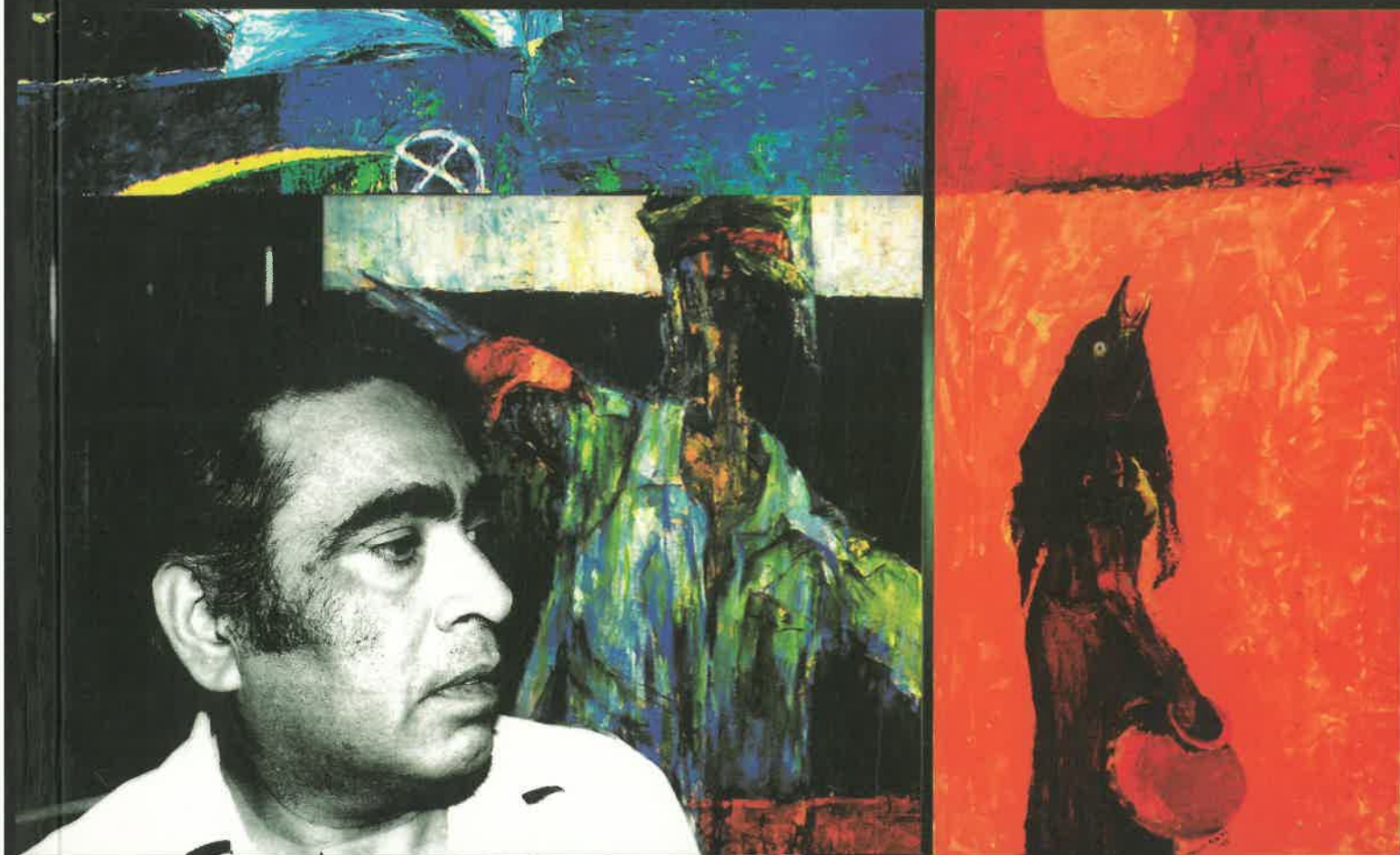


NAGORI

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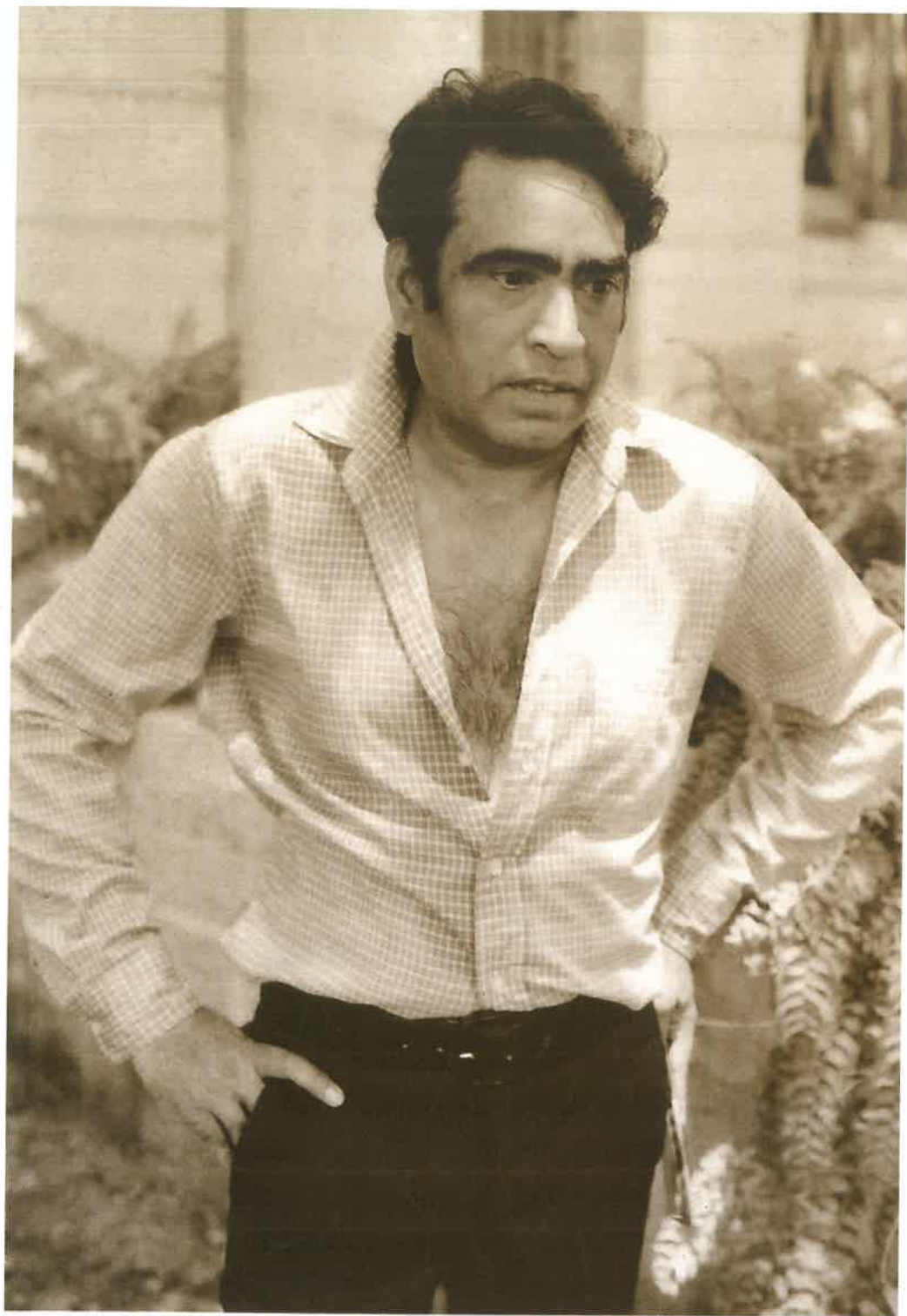
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PREFACE

The dance of Lord Shiva is said to be both of destruction and creation. Holding a flame in his hand, he whirls over and crushes the body of a demon, Apasmara Purusha, symbolic of man's inertia and ignorance. Many genuine artists are caught in a similar dance of death and creation, doomed to wreak havoc on putrid thoughts and annihilate orthodox complacency while they create a world of imagination, aspiration, idealism and beauty. In their hands is the blazing fire of creativity and individuality, fire which gives hope to humanity, flames that light up the world.

History is full of these iconoclasts. Giotto, Grunewald, Bosch, Breughel the elder, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Tintoretto, Chardin, Courbet, Goya, Daumier, Picasso, Rivera, Orozco, Beckmann and numerous other masters. Literature, painting and music, all produced revolutionary individuals, and their life makes fascinating reading. They are the voice of people in search of their identity, and yet, paradoxically, are the guide for a civilisation. Through their works they have dared snatch the fire from the gods for the mortals. To steal this blaze from the gods is no easy task and destruction of orthodoxy exacts a price – the punishment of Prometheus for stealing fire from the gods, which he had gifted to people to improve humanity's future.

