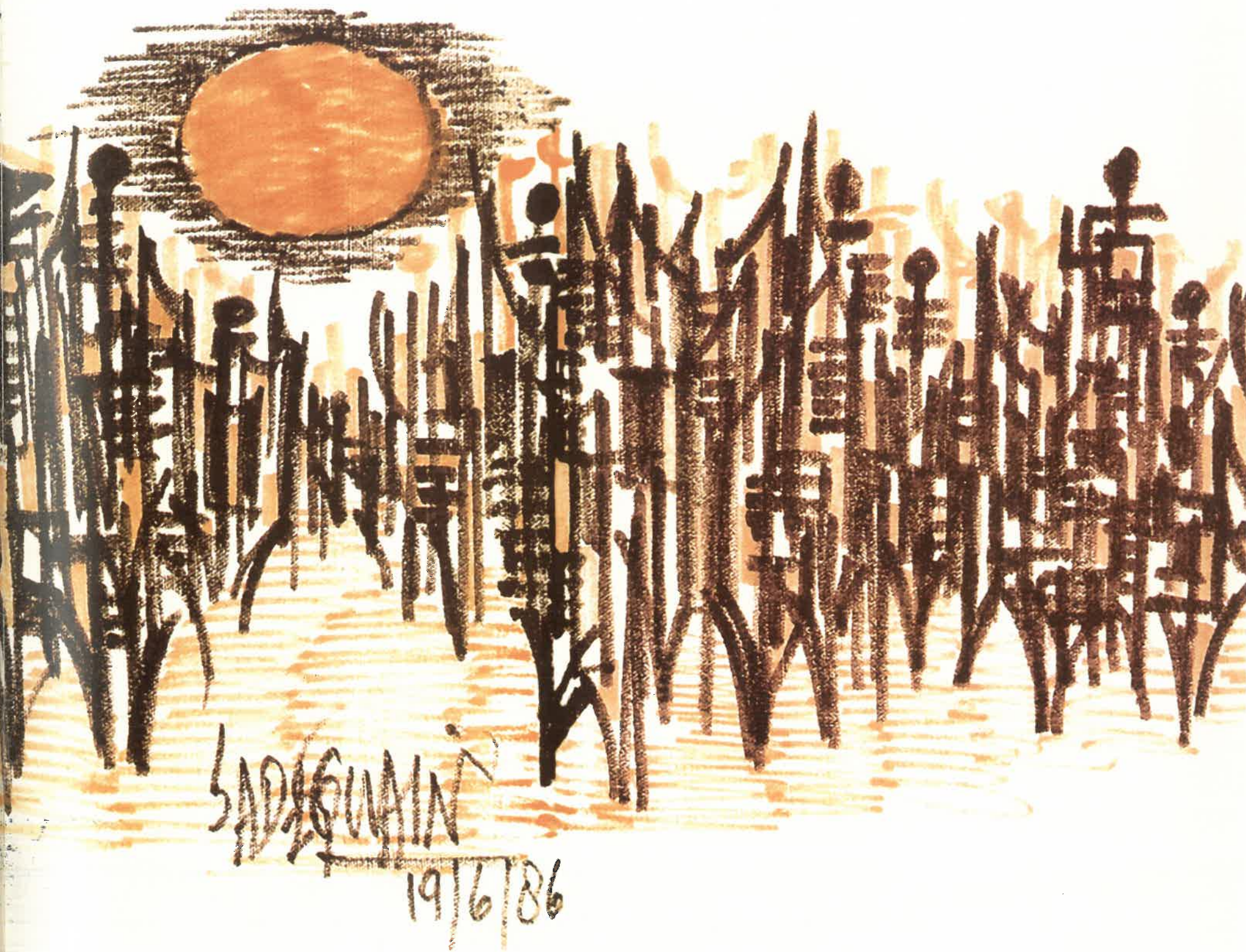


Composition in mystic figurations

n Series

another variation of symbolic representation, Sadequain made effective use of the sun, as the provider of heat, light and energy in a series of paintings aptly titled the "Sun Series." The prominent feature of these paintings is the treatment of light and dark shades, the contrast, which cannot be created without the sun. Sadequain effectively painted the crimson rays of reflected sunrays from and through the maze of crisscrossing lines that sometimes looked like cactus branches and sometimes like landscapes. "It was the reflection of the rays of the crimson sun," explained Sadequain, "which in mystic parlance defines darkness, the darkness cannot exist without light in isolation."





Sun Rise, composition from sun series



Cobweb Series

In another hallmark series of paintings titled the Cobweb Series, Sadequain depicted the cobwebs engulfing the society, including men, women, rich, poor, elite and the ordinary. According to Sadequain, the cobwebs become so ubiquitous they crowd the city streets, surround the buildings, cloud the thinking, and block the sight of the intellectuals and the ordinary. The charade becomes incredulous when people start using the cobwebs to decorate their abodes and even start engaging in the unholy act of worshipping them. In the end, mankind is rendered paralyzed by the cobwebs and the spirit of humanity is broken down.

مقامی میاں
مقامی میاں

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عمری اور ضروری کی لکھی ہوئی کتب

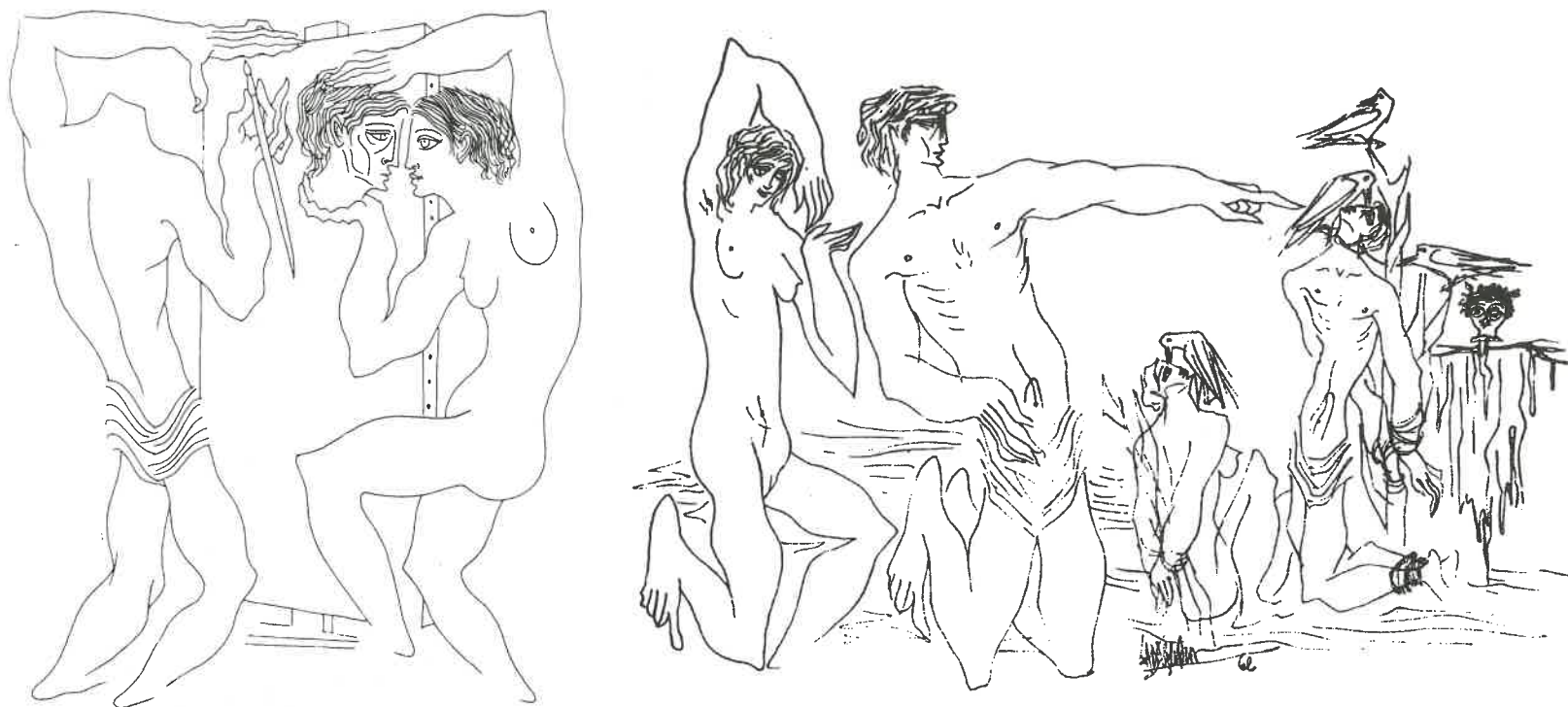
کلید زنی کی لکھی ہوئی کتب

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Composition from cobweb series



The Crow and Scarecrow Series

The Crow Series reinforced the message of the Cobweb Series, by projecting men and women, who have been immobilized long enough for the crows to start nesting, laying eggs and establishing their habitat over their heads. In a variation of this theme, Sadequain portrays the humans as gutless and obedient worshippers of scarecrows, which men themselves have erected to scare the crows but the crows are instead playing with them and even tearing the scarecrows to demonstrate to the spineless humans that they are mere hollow souls and cannot scare anyone. In an advanced stage of decadence, the society is headed to annihilation to be ruled by cobwebs, crows, lizards, and snakes; all symbols of doom.



Composition from crow and scarecrow series



Composition from house of cards series

House of Cards Series

The series titled, The House of Cards was painted in summer of 1968. The faces of the characters on the playing cards bore expressions to match their assigned roles by the artist. Typically, a face was painted above and repeated below, like a playing card pattern, and a spade or other card's symbol was shown at one corner along with other symbolic patterns completing the paintings. The king was portrayed as a tragic figure, his face looked haggard and he wore a crown of thorns. The queen was portrayed as a conniving and manipulative fox, plotting behind the back of the king. The knave was a cunning creature, who would plant the seeds of dissension between the king and the queen. In addition to these figurative compositions, Sadequain painted abstract forms in the playing cards style comprised of what can be termed as calligraphic strokes.