While it might be interesting to read about the artist's life and views, a critical question remains whether it is necessary to know more about the artist to better appreciate a work of art, or must the creator be separated from its creation? Should one enjoy a sculpture without knowing about the hand that wrought it, or read a work of literature without thinking about the writer who brought the characters to life? Should David be separated from Michelangelo and severed from Rodin? Proponents of pure aesthetics would argue that a work must be shorn of all previous associations and linkages; unfettered they wish to savour the beauty of a work. For many others, knowing more of the evolution of the artist or the writer, their vision, philosophy and struggles, adds a richer sense of enjoyment of the work. Their individualism, lust for life and lone battles, inspire and instruct. Who can

read Yevgeny Zamyatin but ignore his approach towards the Soviet establishment, or dismiss Gustave Courbet writing to Napoleon III while declining the 'Legion of Honour': "...Permit me then, Your Excellency, to decline the honour you have thought to give me. I am fifty years old, and have always lived free; let me finish free. When I am dead they will have to say of me: he never belonged to any school, to any church, to any institution, to any academy, above all not to any regime, unless it were the regime of liberty...." Who can discard the powerful words of Ernst Neizvestny telling Khrushchev, when asked about art under Stalin, "I think it was rotten and the same kind of artists are deceiving you", or Neizvestny's response to the Premier on how long Neizvestny could sustain state pressure: that there are certain bacteria, very small, which live in saline solution and can dissolve the hoof of a rhinoceros. Truly, the artists have at all times been the instruments and spokespersons for the spirit of the age, and Ezra Pound has aptly called them "the antennae of the race".

A case can be made that understanding the creator enhances the appreciation and understanding of the work. "I am anxious that the world should be inclined to painters for information on painting", says John Constable. Conversations with artists often provide unique insights into their work. Their words provoke, vex, amuse or enlighten. Many artists have issued manifestos and published diaries. Mexican painters have explained the revolutionary Public Art and its intellectual and aesthetic canons. German Expressionists, Die Brücke, Blaue Reiter, New Objectivity, Italian Futurism/Dadaism, Spanish Surrealism, Russian Suprematism, carry written statements of the artists explaining principles they embodied. Leonardo da Vinci's Notebooks, Vasari's *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, Michelangelo's Conversations, Reynolds's Discourses, Delacroix's Journal, Van Gogh and Pissarro's letters throw light on their paintings. The tremendous work of Delacroix, forming his letters and art-criticism, perhaps the most complete revelation of an artist's mind, is a heroic instance. Matisse, Picasso, Leger, Kandinsky and Klee left monumental intellectual writing on art and aesthetics. Ben Shahn wrote the book *The Biography of a Painting* to explain his painting 'Allegory' to critics who had wrongly associated communist sources.

It is a myth that artists are unable to explain their work; instead, many are excellent conversationalists, and when their words are not recorded, posterity loses many irreplaceable insights into the creative process. One would hope that someone would take up a systematic study of the artists in Pakistan and record in one book conversations with them. It would be a pity to lose out the words of the artist, especially on the flowering art period of the sixties in Pakistan, particularly of Lahore and the ideas discussed in its coffee houses, which were comparable to the cafes and artist-noisy restaurants at Montmartre à la *Moulin Rouge* by Pierre La Mure.

When I was asked if I would consider writing on Nagori, I was interested in the project also as a means to record some of Nagori's words on art and life, especially for students of art, thoughts which I have heard him articulate over the years. Art is communication, often it breaks down the walls between humans, and Nagori often talks fervently about the positive role that art can play in uplifting the masses and creating awareness of social ills.

Nagori fondly quotes Picasso's words: "What do you suppose an artist is? If a painter, an imbecile who has nothing but eyes, nothing but ears if he is a musician, a lyre at every level if he is a poet, nothing but muscles if he is a boxer? Quite the contrary, he is a political being, constantly aware of what is going on in the world, whether it be harrowing, bitter, or sweet, and he cannot help being shaped by it. How would it be possible not to take interest in other people, to withdraw into some ivory tower so as not to share existence with them? No, painting is not interior decoration. It is an instrument of war for offence and defence against the enemy."

The link between art and politics is an organic part of the conscience of modern person and particularly of the conscience of every creative genius. Pablo Neruda famously asserted that those who wanted to separate his political poetry from the rest were enemies of poetry, for separating ethics from aesthetics meant distancing the man from his work. The inseparability of art and politics stems from the nature of art itself. However, instead of people's tradition found in our Sufis Rehman Baba, Bulleh Shah, Baba Farid,

Shah Abdul Latif, and such other native torch-bearers, political expediency selects works where motivated tradition is dished out that serves political objectives. It has been said that anyone who makes people believe that they are thinking will be loved by them, while anyone who actually makes them think will be hated. Schopenhauer was not discovered for forty years for Hegel suited the fascist regime best. All state propaganda machines trumpeted and glorified Hegel as the prophet philosopher of the fatherland. No one dared speak against state ideology which had Hegelian support for authoritarianism and perpetual rule of the fascist junta. Antiquity too had its "doctrine of necessity". Plato excluded slaves from participation in the Republic's affairs. Aristotle improved upon it and said all citizens are equal and eligible for state activity, but then he said citizenship should not be granted to slaves and manual workers. Art also often received patronage when it best fitted the state's dictates.

"No genuine artist would ever allow any Alexander to stand between him and the sunlight. It is not that he wants to be that way, but he cannot be otherwise", says Nagori, alluding to the incident when the philosopher of antiquity, Diogenes, lying in sunlight, was asked by Alexander as to what Alexander could do for him, to which Diogenes replied, "leave the light." Often called the rebel artist, Nagori feels that an artist is in perpetual revolt.

However, the present situation which afflicts our intellectuals, elite and ruling junta alike, is similar to the psycho-analysis mentioned by Jung: "...Every Roman was surrounded by slaves, the slave and his psychology flooded ancient Italy and every Roman became inwardly, and of course, unwittingly, a slave. Because of living constantly in the atmosphere of slaves, he became infected through the unconscious of their psychology."