Composition from house of cards series ►

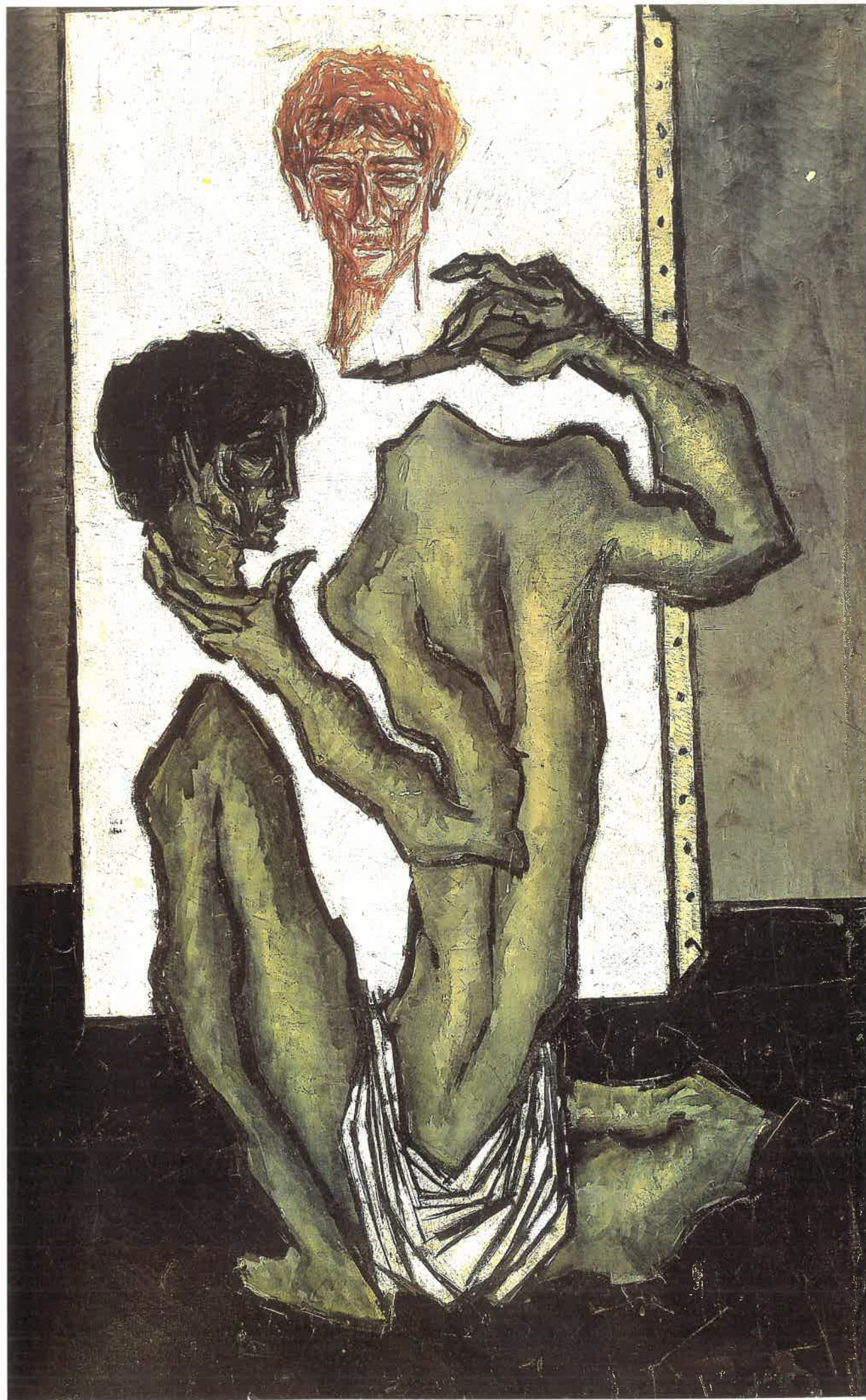




Sar-ba-Kaf Series

The poignant image of the decapitated head featured in a number of Sadequain's paintings and drawings. The image is in memory of the martyrdom through decapitation of Sarmad Shaheed, Mansur-ul-Hajjaj (alternate al Hallaj) of Baghdad and of course the ultimate martyr, Imam Hussain, the grandson of the prophet Mohammad (PBUH). These victims of orthodoxy provided Sadequain with the powerful image of the headless man. The subject was close to Sadequain's heart and it can be implied that the artist's great fantasy was to follow in the tradition of the speaker of truth, who preferred to lay his life rather than deviate from the truth.

Composition from sar-ba-kaf series ►





Crucifixion Series

The series of paintings titled "Crucifixion" depicts Christ on the cross, taking his last breath, but still barely alive to witness the crimes of the dark forces of society. The unscrupulous perpetrators, with no respect for the solemn occasion, could not control their appetite for crime even while the Messiah's eyes were still open. In one dramatic composition, Sadequain showed the out-casts of society, even offering blood to the Christ in an act of defiance.



Composition from crucifixion series

Monumental Murals

Sadequain's monumental murals represent an unparalleled body of artistic genius of the region. Sadequain painted more than forty five murals over his career, lasting from the 1950s through the 1980s. A muralist of great merit, his murals (numbering 4) adorn the museum at State Bank of Pakistan in Karachi, of which, the Treasures of Time measures (65 x 8 ft), Power House at the Mangla Dam (170 x 28 ft), ceiling of the Lahore Museum main entry hall (95 x 25 ft) and the Islamic Gallery (total of twelve murals, each 20 feet in height), Punjab University (3 murals), Punjab Public Library, ceiling of the Frere Hall Karachi (70 x 35 ft), Aligarh Muslim University in India, Urdu Markaz in Delhi, Banaras Hindu University in India, National Geophysical Research Institute of India, Abu Dhabi Power House, and in Lusanne, Switzerland are just to name a few. The murals are tributes to man's constant quest to discover and develop his endless potential.