Nagori says that his art is not based on propaganda, nor can it bring direct relief to the plight of the masses it portrays, but it does raise awareness among those who have the means to bring about a much-needed and long-awaited social change. He says, "I don't think I am a champion of people's causes as one could expect from a reformer or politician. My identification with the masses is simple. I was driven a great deal nearer to pessimism and grim doctrines by the nature of reality shown to me by Schopenhauer: 'the

sum total of our own lives is that we struggle, suffer and die'. This led Nietzsche to say 'God is dead.' I am not an admirer of Nietzsche as Iqbal, was for his doctrine of the superman, but I believe in his 'art-idolatry'."

In painting or in his writings on art, Nagori's expression remains forceful and blunt. Any conversation with him on the subject of his work and life means being exposed to an encyclopaedic range of knowledge on the world of art, the significance of protest art, the Indian and Muslim heritage of art, combined with a brimming passionate alertness to historical and present injustices. "We are a nuclear power, but a greater fact and a greater tragedy is that starvation and famine have taken a heavy toll in Thar, and dearth of water has ruined the wealth of flora and fauna, endangering ecological order; besides there are guns, drugs and exploitation of women and children and apathy towards education and health. Can any breathing soul remain unaffected, especially the most sensitive of all segments of a society called perceptive artists?" These social issues find resonance in his work. For example, in one painting there will be reference to the Greek myth on the abduction of Europa and the allegory will allude to the present mistreatment of women in our country; another alphabet painting will reflect Orwell's *Animal Farm* and the exploitation by "pigs" of the many helpless animals of the land, yet another will have Hanuman rescuing the Babri Mosque while humans are busy in its destruction, or the animals from *Panchatantra* and Saadi's *Gulistan*, passing commentary on sycophancy and the exploitative political scenario. He has protested against the Hudood Ordinance and injustice to women. A raped blind girl sentenced by the Shariat Court on charges of adultery was the subject of his painting. He has painted a woman raped by a jailer in the Multan jail, and women paraded naked in Nawabpur and Mardan, the accursed ritual practice of a feudal society. Victor Anant commented on the painting depicting women without lips, "All Nagori's women are ineloquent. They can't speak themselves for they arise in him as forms, which he, logically, can set free by speaking for them." Nagori's latest painting series titled "May-day, May-day" denounced the ghastly attacks on places of prayer, in May 2004, at Karachi and elsewhere in the country.

The artist satirises and mocks the forces of exploitation and enjoins the viewer to also feel the injustice inflicted on the downtrodden and the meek, giving voice to the voiceless. Ali Imam said that many find in Nagori's pictures an expression of anger they themselves feel against the degradation of our time, and his work has "earned him a place in the record of social protest and resistance of both intellectual and ordinary people who refuse to let contemporary events drain them of human sensitivity."

Today, Nagori, due to ill health, is no longer as prolific as he used to be, and his last exhibition "Return to Sphinx," held in 2004, was claimed by him as his "swan song". He wishes not to display his latest works anymore. Yet, one hopes that his life's philosophy, struggles and vision would provide an impetus to other students of art to continue to steal the fire of Prometheus, to stamp Apasmara under their feet, to light up the world through aesthetic pleasure, and right political wrongs through the fire of creativity.

Amber Romasa

THE EARLY YEARS

Abdur Rahim Nagori was born in 1938 to a fairly religious family. The flavour and speed of people's lives then seemed very different from today. His grandmother went for Hajj on camel back, via Afghanistan. His father, a Haji and a genuinely secular man, admitted the five-year old Nagori to a Madressah (Islamic school) where he studied the Quran along with other subjects, and at the same time hired Mr Bhupat Rai Nagar, a Hindu retired magistrate, to teach English to the young child. During the school vacations his father would often leave him in the company of a sadhu (religious hermit) whose hamlet was on a picturesque river bank in the jungle of Gir. On this bank, gazelles would come to gently lap the water in the summer heat (hence the river was named 'Hiran Nadi'). The surroundings of the jungle provided the young boy with a rare opportunity to love nature and animals. Some days the sadhu would speak to the young child of the pleasure of solitude, knowledge found in stillness, and man's eternal thirst for knowledge. Besides, he acquired knowledge of the Hindi language with stray Sanskrit words and Hindu myths that he overheard from the sadhus during their discussions with the Brahmins/pundits. His formative years were spent at the foothills of Mount Girnar and early drawings at the age of eight depicted soft-skinned, graceful gazelles resting under the Gul Mohur tree.

Of his occasional time spent in the jungle, Nagori has engrossing stories to narrate. As his father was working for the Forest Department of Junagadh State, he frequently accompanied his father to the Gir jungle. One afternoon Nagori saw a procession, led by a band of musicians, coming towards their hamlet. Behind the music band were some Hindus chanting and carrying a garlanded *doli* in which an emaciated man was seated cross-legged. The procession left the old man across the river. Nagori enquired from the sadhu why the man was left all alone and no one had come to take him home as it was getting dark. The sadhu explained that the man was on his last journey for Nirvana. He would die after a few days' fasting and then meet the gods in heaven in the company of *apsaras* (angels). All his sins would be forgiven for his penance and faith in the *devtas*. Young Nagori simply could not swallow this explanation and logic for he knew that by midnight a tiger would pounce on and kill the old man within seconds and instead of *devtas*, he would be facing the hyenas. "Why does a man have to go through hell in this

world for the sake of a promised paradise? I simply could not make out the reason or logic as a child of eight nor have I been able to solve this mystery even to this day. Whenever I encounter people who advise that 'an artist must suffer for his art to mature in insight and intuition,' I am always thrown back to that jungle of Gir, full of fierce animals, and the sermons of saints," reminiscences Nagori.