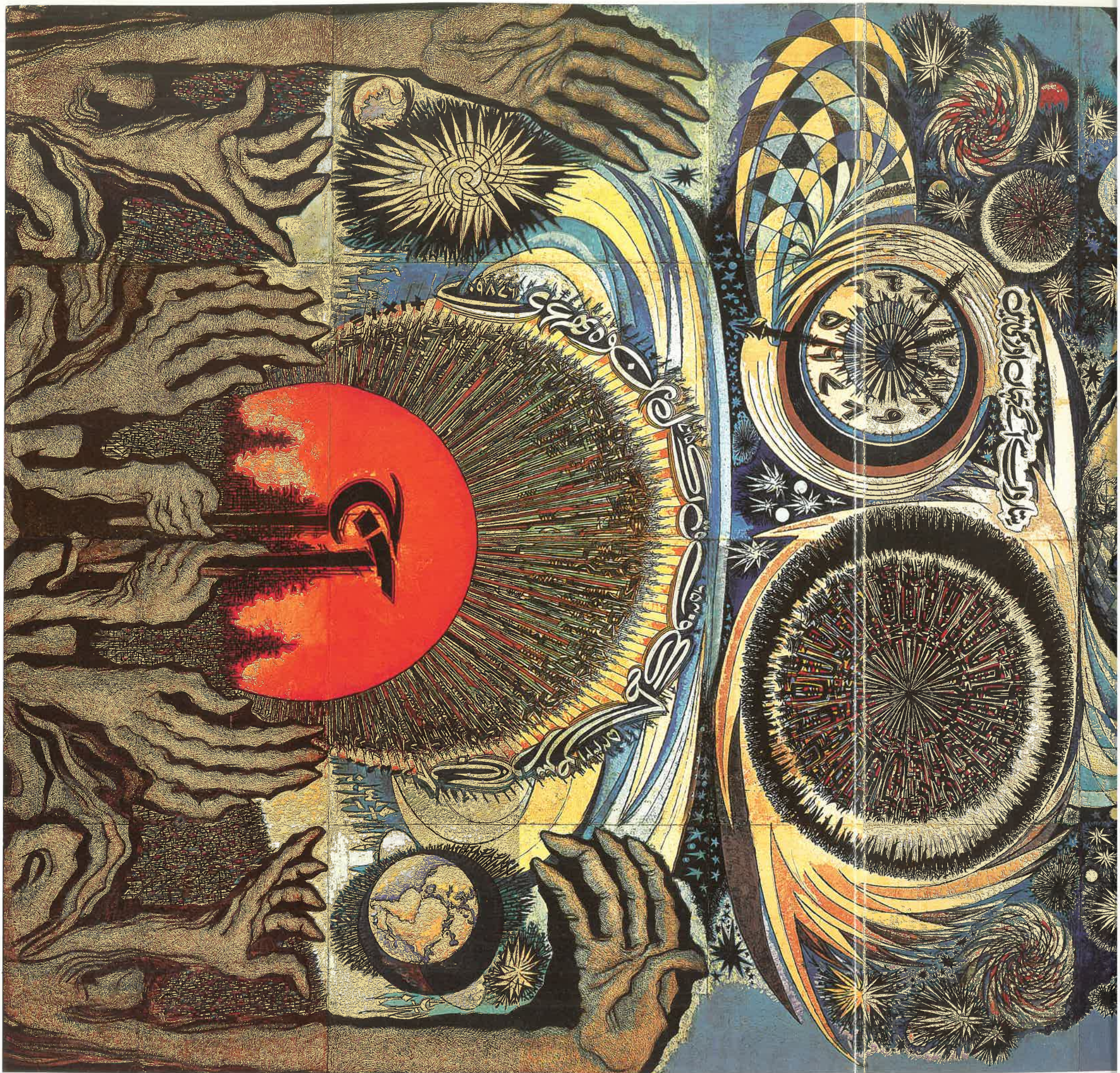


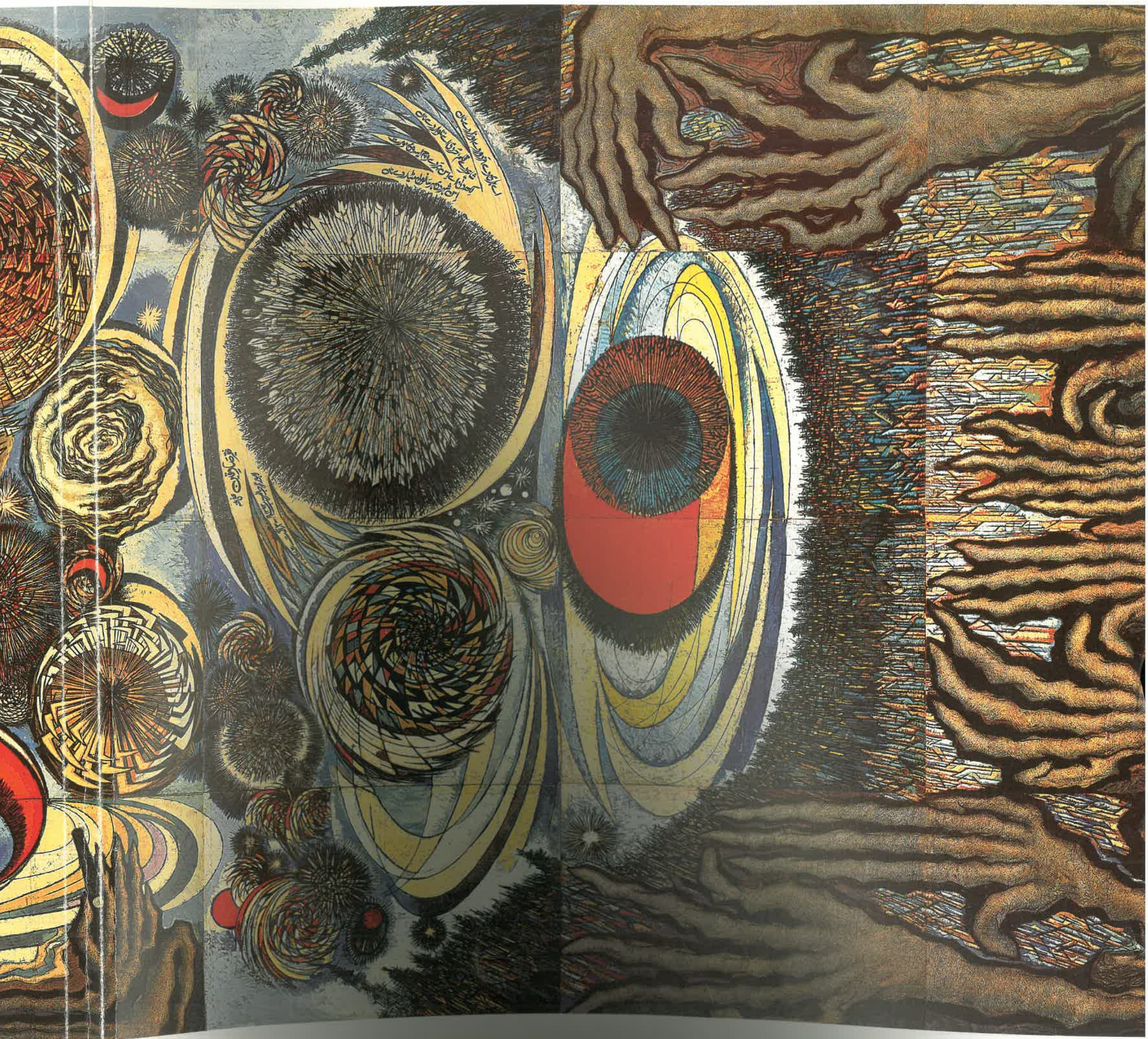


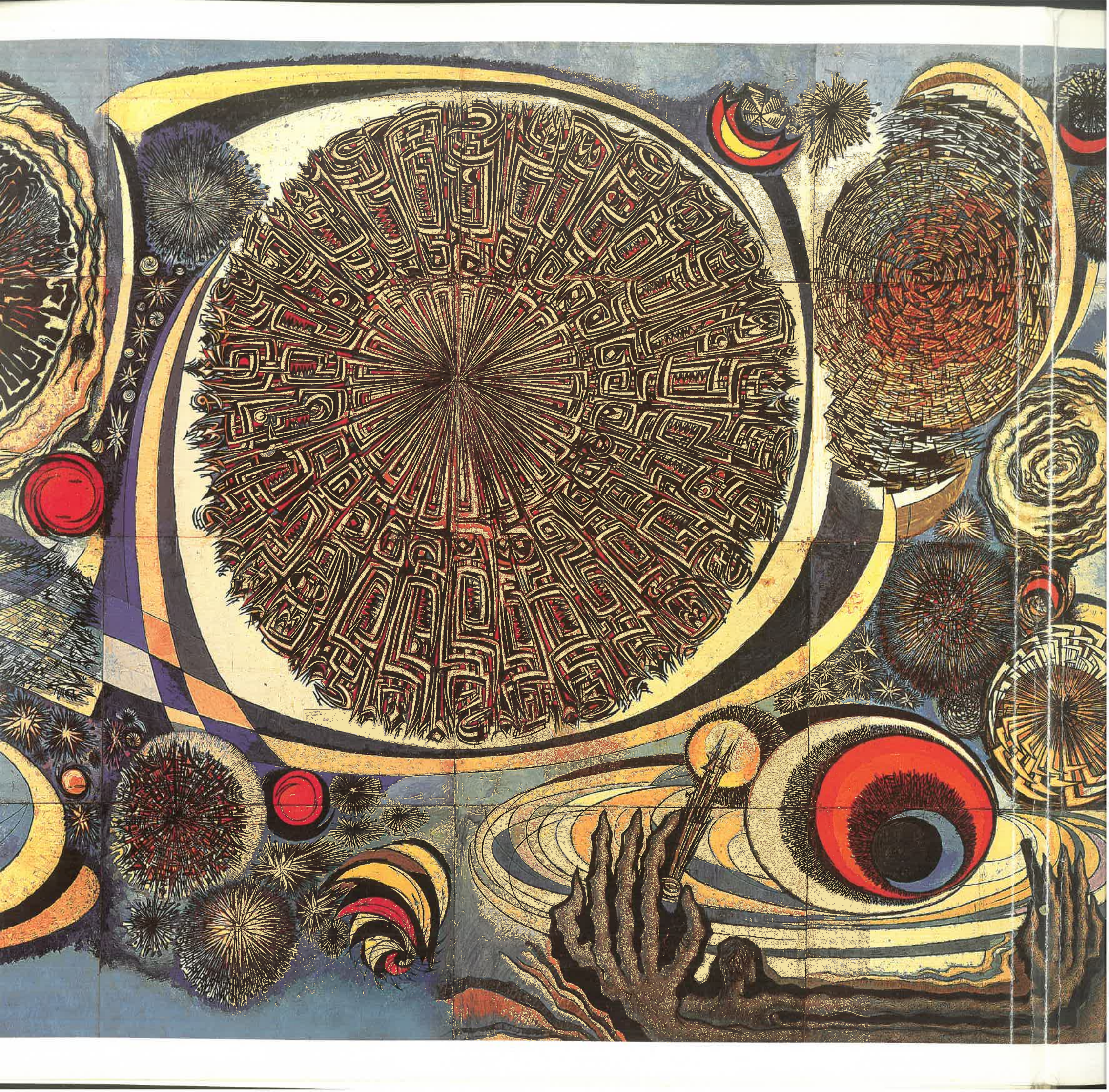
Section of mural "Treasures of Time," 68 x 8 feet, 1961, State Bank of Pakistan

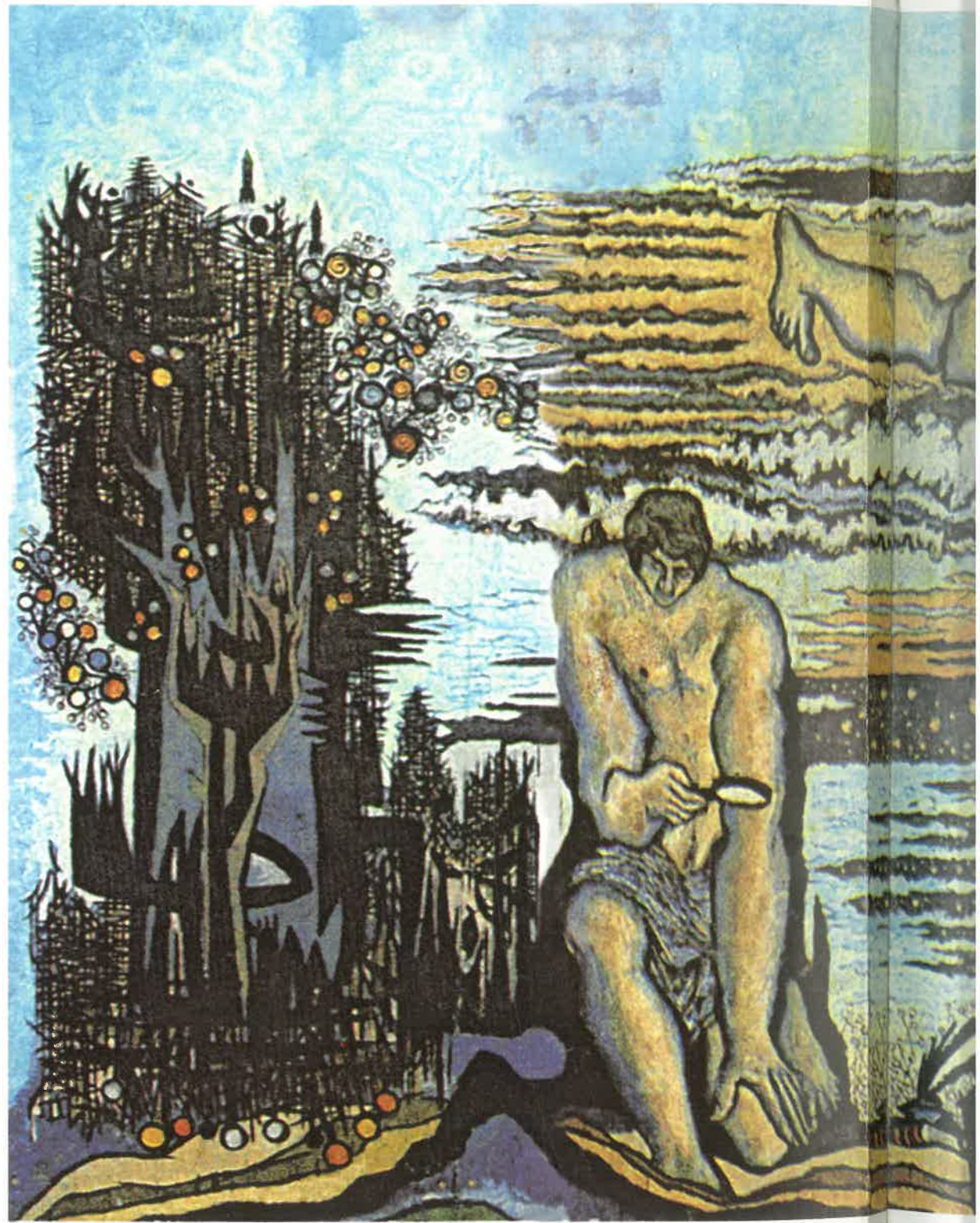


شاو سے آگے ہوا اور عین

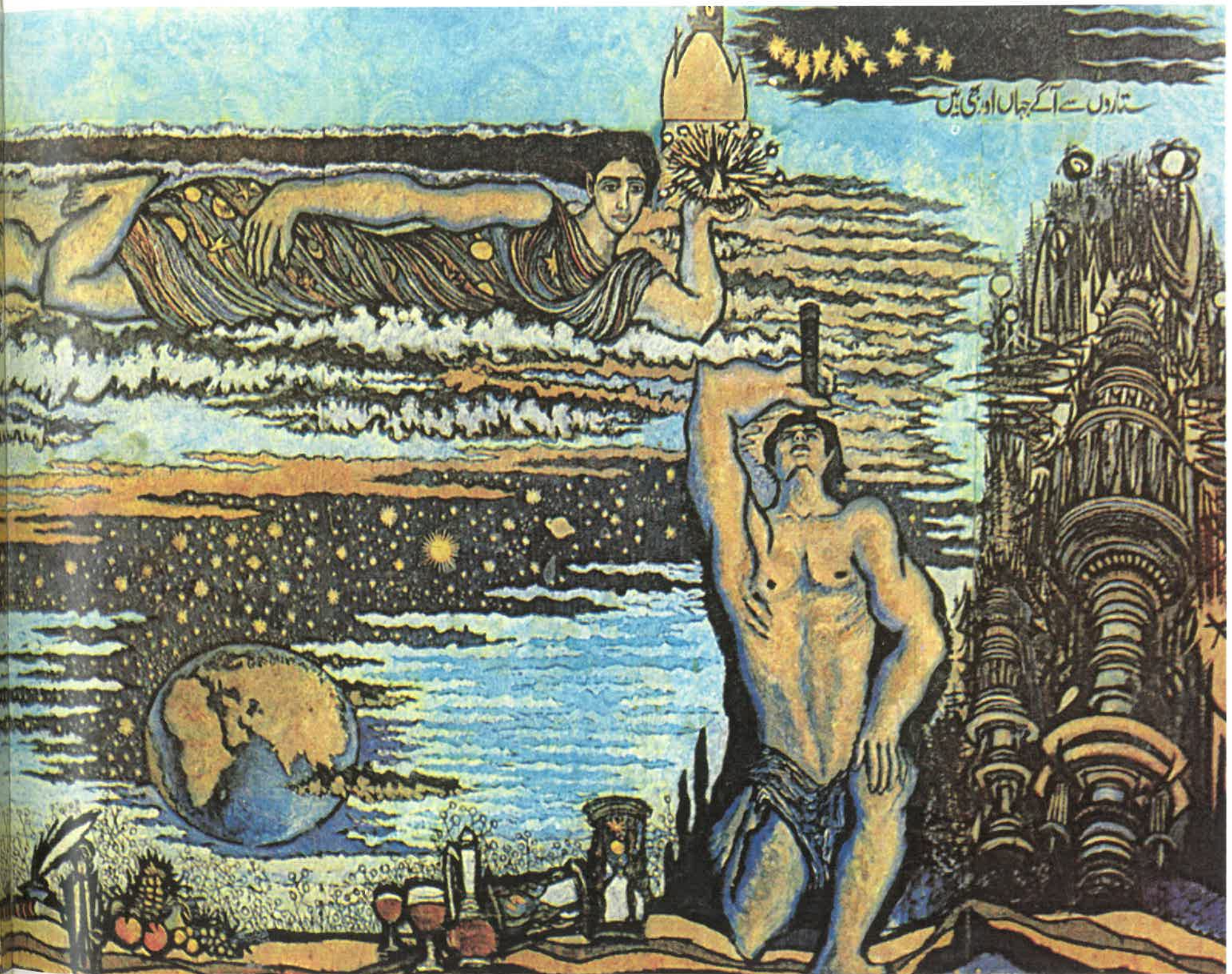








Section of mural "Saga of Labor,"
170 x 28 feet, 1967, Mangla Dam





Mural "Explorers," 30 x 15 feet,
1982, Banaras Hindu University





Calligraphy of "Sura-e-Rehman"

Calligraphy

In 1969, Sadequain painted 31 individual panels of separate refrains of the picturesque verse "Sura-e-Rahman." The words were written in ingenious designs and set in appropriate scenes and settings. Everything has an adornment, and the adornment of the Holy Quran is the verse, Sura-e-Rehman, the "Beauty of the Quran."

The main theme of this verse is the manifestation and attribution of Allah's mercy and grace, which is evident right from the beginning, until the very end. The epithets of God are emphasized as "The Beneficent and The Compassionate." The verse has the refrain: "Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?" It is repeated 31 times. The artist dwelt upon the imagery of letters to ensure that his illustrations were understood by everyone. These calligraphies are not meant to be read, but rather to preserve the mystical power of the letter.

Sadequain devoted the decade of the 1970s exclusively to calligraphic work. In his own words he "wrote thousands of verses of the Holy Quran, which if placed at tandem would stretch for miles and miles."



Calligraphy of "Surā-e-Rehman"



Calligraphy of "Qul"





Calligraphy of "Kalima"



on from the novel "The Stranger," written by Albert Camus



Illustration from the novel "The Stranger," written by Albert Camus

Classical Poetic Illustrations

Reaching back to his rich cultural heritage, Sadequain illustrated the poetry of Ghalib, Iqbal, and Faiz. The illustrations of Ghalib were done in 1968 and 1969, Iqbal's during 1977, and Faiz's verses were illustrated in 1971 and 1985.