The colourist nature of Nagori's paintings is possibly due to an early exposure to the natural environment. In his house a variety of flowers and fruit trees were planted along with a small fishpond with an assortment of fish. The place was visited by different species of colourful birds. His palette predominantly carries bright reds and orange-hued scarlet red from his recollection of the flowery trees, especially Gul Mohur, Amaltas, Keshudi, Flame of the Forest, and cadmium yellows with lush green background and blues of deep river waters. Nature, decorative elements and bright colours dominated the design and composition of his early works, reflective of Clive Bell's aesthetic theory of "Significant Form". Maybe, Rousseau was right when he speculated that unadulterated nature purified imagination (unlike his other assertion that science and arts inevitably corrupt by spreading garlands of flowers over the chains of slavery – true in some cases but not all).

While his father endeavoured to inculcate in him a love of nature and pluralist humanism, Nagori feels that it was through his mother that he gained an interest in historical knowledge and the written word. His mother Bibi Kazi was brought up in the house of her godfather, Kazi Akhtar Junagadhi, counted amongst Sindh University's pioneer professors, whom Allama I.I. Kazi had brought to Sindh University from Al-Azhar University, Cairo. Ahmed Mian Kazi Akhtar was a well-known scholar-poet and his outstanding research included one on the poet Wali Deccani.

On some winter nights, his mother and grandmother would tell the children many stories; two in particular were Nagori's favourites. One was of Saint Hamiduddin Nagori, the famous disciple of Khawaja Moinuddin Chisti. Sufi Hamiduddin believed in respecting the feelings of others and had even turned vegetarian out of consideration for Hindu sentiments. Once upon a time, the Sufi saint was going from one village to another and on the way took a little siesta under a tree. When he reached his destination, there was an ant on his garment. The

ant was greatly dejected and said that he had climbed on the Sufi while the saint was resting and now was separated from his family. Hearing this, the saint retraced his journey of many miles and left the ant under the tree from where the ant had climbed onto him. The other story the young Nagori loved was of a floating hand that was severed from its body and at night-time was supposed to chase young children in search of a surrogate body. This tale, told by the elders in the family to ensure that children didn't stay out of the house in the evening, had an opposite effect on Nagori, who on many nights sneaked out of the house to look for the floating hand.

As a child, Nagori soaked in an air of multi-religious festivity. He relished partaking of a ceremony where a *naou* (boat) with lamps was released at the advent of the monsoon in a great saint's lake near his home, in the belief that the saint Dataar Bapu would save the city from flood water overflowing the Wellington Dam. He attended devotional *qawwali* music on Dattaar's *urs*, and *bhajan* sessions in Bhaweshvar *mela*, at the foothills of Mount Girnar, and fondly listened to a blind poet-singer, Surdaas, who sang in chaste Hindi, holding a single-cord musical instrument (*Eiktara*) in one hand and wooden clamps with brass rings in another, the rhythmic clapping with wood and brass, with the melodious voice created perfect harmony. Says Nagori, "In my later years, when I read *The Merchant of Venice's* lines, 'I am never merry when I hear sweet music', I found the right words to explain the impact of Surdaas's songs on his listeners."

Nagori participated in *maatam* after Muharram *majalis* at night, around a fire in a circle, called *chokaara* and once, while staging a mock sword fight in front of *alums* of Muharram, he was hurt with the opponent's sword and still carries a scar on his forehead. He remembers secretly attending Ram-leela, evenings of folk performers in street theatre. That is where he first witnessed the power of art as an organic part of social and intellectual life, making people laugh, entertaining as well as educating. In Ram-leela, he particularly liked the character of Hanuman, for Hanuman had tremendous strength, which frightened the celestial gods, and they ensured that he remained ignorant of his powers. Be it the philosophers of antiquity or the laments of Nietzsche, human beings remain unaware of their ability to surpass their present potential. The motif of Hanuman as a being of great but unrealised potential captured Nagori's imagination, and that motif has appeared in many of his paintings. About sneaking to watch Ram-leela, Nagori says, "I received severe beatings

from my elder brother who was a zealot of the Aligarh University's Muslim League. Big brother, before leaving for Aligarh, always in colourful clothes, spoke in fluent English for he was close to Aunt Lucy, and played cricket with Hanif Muhammad's elder brothers, Wazir Muhammad and Raees Muhammad at Bahauddin College."