In addition, in 1966, Sadequain was commissioned to illustrate the novel, *The Stranger* written by the Nobel laureate, Albert Camus of France.

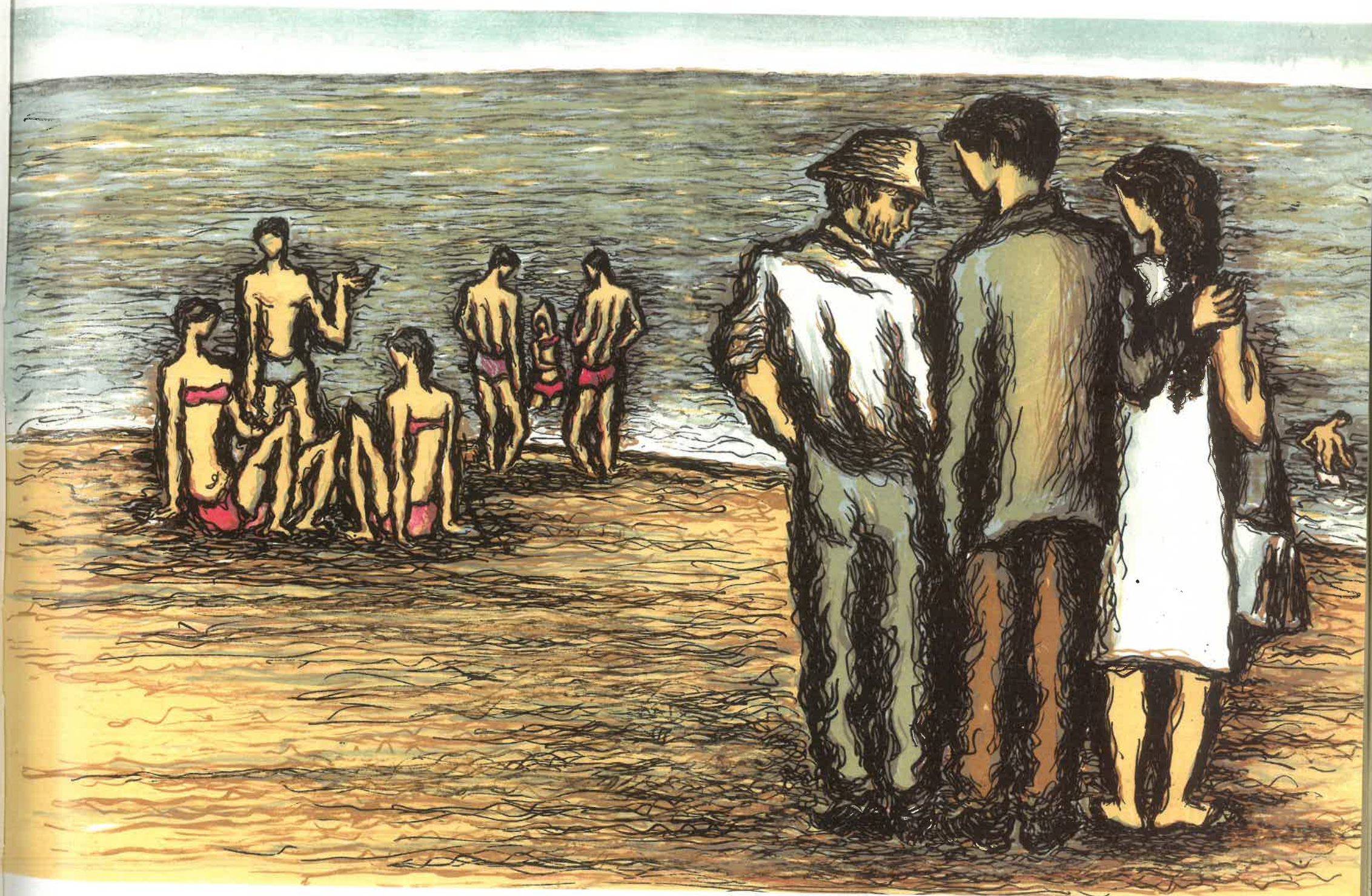


Illustration from the novel "The Stranger," written by Albert Camus

Poetry

Sadequain wrote his first piece of poetry at the age of 11. Among his published works, are four collections of rubaiyyat, titled, Rubaiyyat-e-Sadequain Khattat, Rubaiyyat-e-Sadequain Naqqash, Bayaz-e-Sadequaini, and Juzw-e-Bosida. For one version of his collection of rubaiyyat, he illustrated his poetry by more than 200 exquisite drawings. The first three collections of rubaiyyat were composed, inscribed and illustrated by Sadequain during the decade of the 1970s, and the last collection represents his poetry of his teen years.

In an attempt to further elaborate on Sadequain's vision, following 8 pages are replicated from Sadequain's collection of rubaiyyat in Urdu language, which help explain in his own words, the *Situation* as he saw around him, his *Motivation* to capture the situation, his approach in *Rendition* of his motivation, and how he envisioned the *Destination* of his work.

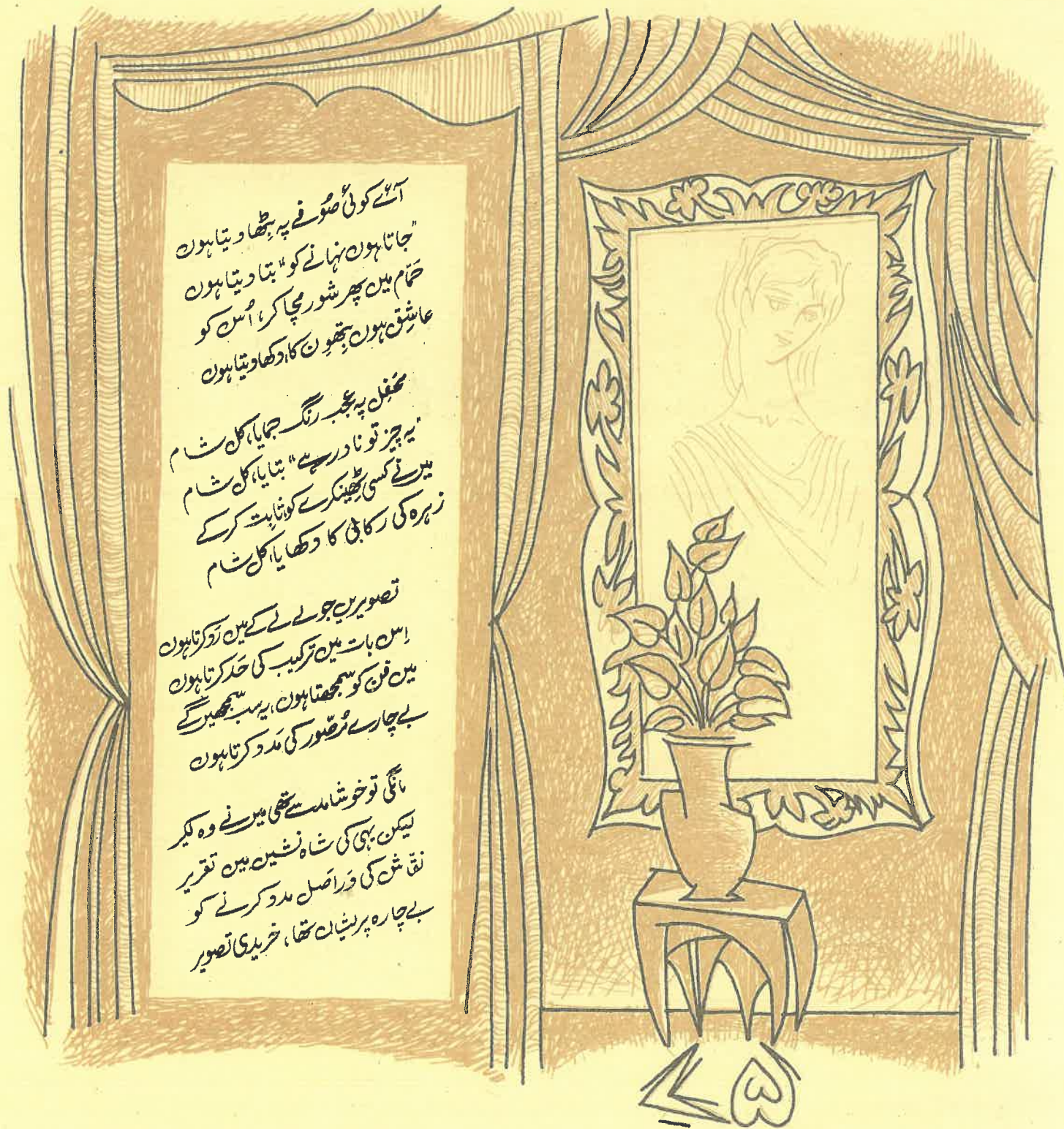
Situation - as Sadequain saw around him

Those who frequent my abode I ask them to wait
Tell them I have to cleanse and only then attend to them
In the room next door, I raise my voice and start to hum
To impress upon the visitor that I am an admirer of Beethoven

Impressed them all who were present last night
This is a rare specimen I announced with pride
Though it was mere trash, I alleged in front of the crowd
What a rare gem it was, I lied and lied and lied

I examine each painting up close then reject
Extreme tactics I employ on this subject
I bluff and show support for the cause of the arts
To buttress my lies I toast the poor artist's abstract

Though I begged the painter for his work
But I bragged shamelessly in the drawing room
Helped the poor painter out of pity, I claimed
So I bought his painting with inscription of my name



آئے کوئی صوفی پہ بٹھا دیتا ہوں
جاتا ہوں نہانے کو "بتا دیتا ہوں
خام میں پھر شور مچا کر، اس کو
عاشق ہوں بھون کا دکھا دیتا ہوں

مخمل پہ بچہ رنگ جمایا، کل شام
یہ چیز تو نادرس ہے "بتایا، کل شام
میں نے کسی ٹھینکے کو ثابت کر کے
زہرہ کی رکابی کا دکھایا، کل شام

تصویریں جو لے کے ہیں دکھاتا ہوں
اس بات میں ترکیب کی حد کرتا ہوں
میں فن کو سمجھتا ہوں، یہ سب سمجھیں گے
بے چارے مرقور کی مدد کرتا ہوں

مانگی تو خوشامد سے تھی میں نے وہ کیر
لیکن یہی کی شاہ نشین میں تقریر
نقاش کی واصل مدد کرنے کو
بے چارہ پریشان تھا، خریدی تصویر

Situation - as Sadequain saw around him

It is not polite to chime my own accolades
So I invite the guests to sit at the vantage spot
But the costly Gandhara stature on the mantle
Boasts of my wealth and boosts my ego a lot

I inspected the painting from an acute angle
Then stepped back to cast a critical glance
Poor painter was duly impressed, I reckon
Must be convinced that I was a connoisseur

Offered a few drinks to the painter
And tricked him to usurp his painting
Then invited guests to my pretentious abode
And bragged about the collection of my loot

Gandhara statue is seated in the corner
Strategically placed to impress them all
I point to everyone its lineage and price
And laugh discreetly after bulldozing them all



زیبا نہیں خود کروں جو اپنی توصیف
آئے کوئی کہتا ہوں کہ رکھتے تشریف
گندھارا کا کارنہن پہ گوتم لیکن
کرتا ہے مرے فوق ہنر کی تعریف

اک زاویہ راز سے دیکھی میں نے
اک فاصلہ ناز سے دیکھی میں نے
نقاش بھی سمجھا کہ سمجھتا میں ہوں
رسمیراں انداز سے دیکھی میں نے

فن کار کو دو جام دیئے ہیں، میں نے
ترکیب سے مانا کہ لئے ہیں، میں نے
سب دیکھنے آئے ہیں مکان پر میرے
شہکار، اسٹھ جو کیئے ہیں، میں نے

گندھارا کا گوشے میں جو گوتم، میں نے
رکھا ہے انہیں کرنے کو گوتم، میں نے
ہر شخص سے کہتے ہوئے اصلی یہ ہے
دل میں کیا ہلکا سا بتسم، میں نے

۱۱

Situation - as Sadequain saw around him

Behind the veil of set backs lurks my own self interest
Hidden under the veil, megalomania rules
I mingle with the big wigs only so I could
Drop their names to gain favors when I chose

Flatulent and pretentious I frequent the worldly crowd
Frankly speaking I indulge only with inflated and imperious
To seek personal gains I go out of my way
And meet and greet only overbearing and portentous

Ah, the art of conversation let me explain
I just remembered, that is my favorite refrain
I groom, dress up and memorize clever phrases
This is how I impress and countless favors I gain

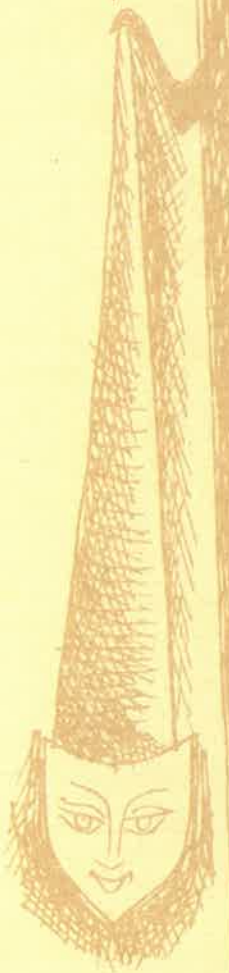
I delivered an eloquent speech contrary to the norm
That impressed most and made them feel inferior
Last night when I prepared for a society gathering
Memorized few quotations before heading to the congregation

نقصان کے ڈھانچے پر کھڑا فائدہ ہے
 کھوروں جو دینے سے گڑا، فائدہ ہے
 ہر کام کا آدمی ہے واقف، اس سے
 میں دوستی کروں تو بڑا فائدہ ہے

بن چٹن کے ہر اکبزم میں جاتا یوں ہوں
 یہ سچ ہے کہ میں پتلا پلا تائوں ہوں
 کچھ کس میں برا فائدہ ہو جاتا ہے
 لوگوں سے رہ ورام بڑھاتا یوں ہوں

"یاو آیا" یہی کہہ کے مٹنا ہے مجھے
 خود ہٹنا نہیں، اُن کو ہٹنا ہے مجھے
 بن چٹن کے کتابوں میں رُطیفہ پڑھ کر
 اک محفل گل رنگ میں جانا ہے مجھے

کی بات جو کچھ عام روشن سے ہٹ کر
 ہر کوئی تھا پھر علم میں مجھ سے گھٹ کر
 اک بزم میں، کل گھر سے جو چلتے چلتے
 پہنچا تھا، میں دو چار مقولے رٹ کر



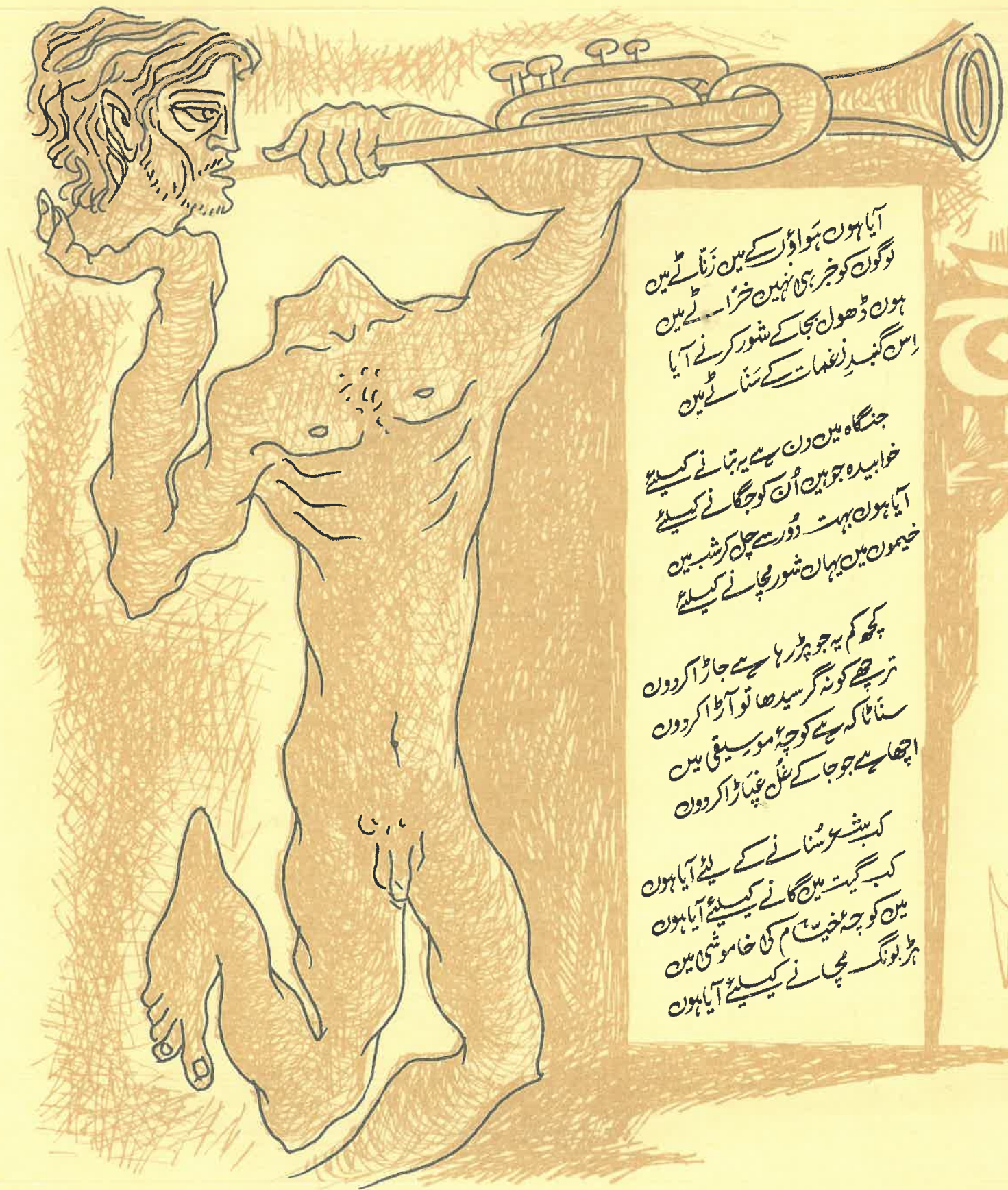
Motivation - that encouraged Sadequain to capture the situation

I have arrived like a gust of wind
Those who are asleep are ignorant to their peril
I beat the drum aloud and announce my arrival
In the atrium of the silent symphony

The dawn has arrived in the battle field I announced
Woke up the complacent to prepare and protect
I have traveled afar in the dark of the night
To lay the foundations of the dawn of the intellect

Fire up the emotions and warm up the chill
If not completely upright, may be half way up hill
Silence is deafening in the city of hope
So raise a raucous and shake the young and old

I have not arrived on the wings of lyrical notes
Nor to relax to the tune of soothing music
I, in the silence of the valley of Khayyam
Have arrived to play the discordant cords

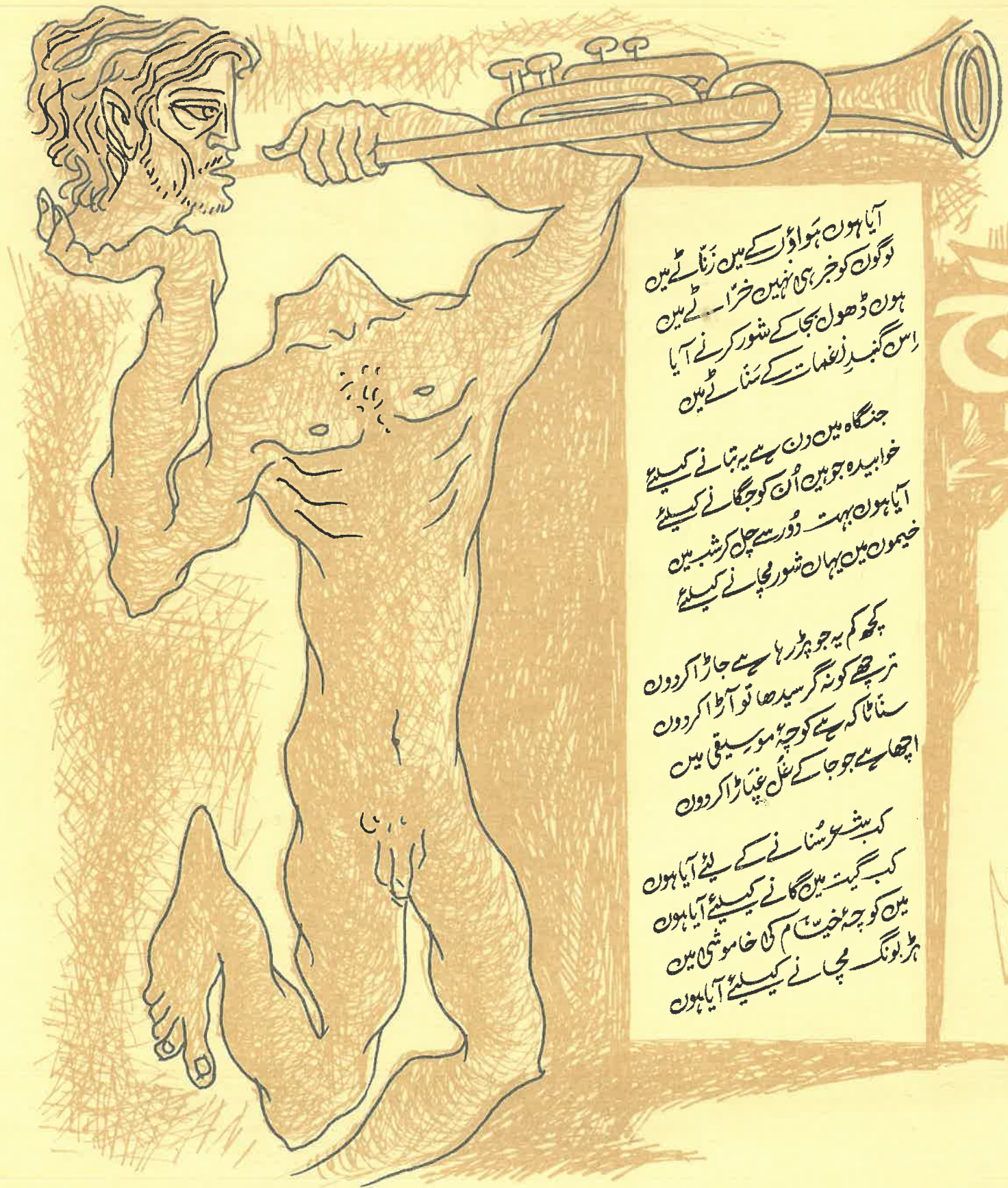


آیا ہوں ہواؤں کے میں زناے میں
لوگوں کو خبر ہی نہیں خراے میں
ہوں ڈھول بجا کے شور کرنے آیا
اس گنبدِ زلفیات کے سناے میں

جنگاہ میں دن سے یہ بتانے کیلئے
خوابیدہ جو ہیں اُن کو جگانے کیلئے
آیا ہوں بہت دُور سے چل کر شب میں
خیموں میں یہاں شور مچانے کیلئے

کچھ کم یہ جو بڑا ہے جاڑا کروں
ترچھے کونہ گر سیدھا تو آڑا کروں
سناٹا کہ سے کوچہ موسیقی میں
اچھا ہے جو جا کے غل غپاڑا کروں

کبش سنانے کے لئے آیا ہوں
کب گیت میں گانے کیلئے آیا ہوں
میں کوچہ غیت م کی خاموشی میں
ہڑ بونگ مچانے کیلئے آیا ہوں



آیا ہوں ہواؤں کے میں زناے میں
لوگوں کو خبر ہی نہیں خراے میں
ہوں ڈھول بجا کے شور کرنے آیا
اس گنبدِ رفعت کے سناے میں

جنگاہ میں دن سے رات بتانے کیلئے
خوابیدہ جو ہیں اُن کو جگانے کیلئے
آیا ہوں بہت دُور سے چل کر شب میں
خیوں میں یہاں شور مچانے کیلئے