Life can change in a moment. One day Nagori, along with other children, climbed over the wall of a garden to steal berries. Unexpectedly, the owner came with a stick and all the children scampered away. In his haste to get away, Nagori fell down and injured his foot. Soon the foot developed an infection and consequently he was unable to walk for a long time (the owner of the garden was mortified and visited Nagori's father several times to apologise and express deep remorse). The pain was unbearable, education was discontinued, and he was deprived of formal middle school education, a loss of eight precious years. When he shifted from Mirpur Sakro to Hyderabad, he appeared for Sindh University's Matriculation exams as a private candidate in 1957. He feels that psychologically he never reconciled that feeling of deprivation, despite the fact that he secured first class and a position in the exams of Honours and Master's level at the Punjab University, Lahore.

When talking of his injury, Nagori says, "Goethe told us that our own pain teaches us to share the suffering of our fellow creatures, and Philoctetes, the Greek archer in Sophocles's play, exclaimed, 'When pain takes hold of me I know that I am human.' Suffering is inextricably bound with human existence. What the ancient Greeks, with their astute insights into human nature, knew was that hope accompanies misfortune. For this reason, in the tale of Pandora, out of the box of troubles and misfortunes, white-winged Hope also emerges. To me, the white-winged Hope was my interest in art and my love for books. Throughout this time of illness, I continued to sketch and read. The conductor/composer Gustav Mahler beautifully expressed that the ultimate goal in art is relief from suffering, while Paul Klee poignantly said 'I create in order not to cry'; these sentiments find resonance in my work and life."

When the injury healed, Nagori's father sent him to Sindh to live with relatives and resume his education, and from there he went to Lahore for his art education. From Thar to Mirpur Sakro to Hyderabad and then to Lahore, the journey he undertook was a journey towards

art, and the experiences that he accumulated along the way, the laughter of childhood, the pain of a physical injury, the spirit to continue the struggle, are reflected in his work. For ultimately, every creative expression, even the most extreme abstract art, is a reflection of the events in the artist's own life.

ADOLESCENCE AT THE DELTA

It was the early fifties. Sindh was still a land of plenty. The famous fish 'Pullo aannee-warō' was available for 12 annas (75 paisas) and "Kheero" was sold for 8 annas (50 paisas) at Mirpur Sakro. Here Nagori spent his adolescence, wandering around Sakro-Boharo and Ketī Bunder, the dwellings of Mohana fishermen with whom he often went fishing.

He received informal education when he was living around the Indus Delta. Diving in Kalri-Baghar-Wah with his Mohana friends, he often caught "Jarko" fish with his bare hands. The first ever political speeches he heard were those of A. Majid Sindhi and Sain G.M. Syed at Sakro and Thatta. He avidly read newspapers, mostly Sindhi papers, periodicals and books, almost all the translations of Tirthram Ferozpurī in Urdu borrowed from his friend Kaatiyar, a number of Hindi, Urdu and English periodicals and books including *Verdict on India* by Beverly Nichols which he found in a junk shop. His collections of the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, and *Dharmayuga*, a Hindi weekly from Times of India Publications, are still with him. He collected reproductions of Zainul Abedin's famine sketches of 1943 for his scrapbook and saw for the first time a reproduction of Ahmed Parvez's "Muree Landscape".

At Sakro, he often drew charcoal drawings on brown colour wrapping papers. He recalls drawing a black donkey that a Mohano friend used to bring along with the Pakhee birds caught from the lake "Chhuchh Dhandh". When the donkey owner saw the drawing of his donkey, he went to a nearby shop, bought a black silk thread and tied it around Nagori's wrist believing that the charm of the black thread would protect the artist's skill from an evil eye. That was the first art appreciation he received, and it inspired and encouraged him to draw more.

THE TURNING POINT

The second phase of life in Sindh started at Hyderabad. Mama A. Karim Ansari of Sindh Education Department gave him a chance to play cricket for his team – the National Club. Here he played matches on Sundays on the ground behind the Majestic Cinema. Nagori's knowledge of cricket impressed the Ansaris at Fakir-Jo-Pir. They (including Dr A.Q. Ansari, future Vice Chancellor Sindh University and Chairman University Grants Commission) coached him academically, and the ever kind Hasan Jafri sahib, of Jafri Institute, helped him appear in Sindh University's Matriculation Examinations, as a private candidate. He joined the newly opened Sindh College of Commerce, Hyderabad, simply to get selected for the college's newly formed cricket team.

Nagori feels that the turning point of his life came about when he met a genius, Syed Nayab Hussain, a teacher of English literature par excellence, a Shakespearean scholar and brilliant radio performer and playwright, who changed Nagori's vision overnight by reading out Eric Newton's essay *The Nature of the Arts and Art and Amateur* by J.A. Spender. Nayab, on seeing Nagori's sketches that he was making in the college canteen, arranged his first solo exhibition, at City College's sport pavilion. The visitors included Mr Z.A. Bukhari, DG Radio Pakistan, and Mr Sajjad Hyder, Regional Director Hyderabad, who bought one painting. Mohammad Idrees, ace debater of Government College, Lahore, also came along with his team: Imtiaz Javed, Nargis Wahab and Tariq Ali. The same year (1958), Nagori received first prize for painting in the All-Pakistan Inter-Collegiate Competition from Dr Jehangir Khan, Director, Education, West Pakistan. Later Prof Eric Cyprian handed over a prize at Islamia College, Lahore, followed by an All Pakistan Award sponsored by CSP Club in 1963, The jury comprised A.R. Chughtai, Shakir Ali, Anna Molka Ahmed, Moyene Najmi and Colin David.