کچھ کم یہ جو پڑھا ہے جاڑا کر دوں
ترجہ کو نہ گرسیدھا تو آڑا کر دوں
سناٹا کہ ہے کوچہ موسیقی میں
اچھا ہے جو جا کے غل غپاڑا کر دوں

کبشہ سنانے کے لئے آیا ہوں
کب گیت میں گانے کیلئے آیا ہوں
میں کوچہِ مخیت ام کی خاموشی میں
ہڑ لونگ مچانے کیلئے آیا ہوں

Rendition - Sadequain's approach, a sarcastic rebuke

For ages I have painted relentlessly
For long I have serenaded my illusive muse
My memory is sharp and I can recall ancient events
But how long have I been painting, that is too long to recall

It is fire, flame, and restlessness or what else
Like an erupting volcano in my heart; what is it
I burn in the fire of desire, but why
Is it the lifeblood of sacrifice; what else

I styled the curls of thy tresses
And improved thy facial features
I searched for inspiration from the same source
Written with pen of destiny dipped in ink of soul

Why do you purchase my priceless painting
Simply cherish it with your vision and soul
It is not done with the ordinary oil and paint
I have painted it with my blood, sweat and more

نقاشی نہ جانے ہے مرادیں کب سے؟
 فرادہ ہوں میں اور یہ ہے ٹریں کب سے؟
 ہے حافظہ اچھا یہ نہیں ہے یہ یاد
 ہیں خونِ جگر میں ہاتھ رنگیں کب سے؟

منکلم ہے، شرارہ ہے، چھلاوا کیا ہے؟
 جو بھوٹنا دل میں ہے وہ لاوا کیا ہے؟
 اس کو ہی بہاتا ہوں، متا جی عاشق
 ہے خونِ جگر اس کے علاوہ کیا ہے؟

منقوش کیا زلف کے خم کو میں نے
 کچھ بیش کیا صورتِ کم کو میں نے
 اور جب بھی ڈبویا تو ڈبویا ہر بار
 دل ہی کے لہو میں موقلم کو میں نے

کیوں اس کو خریدتے ہو زر سے اپنے
 حاصل کرواؤ ذوقِ نظر سے اپنے
 کب پاؤں کے میل سے بنائی میں نے
 تصویرِ بنی خونِ جگر سے اپنے



11

Rendition - Sadequain's approach, a sarcastic rebuke

Painter claimed to have offered selfless affection
Rendered his tender feelings on to the canvas
Luscious desires wrapped in charm and allure
Exquisite imagination of illusive existence

Painter claimed he was a roving gypsy
But then he claimed he could move no more
Soon exquisite elegance ruffled his imagination
Arrested was his attention by temptation and allure

Painter was deliberate in sketching the portrait
Crossed the bridge of ecstatic fantasy
Walked gently across the broad horizon
Rendered the reflection of exquisite silhouette

Lonely self, so quite, tranquil and serene
Silence of sweet whispers and sounds of anticipation
In the reflection of the cherished privacy
Murmuring shadows slide through the lonely night

کہتا تھا موصو کہ مجھ تو دی تھی
جو دل میں تھی میرے اُس صورت دی تھی
اک لوح کی ساوگی نے بڑھ کر میرے
کل حسی تصور کو جو دھوٹ دی تھی

نقاش یہ بولا کہ میں بنجی رہا تھا
پھر کہ گیا، چلنے کا گہاں یا رہا تھا
اک لوح کی ساوگی نے آگے بڑھ کر
جب میرے خیالات کو لٹکا رہا تھا

نقاش نے کھینچی ہے سب کچھ کر تصویر
اک پہلے یہ خیالات کے چل کر تصویر
وہاں پہ اسٹند خرامی کر کے
آئی ہے دیر دل سے نکل کر تصویر

تنہا ہے مری ذات، نظر آتی ہیں
کرتی ہوئی کچھ بات، نظر آتی ہیں
ہاں پردہ خلوت پہ نہ جانے کس کی
پر چھائیوں ہر رات، نظر آتی ہیں



Rendition - Sadequain's approach, a sarcastic rebuke

Wandering imagination across and beyond
Searching for enticing stimulation
Discovered exposed bodies of ravishing nymphets
Lodged in the deep crevasses of imagination

She seemed a bit too young
Like a butterfly resting on a rose bud
The flight of imagination summoned her image
Delicately rolling and softly touching my soul

Even thy fragrance can reveal the essence
Near and dear should be kept close to the heart
The regal stance of thy beauty and grace
Even the shadow can expose the concealed details

The eyes relished and measured thy gems
Imagination explored the contours of thy self
With one snap of an imaginative moment
Caressed the delicate warmth of thy self



جس اپنے خیالات کو ہانک میں نے
پایا جسے دیکھا اُسے بانک میں نے
اگر غول حینوں کا تھا بالکل عریان
کل اپنے داغ میں جو جھانک میں نے

کچھ لگتی ہوئی عمر سے چھوٹی وہ تھی
پتے پر کوئی زیر نہ ہوئی وہ تھی
چادر پر خیالات کی برسات، کل شب
پیکر پر لگا کے رنگ لونی وہ تھی

خوشنودی اگر آئے تو چکھ لیتے ہیں
ناور ہو تو دل میں اُسے رکھ لیتے ہیں
ہم حسی خدو خالِ قد و قامت کو
پرچھائیں بھی دیکھیں تو پرکھ لیتے ہیں

موتی جو ہیں سب رول چکی ہیں نظریں
محفل میں تجھے تو لچکی ہیں نظریں
چٹکی سے تصور کی، یکا یک تیرے
سب بندِ قبا کھول چکی ہیں نظریں

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Destination - Sadequain's approved venues to display his works

It is meant to refine the sense of appreciation
It is meant to be felt by the heart
Oh, how can I convince my painting is not for the décor
Of the ostentatious mansion of an up-start

Not in the mansions of black marketers
I am not desperate and out of hope
My monuments adorn the libraries though
But never would hang in embezzler's abode

Yes I painted in the libraries
And also painted in the academic institutions
But places where the concubines reside
Will never display my compositions

Where art merchants reside, I do not fancy visiting
I keep the company of the good and not the abominable
My monuments only adorn the institutions of learning
But never found in the mansions of the reprehensible

ہے ذوقِ جمال کو جگانے کیلئے
یہ چیز، دلوں میں ہے سمانے کیلئے
کس سے کہوں؟ تصویر نہیں ہوتی ہے
عشرتِ گیر زردار سجانے کیلئے

سیٹھو کے سکانائیں کب ہیں اسے
ایسے بُرے سکانائیں کب ہیں اسے
ہیں لا بُریریوں میں یرے شہکار
سے کی عمارتیں کب ہیں اسے

ہاں لا بُریری میں ہمارے میں نے
شہکارِ مدر سے میں لگائے میں نے
عباسِ جہان جلتے ہیں زندگی بھر
کب ایسے مقامات بچائے میں نے

جو غری کی ہیں، اسی حلوں میں کب ہیں
نیوں میں ہیں اسے دو بدوں میں کب ہیں
یری تو ندر سوانی میں تصویریں ہیں
میخانوں میں اور عیشِ کدوں میں کب ہیں





Cover page of Collection of Sadequain's Letters

Collection of Sadequain's Letters

Perhaps the only example of collection of letters by a non political personality, besides Ghalib's famous letters, is a collection of Sadequain's letters to his family written during his overseas travels in the 1960s. The collection of letters is an unedited version, which provides a unique window to Sadequain's personality as a family man, an unusual perspective of a man who never married and did not leave an immediate family behind.

Epilogue

This book is a celebration of the most intriguing and innovative artwork of a national icon who crossed the traditional and predefined boundaries of artistic forms, norms, subjects, objects, shades, dimensions, and every other confinement that he deemed as an obstruction. He did not work under some preordained plan, but rather allowed his instincts to guide him freely toward the peaks of perfection. Compliance was not in his genes.

This book is also a cry for help. You see, Sadequain unwittingly gave away or, in many instances, simply lost majority of his work. He presumed, in most cases, if he gave away his work, it would preserve his legacy somehow. Now we know his assumption bordered on misplaced trust. As a result, there does not exist a catalog that would preserve even a fraction of his work; three art galleries that were established in his lifetime are no more; and his art, that he considered a sacrilege to sell, now is selling in large numbers all around the world.

The SADEQUAIN Foundation has no control over the prevailing circumstances, but it strives to discover, preserve, and promote the art of Sadequain by using all resources at its disposal.

This book cannot be considered a scholarly research by any stretch. However, it is hoped that this book provides a collection of Sadequain's body of work, which has mostly remained unknown to the world so far and allows the reader a peek at the most extraordinary pieces of artwork produced by Sadequain in a burst of creative ecstasy.

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Select World Press on Sadequain

Sadequain traveled all over the world long before it became fashionable and accessible to his generation. His paintings were widely displayed on five continents and received praise from public and connoisseurs alike and commanded generous press coverage.

Below are select excerpts from print media from all five continents. News excerpts from Pakistan and India are not included.

AFRICA:

Al-Ahram, Cairo, Egypt
November 2, 1974

His paintings are characterized by a humanitarian touch, which abhors destruction and death and calls for life. The breath-taking beauty and elegance of the Arabic alphabet in its permutations and combinations of the horizontal, the vertical and the curvilinear, enthralled Egyptian artists.

ASIA:

Milli Gazette, Istanbul, Turkey
December 11, 1975

Sadequain, Pioneer of Islamic Painting.

Tasvir, Ankara, Turkey
December 17, 1975

The renowned artist Sadequain is highly keen and productive artist.

Milli Gazette, Istanbul, Turkey
December 17, 1975

The people who visited Sadequain's exhibition were delighted to see that the gallery had assumed an entirely different look due to Sadequain's works on display.

Tasvir, Ankara, Turkey
December 10, 1975

The renowned artist Sadequain is most prolific.

Yeni Ulus, Ankara, Turkey
December 10, 1975

Sadequain, who became famous more than twenty years ago for his abstract paintings, introduced something quite unique in the world of art, namely the ornate paintings or calligraphy of verses of the Holy Quran.

Al-Dustour, Amman, Jordan
November 29, 1974

Sadequain, The Great Islamic Artist and his ability to transform Arab Calligraphy into Expressive Paintings. For the first time in modern history, an Islamic Artist surpassed himself and others in East and West.

Al-Liwa, Lebanon
November 16, 1974

Sadequain, a great contemporary artist. He is very serious and a social critic with a transparent eye to things and life. It seems that Sadequain is not indebted at all to Western Art, for, he only emerges from two springs the Muslim past and the natural environment of his country and all his artistic works are combined either with Muslim past or with human being and from them he drives his inspiration.

Al-Thawra, Damascus, Syria
November 27, 1974

From within these works, Sadequain seems a calligraphist, and original master of his craft to the extent that he carries out the script from all directions with power, mastery and perfection.

Al-Urdun, Amman, Jordan
November 27, 1974

When his pen moves in his hands, it seems all nature, including the past, present and future moves.

Kayhan International, Iran
January 4, 1976

Calligraphy takes off into space.

Khaleej Times, UAE
June 20, 1980

Renaissance of Islamic Calligraphy. A mystic artist from Pakistan who has become a legend in his own time. The remarkable story of Sadequain, who did not seek but was endowed with divine inspiration.

Rastakhez, Tehran, Iran
January 4, 1974

From Agony to Ecstasy.

UAE News, UAE
October 26, 1974

His exhibition in Abu Dhabi has been seen by many people and most of the visitors who inspected his works wanted to buy them. "But the exhibits are not for sale" he told them.

The Daily News, Kuwait
November 26, 1974

Sadequain is a lean thin man of 44, very amiable and pleasant and every inch an artist. He lives the life of a dervish.

Tehran Journal, Tehran, Iran
January 2, 1976

However, none of the works on display are for sale and many prospective buyers have been disappointed by this aspect of his exhibition.

AUSTRALIA:

Daily West, Perth, Australia
August 1975

Sadequain, the great speaker of truth.

EUROPE:

Le Figaro, Paris, France
October 16, 1962

Raymond Congiat wrote, "Sadequain adds up the impression of space, density, volume, and the reality of matter, which transforms an abstract thought into a material fact in plastic."