Dr Nasir Zaidi, nephew of Ali Imam, at Hyderabad, gave Ali Imam's left over collection of art magazines and related art clippings to Nagori, as Ali Imam had left for London, in the early fifties. Some books on Indian and Persian miniatures, and some torn art magazines, such as *Modern Review* and informative material from *Marg*, edited by Mulk Raj Anand, proved great resource material for his debut at Lahore, for interviews, and later for seminars and lectures.

SOJOURN AT LAHORE

Syed Nayab Hussain had informed Nagori of art education and the NCA (National College of Arts) at Lahore and insisted on his applying for admission. On receiving an interview call from NCA, Nagori excitedly reached Lahore by train and booked a room at Lahore Hotel. From a pavement outside the hotel on McLeod Road, he bought *Discovery of India* by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru for 12 annas. Since the vendor had no change, he asked Nagori to pick any other book for 4 annas. With this rare bargain offer, he picked up a copy of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and Ghani Khan's *The Pathan*. Earlier, he had bought *Outline of Arts*, a huge volume by Orphans and Orphans from second-hand books on the Chotki Ghitti pavement. To pass time in the hotel's rickety room, where sleep was not possible, these books were a great solace. The next day he reached the National College of Arts, one hour before time and appeared for the tests and interview. Shakir Ali's name and work was familiar to him. He was then the acting principal and showed interest in Nagori's talk on art, and Nagori was accepted immediately.

As he came out of the NCA, inquisitiveness took him across to the Punjab University. On the lawns, some girls with easels were painting the University's surroundings. He offered help to a girl struggling to simultaneously carry her paint box and the canvas to the classroom. But before he entered the Fine Arts Department, he was intercepted by a *Mai*, a very healthy female guard, who, according to Nagori, "behaved like a non-white replica of Mrs Anna Molka Ahmed, guarding girl students, protecting them from evil hawk-eyes, (Shikarey, in Punjabi) who used to hover around the entrance of the Fine Arts Department, and once not recognising the Registrar of Punjab University, the *Mai* caught him by the neck and pushed him out saying, in Punjabi, *Mem saab da aadar nai* (Madam hasn't given permission). The *Mai* used to stay in the department till the last girl student left, and at *Asr* (evening prayer time) she offered her prayers on the lawn, facing Qibla towards the west while angling her beady eyes wide open and fixed towards the north where the department's entrance was located. As it was a restricted area, and an out of bounds place for strangers, Nagori, as an offender, was taken to a small room at the left side of the entrance.

Nagori narrates: "There, a very scholarly looking person, with an unkempt Einstein hair style, a heavy Iqbalian frame/name and moustaches, was fixed in a *mora* (cane sofa). He was Prof Khalid Iqbal, my future mentor and benefactor. Fate landed me into the right place and the right person. He asked me who I was and why I had entered the department. On sensing my interest in paintings rather than the glamorous girls at the department (as usual, all male entries were suspected of) he got up and led me to the department's permanent gallery, sat watching me from the circular seat in the centre and asked a few questions on the paintings displayed there. Seeing the stunning nudes painted by Miss Nasim Qazi, I mentioned her Gauguinesque approach and pointed to Van Gogh's influence on Anna Molka's work. Hearing this Khalid Iqbal got up and pushed me into Mrs Ahmed's office. On hearing of my admission to NCA, Anna Molka gave me a strange, awful look and said, 'Why are you joining NCA? Apropos to their certificate courses, Punjab University offers Honours degree in fine arts, leading to a Masters.' I told her that I had no money, just ten or fifteen rupees left, not enough to pay my room rent at the rate of five rupees a day and my meals from pavement vendors selling *anna-naan, daal muft* (free). The coin *anna* was pronounced as her name Anna. She laughed heartily at my English translation and pronunciation, as I was trying to adopt a British accent."

"Anna Molka always reminded me of Stalin without moustaches but surely she, unlike the Russian dictator, had a great sense of humour, and appreciated amusing and witty remarks. She was a kind-hearted person, despite her unpredictable bullish outrage that at times surfaced unprovoked. But I was to become her most pampered student, who dared answer her back. Often she overlooked my crude manners and suppressed her anger. But I shall never forget her once publicly rebuking me for my unintended crude manners. I was terribly offended, did not show up for weeks and almost left the department for good, halfway to my graduation, but for Khalid Iqbal, who sent Zulqarnain Hyder, to 'ask Nagori to see me before saying farewell to Lahore.' I gave in to his and Mrs Ahmed's persuasion and gave up the idea of leaving the university. Mrs Ahmed said, 'I am the worst kind of bitch, my bite is better than my bark'. In most cases, Mrs Ahmed proved to be a benevolent dictator for the Department of Fine Arts and the battles she used to fight with the university administration etc. were of a lioness to fetch the lion's share from the

university's annual budget allocations. Realisation of Mrs Ahmed's efforts came to Nagori when he had to struggle for his own Art Department's survival at the Sindh University.