Le Monde et La Vie, Paris, France
April 1964

The multiplicity of Sadequain's gifts is reminiscent of Picasso.

London Times, London, England
November 7, 1963

There is an impressive fund of energy in his works.

Pictures on Exhibit, Paris, France
October 1963

Sadequain's recent exhibition at Galerie Mona Lisa, Paris suggests there is a new personality in art.

Romania Libera, Bucharest, Romania
October 22, 1975

Sadequain, A Remarkable Messenger of Pakistani Art. The huge paintings of Sadequain's calligraphy illustrating thus to their best, the eloquent sources of an art that succeeds in suggesting the passionate approach of many fundamental views on human being's existence.

Scinteia, Bucharest, Romania
October 22, 1975

The creation of Sadequain is a modern vision of a strong expressiveness and commotional force.
The Arts Review, London, England
October 6, 1963

In Sadequain's gouaches the metamorphoses of plant into human figures have cosmic implications.

The Arts Review, London, England
November 30, 1963

Although Sadequain's paintings are saturated with all that identifies him with his natural background or development he has clearly succeeded in transplanting his vision into an internationally understood medium.

The Arts Review, London, England
December 15, 1963

The exhibition of paintings by Sadequain held in Commonwealth Institute Art Gallery so impressed the directors of the New Vision Center that they have arranged a subsequent show of his work.

DAWN's London Correspondent
November 2, 1963

Art critics on both sides of the Atlantic and particularly in parts where Sadequain is living at present are unanimous in their praise of his evocative use of large dramatic forms and his distinctive color range. He is by far the most exciting and imaginative Pakistani artist to enter and conquer the western art world.

USA:

Christian Science Monitor, USA
January 1970

Pakistan's pride — Artist Sadequain.

New York Times, USA
August 14, 1963

There is a New Personality in Art.

Washington Post, USA
July 28, 1963

Pakistan's Sadequain — Upside Down Artist.

Washington Post, USA
August 11, 1963

Like every born artist Sadequain thinks in terms of form rather than the subject matter. His drawings are sophisticated and knowledgeable.

Select Chronological Bio Data

- 1930: Born in Amroha, UP, India.
- 1935: Admitted to ancestral school, Imam-ul-Madaris in Amroha.
- 1940: Demonstrated early signs of artistic talent.
- 1941: Manually inscribed and duplicated entire textbook of geography.
- 1942: Manually drew the contents of a world atlas.
- 1943: Painted on the walls of neighborhood homes a world map tracking troop movements of World War II.
- 1945: Composed a 46 "bund" marsia in commemoration of the death of his sister.
- Completed high school, appointed art teacher at his alma mater.
- Drew a portrait of Mr. Naqvi.
- 1945: Composed, inscribed, compiled more poetry.
- 1946: Moved to Delhi and upon an impromptu demonstration of talent for penmanship on a street corner, secured a job offer on the spot as a professional inscriber of Urdu text for All India Radio.
- 1947: Inscribed for All India Radio, the poetry collections of classical Urdu poets and sketched their portraits for official catalogs.
- 1948: Graduated from Agra University in Art History and Geography. Migrated to Pakistan.
- 1949: Stayed at Sujawal with his brother. Composed inscribed, compiled, and bound the collections of *ghazal*, *nazm*, and *marsia*, later privately published entitled, *Juzw-e-Bosida*.

- 1950: Worked at Agricultural College in Sakrand as an illustrator in Botany Department.
- 1951: Stayed in Quetta for several months with his brother and sketched pen and ink portraits of Baluchi nomads and landscape drawings.
- 1952: Worked at Radio Pakistan Karachi as an assistant program producer.
- 1953: Compiled his first catalog of drawings and portraits of common people on streets and trains, as well as family members.
- 1954: Solo exhibition at the Quetta Town Hall of 35 selected works.
- Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy visited Sadequain's home, Sibtain Manzil for a preview of paintings.
- 1955:
- July: Solo exhibition at the residence of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy in Clifton.
October: Executed two murals at Jinnah Hospital Karachi Ward number 5.
- 1956: Painted full-time at home, Sibtain Manzil in Nazimabad Karachi.
- 1957:
- April: Solo exhibition at the Frere Hall in Karachi, inaugurated by Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy.
December: Executed a mural, 45 x 8 feet for the Karachi Airport Departure Lounge.
- 1958:
- July: Exhibition sponsored by the Quetta Fine Arts Society in Quetta. Jamshed Marker, an eminent art collector, booked all the paintings.
- September: Established studio at seaside village of Gadani.
December: Executed the mural "Smuggler."
- 1959:
- July: Executed a mural for the Committee Room at Mangla Dam on the subject of Dignity of Labor.
November: Executed a mural "Quest for Knowledge" at the Services Club in Karachi.

1960:

- January: Exhibition at the Town Hall Quetta. None of the paintings was for sale. After the exhibition, he gifted the entire collection to a photographer friend.
- March: Awarded "Tamgha-e-Imtiaz" by the president of Pakistan.
- July: First Prize in the All Pakistan National Exhibition of Paintings for the painting titled "Man at Sandspit."
- December: Left for France at the invitation of the French Committee of the International Association of Plastic Arts.

1961:

- August-October: Executed the largest mural in Pakistan at the time, "Treasures of Time" and 11 smaller murals and metallic cut-out sculptures for the headquarters of the State Bank of Pakistan, Karachi.
- September-October: Participated in Biennale of Paris and awarded "Laureate Biennale de Paris" by the International Jury of Critics.

1962:

- March: Awarded "President's Medal for Pride of Performance."
- June-July: Exhibition at Musee Maision du Culture, Le Havre, France.
- October: One-man exhibition at Galerie Lambert, Paris.
- October: Permanent display at Galerie Mona Lisa, Paris.

1963:

- May-August: Visited USA, UK, and France.
- August: Exhibition at Henry Gallery, Washington.
- October-November: Exhibition at the Commonwealth Institute Galleries, London.
- December: Exhibition at the N.V.C. Gallery, London.
- December: Exhibition in the 5th Salon of the "Young and Great Artists" at the Museum of Modern Art, Paris.

1964:

- February: Exhibition at Galerie Presbourg, Paris.
- February: Selected to do color lithographs for a special publication of the novel by Albert Camus, *L'Étranger* (The Stranger) published by the Automobile Club of France.
- August-September: Worked on lithographs for The Stranger.
- September: Paid visit to Karachi.
- November: Returned to Paris to continue work on The Stranger.

1965:

Participated in several exhibitions in France.

- February: Exhibition at Nouran Le Havre.
- April-May: Exhibition at Palais de la Mediterranee.
Exhibition at Chateau-Musee Annecy.
Exhibition at Musee Casino Dieppe.
Exhibition at Casino de Charbonnieres.
Exhibition at Musee Macon.
- June: Came back to Karachi.
- August: Exhibition at the Arts Council Gallery, Karachi.
- September: Exhibition at Alhamra, Lahore.
- October-November: Executed the mural "War and Peace" at Karachi.

1966:

- May: Exhibition of drawings at Hotel Intercontinental Karachi.
- July: Retrospective exhibition of 300 paintings at the Banking Hall of the State Bank of Pakistan, Karachi.
- July: Exhibition on Lloyd Triestino's ship "Victoria" while crossing the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Adriatic Sea.
- August: Executed a mural in Lausanne, Switzerland entitled "Pakistan" in the Pakistan Pavilion in the Swiss Fair. Later on, that mural was reported to be exhibited in New York, Tokyo and Toronto, Canada.
- September: Exhibition in Lausanne, Switzerland.
- October: Exhibition sponsored by Automobile Club of France, Place de la Concorde, Paris.
- October: Executed a mural "Flight" in the PIA Office at Paris.

1967:

- April: Accompanied his father from Paris to perform "ziaraat" in Iraq. He was deeply impressed by the calligraphic inscriptions on the holy shrines.
- May: Executed mural "Flight II" in Karachi (for a friend's travel agency).
- August-October: Executed the mural "Saga of Labor" at Mangla Dam Power House.
- December: Executed a Mural "Light of the Book" in the Punjab Public Library.

1968:

- January: Executed the mural "Quest for Knowledge II" for the library of the Punjab University.
- February: Executed two murals for the Auditorium of Punjab University titled, "Confrontation" and "Triumph."
- March: Exhibition of murals and paintings at "Alhamra" in Lahore.
- April: Transformed the unfinished auditorium of the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs into a painting workshop.

August: Held series of expositions of paintings at the PIA Auditorium.
 September: Exhibition of series of paintings titled "Barbed Wire."
 October: Exhibition of collection of mystic figurations including "Reflection Series."
 November: Exposition of 25 paintings, illustration on the verses of Mirza Ghalib.
 November: Extended inscription of Ghalib's verses to calligraphy of Quranic Verses.
 December: Exposition of the calligraphies of verses of the Holy Quran executed during the month of Ramzan.

1969:

February-March: Additional 25 paintings based on the poetry of Ghalib and inscribed corresponding verses on wooden tablets.
 April: Executed calligraphy of Ghalib's poetry on wooden tablets.
 May: Exposition of 50 paintings based on the poetry of Ghalib and corresponding calligraphies, as part of the centenary celebrations organized by "Idara-e-Yadgaar-e-Ghalib" at the Arts Council Building, Karachi.
 August-December: Composed more than 1,500 *rubaiyyat*.

1970:

February: Transcribed the first edition of his *rubaiyyat*.
 March-April: Painted more than 100 paintings on the themes of *rubaiyyat*.
 May: Published privately First Edition of the *Rubaiyyat-e-Sadequain Naqqash*.
 May: Exposition of paintings and calligraphy of the poetry at the Arts Council Building in Karachi.
 July: Started calligraphy of "Sura-e-Rehman." Concentrated on calligraphic art.
 July-September: Floods in East Pakistan. A large mural was painted on the theme of man's struggle against the hostile forces of nature. That mural was donated to the Naval Headquarters, Queen's Road in Karachi and was housed there. Later reported to be shifted to Istanbul, Turkey.
 October: Exposition of calligraphic works during the month of Ramzan 1390 A.H. at the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi.
 November: Exposition of calligraphic works at the library of the headquarters of the State Bank of Pakistan during the International Islamic Conference.

1971:

February: Executed 25 large paintings and appended calligraphies based on the poetry of Faiz Ahmed Faiz to celebrate the 60th Birthday of the poet.
 February: Exhibition at PECHS College of the illustrations of Faiz Ahmed Faiz.

- July-August: Made more than 200 pen and ink drawings for the illustrated edition of *Rubaiyyat-e-Sadequain Naqqash*.
 September: Wrote the preface of the *Bayaz-e-Sadequaini*.
 September: Exhibition calligraphies at the Pakistan Arts Council Karachi.
 November: Exposition of calligraphies that lasted eight months at Lahore Museum.
 November: Exposition of the paintings based on Ghalib's poetry at Lahore Museum.

1972:

- February: Exhibition at Lahore Museum.
 April: Executed "Sura-e-Yasin," 260 feet long on wooden panels for the Islamic Gallery in Lahore Museum and donated it to the museum.
 October: Exhibition of calligraphic works at the Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi, while being admitted in the Jinnah Hospital.

1973:

- January-August: Started the ceiling mural at the Lahore Museum's central gallery. (Completed the ceiling mural on 3 August 1973 and gave it away as a gift to the wheat-colored beauties of Lahore).
 August: Exposition of calligraphic works at the Liaquat Memorial Hall, Rawalpindi.
 September: Exhibition of paintings at the Liaquat Memorial Hall, Rawalpindi.

1974:

- January-June: Worked on calligraphies at Lahore Museum.
 June-October: Worked on calligraphic paintings, titled the "Air Mail Edition" for the exhibition tour of eight Middle East countries.
 September: Exhibition at Lahore Museum.
 September: Exhibition in Islamabad at PNCA.
 October: Exhibition at the Karachi Arts Council.
 October: Exhibition at Municipal Library Hall, Dubai, U.A.E.
 October: Exhibition at Main Hall, Hilton Hotel, Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.
 October: Exhibition at Markazul Funoon, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
 November: Exhibition at Ardul Muarad Museum of Cairo, Egypt.
 November: Exhibition at National Museum of Damascus, Syria.
 November: Exhibition at Hall of Jordan Intercontinental, Amman, Jordan.
 December: Exhibition at Art Gallery of Kuwait City, Kuwait.
 December: Exhibition at Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad, Iraq.

1975:

- June: Received Cultural Award from Australian government.
 July-August: Visited Australia on invitation of the Australian government.
 October: Exhibition at Sala Ateneului Bucharest Romania.

- November: Exhibition at the State Museum of Oriental Arts, Moscow, Soviet Union.
- November: Exhibition at the Hall of Union Painters, Baku, Azerbaijan.
- November: Documentary SADEQUAIN at the State Museum of Art, Baku, Azerbaijan.
- December: Exhibition at the State Museum of Fine Arts Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
- December: Exhibition at the State Fine Art Gallery, Ankara, Turkey.
- December: Exhibition at the Khana-e-Aftab Gallery, Tehran, Iran.
- 1976:
- January: Exhibition at the Khana-e-Aftab Gallery, Tehran, Iran.
- February: Established studio at "Tilla" at Bagh-e-Jinnah, Pakistan.
- February: Exhibition of calligraphies at the Lahore Museum, Pakistan.
- May: Exhibition of paintings at the Punjab Arts Council Alhamra Lahore, Pakistan.
- May: Street protests turned violent.
- June: Street protests were followed by more processions, parliament debate, and culminating in a bomb blast on the last day of the exhibition.
- June: Exhibition extended by two more weeks.
- June: A parallel exhibition in Islamabad to counter the mobs in Lahore.
- June: Intellectual forces came forward to write in support of Sadequain.
- July: Wrote quatrains to address the hoodlums responsible for violence in Lahore and made line drawings.
- August: Published the collection of quatrains, *Rubaiyyat-e-Sadequain Khattat*. Recited the quatrains in an open gathering and distribution of complimentary copies of the book of quatrains.
- August: Converted Montgomery Hall into his painting workshop.
- August: Started on two large murals for the Sports Complex in Islamabad. The theme was the struggle for emancipation, fighting for freedom of the nations of Asia and Africa and their fight against imperialism.
- October-December: Painted 99 calligraphy works, "Asma-e-Husna" on square-shaped pieces, while admitted in hospital. Now permanently displayed in the Islamic Gallery at the Lahore Museum as a gift to the city.
- 1977
- January: Sketched more than 200 line drawings and composed hundreds of *rubaiyyat*.
- June-August: Executed large paintings based on the poetry of Iqbal.
- August: Series of documentary film, *Mojiza-e-Fun*, about Sadequain was made by Pakistan Television Corporation.
- September: Exhibition of calligraphies at the Punjab Arts Council.
- November: Exhibition of paintings based on the poetry of Iqbal at the Lahore Museum.
- December: Painted calligraphic arches and exhibited during the month of Ramzan of 1399 in Lahore Museum. Now they are permanently fixed in the Islamic Gallery of Lahore Museum as a donation by the artist.

1978:

January-December: Published book of poetry with illustrations. Devoted the entire year to calligraphic work.

1979:

January: More calligraphies.
 February: Executed a large calligraphic mural and several smaller calligraphies for the National Bank of Pakistan in Lahore.
 March-April: Calligraphic murals for the Lahore Museum as a permanent display in the Islamic Gallery. Gift to the citizens of Lahore.
 June: Compiled books of quatrains with illustrations.
 August: Published personal letters written to elder brother Kaz-e-man, verbatim as they were written from Europe and America during the 1960s.
 October: Visited Abu Dhabi on a special invitation from the Ministry of Water and Electricity to execute a calligraphic mural in the lobby of the power station, Um-ul-Naar.

1980:

March: Awarded national award, "Sitara-e-Imtiaz."
 April: Attended the International Islamic Exhibition in Bahrain on the turn of the century of Hijra. Pakistan was represented at the exhibition with only Sadequain's calligraphies. The Pakistan Section was visited by the Amir of Bahrain together with Yasir Arafat and was awarded the first prize. Left the trophy for the Pakistan Embassy. Invitations from Istanbul and London for exhibitions, but declined.
 July: Exhibition of calligraphies in Karachi for Hijra Celebrations.

1981:

August: Inauguration of Galerie Sadequain in Islamabad.
 November: Arrived at New Delhi, India after 33 years.
 November: Visited ancestral home, Amroha, India.
 November: Exposition of calligraphies, International Trade Fair in New Delhi, India.
 December: Exposition of paintings and drawings sponsored by Indian Council for Cultural Relations at State Lalit Kala Academy, Rabindra Bhawan, New Delhi, India.

1982:

January: Exhibition of calligraphies and drawings at Kennedy Hall, Aligarh Muslim University.

- January: Executed the calligraphy of the university's logo for Moulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University.
- February: Executed a large mural and a metallic mural for the exterior of the Department of Geography, Aligarh Muslim University.
- February: Exhibition of paintings & calligraphies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.
- March: Exhibition of calligraphies and drawings at Urdu Ghar, Hyderabad, Deccan.
- March: Executed a mural for the Urdu Ghar.
- March: Executed mural on the subject of Earth sciences in the National Geophysical Research Institute, Hyderabad, Deccan.
- March: Calligraphy at the Mazar of Tippu Sultan.
- May-June: Visited Varanasi. Executed a mural, "Quest for Reality," for Banaras Hindu University.
- June: Exhibition of calligraphies and drawings, State Lalit Kala Academy, Lucknow, India.
- July: Exhibition of calligraphies at Ghalib Academy, New Delhi in Ramazan Tradition.
- August: Awarded International Gold Mercury Award.
- September-November: Executed a five-story circular calligraphy based on "Asma-e-Husna" for the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies, New Delhi.
- December: Exhibition at International Quran Conference.
- 1983:
- January-December: All year composed thousands of *rubaiyyat*. More calligraphies.
- 1984:
- Started writing autobiography.
- 1985:
- Illustrated verses of Faiz Ahmed Faiz on his death.
- Exhibition at Anjuman-e-Sadaat-e-Amroha in Karachi, Pakistan.
- Exhibition of calligraphies in Kuala Lampur, Malaysia.
- Calligraphed 99 "Asma-e-Husna" on marble panels and gave as gifts to the National Institute of Public Administration in Karachi, Pakistan.
- 1986:
- February: Exhibition of calligraphies at Frere Hall.

- March-April: Painted "Sura-e-Rehman" on 40 marble panels, 6 x 5 feet each, and presented as a gift to the citizens of Karachi. All marble panels are now missing from the site.
- April: Exhibition in Maldives.
- May: Studio at the Frere Hall in Karachi. Started painting the ceiling mural in the main hall.
- June: While at Frere Hall, painted calligraphic mural for Faisal Mosque in Islamabad and presented it as a gift to the mosque named after the Saudi monarch.

1987

- January: Fell ill and admitted to Jinnah Hospital first, later shifted to OMI Clinic.
- February 10 1987: Passed away at 2:00 AM. At 3:20 A.M., thieves broke in the Frere Hall and stole dozens of paintings. Buried at Sakhi Hasan Graveyard in Karachi, Pakistan.

SADEQUAIN Foundation's Charter

Background:

Sadequain (1930 – 1987) received international acclaim during the early 1960s, when he was recognized as the “Laureate Binnale de Paris” in 1961, and also chosen to illustrate the novel, titled *The Stranger*, written by Nobel Laureate Albert Camus in 1964. He received widely positive coverage in the media in Europe and the USA and he was compared to Picasso in the French press when living in Paris during the 1960s. Later, during 1974 and 1975, Sadequain had highly successful exhibition tours of the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Sadequain is practically a household name in his native Pakistan, but since his last exhibition tours, he has become virtually unknown in the Western world.

Overview:

Legendary Artist and Thinker: Painted more than 15,000 pieces consisting of murals, paintings, calligraphies, drawings, and composed thousands of quatrains.

- **Murals:** Introduced monumental murals to the visual vocabulary of the country. Painted more than 45 gigantic murals, most of which are now housed in Pakistan, India, the Middle East, Europe, and North America. These murals represent an unparalleled body of artistic genius by an artist of the region. Most murals were given as gifts to public institutions. Many have been destroyed.
- **Paintings:** Prodigiously prolific, his palette included thousands of figurative works embodying universal subjects and Eastern forms. Introduced Pakistan to the international art forums.
- **Calligraphy:** Re-defined the script of calligraphic art and responsible for the renaissance of painterly calligraphy in Pakistan.
- **Drawings:** According to Dr. Naqvi, a recognized art critic, “If Sadequain had done nothing but his drawings, he would still be considered the greatest artist of the country.”
- **Poetry:** Sadequain wrote thousands of quatrains (four-liners) and illustrated many of them in his four volumes of *rubaiyyat*. The confluence of three genres — composition, inscription and illustration of quatrains — is a singularly unique creation in Urdu literature.
- **Philanthropist:** Sadequain gave away most of his work, amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars, if sold, to individuals and institutions.

Alarming Situation:

- Three art galleries were established in Sadequain's name in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad, when he was alive. After he passed away, the contents of his galleries, including his personal belongings, were removed without permission of Sadequain's family. The locations of Sadequain's artwork and personal property are now unaccounted for.
- Many of Sadequain's murals are in a state of dis-repair and several have gone missing.
- Paintings are locked in private homes and are decaying.
- Many paintings have been stolen and no effort is made for their recovery.
- Fakes abound and are selling with impunity.
- Many recipients of Sadequain's gifts have been cashing in by selling his artworks in their possession. Because Sadequain did not sell his own artwork, the SADEQUAIN Foundation considers such sales disrespectful to the spirit of Sadequain's benevolence.

SADEQUAIN Foundation's Goals:

- **Discover:** Research and locate Sadequain's artwork at institutions and in private collections.
- **Preserve:** Catalog Sadequain's artwork.
- **Restore:** Identify artwork in state of dis-repair and arrange for restoration.
- **Promote:** Introduce Sadequain's art to museums, universities and other institutions outside of Pakistan.
- **Educate:** Establish teaching curriculum on Sadequain's art at recognized educational institutes.

Conclusion:

- There is much work to be done for the international exploitation of Sadequain's works that will be essential for Sadequain's life, words and works to bring him to global attention and recognition.
- A comprehensive Catalogue Raisonné will be a true official reference for the artist and it will bring prestige to his works and elevate his status dramatically in the West.
- Set up a dedicated database to catalog Sadequain's artwork that will facilitate cross-referencing his work to eliminate fakes and avoid bogus artworks.
- A sustained effort is required to actively collaborate with concerned entities on authentication, publication and common communication.
- Raise awareness amongst the collectors, as they are vital for this project, and apply the standard procedures used in similar campaigns by many important modern artists such as Monet, Chagall, and others.
- Establish direct contact with individual collectors and institutions needed to have the artworks loaned for exhibitions.
- Funding required for publication of a series of catalogs and books on Sadequain.

About SADEQUAIN Foundation:

The Foundation is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to discover, preserve, and promote the art of Sadequain. To that end, the Foundation is poised to publish the largest art catalog in the country consisting of 12 volumes of Sadequain's artwork, comprising of more than 1,000 pages of text and exceeding 1,800 images. It holds regular exhibitions of Sadequain's works, and conducts seminars at museums and universities to raise awareness about Sadequain's prodigious palette.

Publications by the **SADEQUAIN** Foundation

1. *Rubaiyyat-e-Sadequain Naqqash* — Collection of rubaiyyat and illustrative drawings.
2. *SADEQUAIN: Three Wise Men of the East* — Strokes of Picasso and Scale of Michelangelo.
3. *The Legend of Sadequain* — Renaissance of Calligraphic Art in Pakistan.
4. *Mystic Expressions by Sadequain* — An Odyssey to Exaltation with Ghalib, Iqbal, Faiz and Sadequain.
5. *Realism to Calligraphic Cubism* — The Legacy of Sadequain: From Paris to Pakistan.
- 6.* *Trails of the Lost Art of Sadequain* — Where Have All the Flowers Gone?
- 7.* *Albert Camus and Sadequain* — Illustrative drawings of *The Stranger* by Sadequain.
- 8.* *The Saga of Sadequain* — Biography and over 500 images.

* Future publications

SADQUAIN
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Mystic Expressions by

SADQUAIN



Topical