Art education in Pakistan was Anna Molka Ahmed's passion. She was very excited on hearing of Nagori's Sindh credentials and wanted him to be her future art educationist for Sindh. Her influence and vision for art education inspired him, and all these years he has written and spoken extensively on the topic. Nagori says, "Every child intuitively understands art but society often curbs his or her natural instinct. The dominant values of culture are considered to be the quest for wealth and upward social mobility, while art is thought to be a leisure time pursuit or a symbol of wealth and social sophistication – the deeper meaning of art remains largely unrealised. The need of art education gains further importance in our present society. Inundated with tailor-made images and values from the media, the individual identity, experiences and thoughts are sacrificed at the altar of mass production of commodity and ideas. The more fragmented post-modern existence becomes, the more art is needed to give beauty and meaning to life, and help prevent the individual from getting lost in the labyrinth of nothingness".

In order to arrange for Nagori's board and lodging, in Lahore, Mrs Ahmed gave him a letter for Dr Nazir Ahmed, the Principal of Government College, Lahore. It was early winter. Nagori saw a man in an un-ironed, top-unbuttoned, cotton sherwani, standing in the sun-lit corridor outside the Principal's office. Nagori went inside the office but it was empty. The man outside the office, who had been watching him enter the office, asked the purpose of entering the office. Nagori told him about the letter that he was carrying, which the man asked to see. However, Nagori refused and said that he was following Mrs Ahmed's instructions to give the letter to the Principal himself, personally. This man then entered the office, sat on the imposing revolving chair behind a huge carved Victorian table with a maroon blazer cloth spread under thick glass, and then asked Nagori to give him the letter. This was how Nagori met Dr Nazir Ahmed, Principal, Government College, Lahore, and a man of great virtue and simplicity.

Nagori was given accommodation at Government College quadrangle but the room had

to be shared, and he requested Mrs Ahmed to get him shifted. She telephoned Dr M. Sadiq, Vice Principal at Dayal Singh College and said she had found another Colin David. Nagori laughs and recollects, "I was flattered, for I thought she was comparing me with some European artist (Colin was at Slade at that time, and I had not met him)." Nagori was admitted to Punjab University's newly started B. A. Hons Fine Arts classes and to the Dyal Singh College hostel, Majithia Hall, free of charge.

During his stay at Majithia Hall, he met Hafeez Sheikh, a Sindhi student from Khairpur studying journalism at Punjab University. Knowing Nagori's love for books, Hafeez presented him with sets of Dostoevsky including *The Idiot*, Maxim Gorky's trilogy, Rousseau's *Confessions* and a number of books from Russian and French classics. (These books, along with Shaikh Ayaz's personal gift *Story of San Michael* and Ibrahim Joyo's set of Hermann Hesse and some other books they bought for him while both these men were staying with him in his house at Karachi, influenced him immensely).

During the vacations Majithia Hall used to be empty and the mess and tuck shop would be closed down. Hafeez often invited Nagori to lunch in his room. Says Nagori, "What a selfless and loving person Hafeez was! He was a brave fellow who spoke against One Unit in front of the Governor, the Nawab of Kalabagh, in the Punjab University's Senate Hall. Hoodlums were unleashed with clubs and kicks. With great risk and with the help of another goon's party, Hafeez was rescued."

Nagori was awarded SEATO sponsorship of Rs. 50 a month. He was also sent to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) on the then Governor's invitation and painted Dacca, Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar, where the green background and mauve/blue and amber/bronze green female bodies of Bengali women and plants had reminded the novelist, Prof Ahmed Ali, of Gauguin's Tahiti. On return from East Pakistan, he was interviewed by the newly inaugurated TV station at Lahore in 1964, a live programme showing him painting with Zara Marium, daughter of Mrs Ahmed. He did a number of programmes on art with Mohammed Idrees and Mohammad Nisar (often turning serious programmes into live comedy). The programme was appreciated by Aslam Azhar, who was then PTV chief.

At the University, Mrs Ahmed never allowed freedom from academic routine and, as Nagori put it, "volumes (Percy Brown/Creswell) on the history of Muslim architecture bent my back." As the spread of art education was her priority, the courses designed were heavily configured towards the theory of Art and Architecture. It was Khalid Iqbal who rescued Nagori and often softened Mrs Ahmed towards him, asking her to ignore his low grades in the history of Muslim Architecture. Instead she was advised to see his grades in Majors such as History of Western Art, Art Appreciation and practicals. Both were remarkable teachers, having great insight into his behaviour patterns. "Khalid's greatest contribution was that he allowed me freedom to differ with him," says Nagori. He was the only student who fell out from the landscape charm and style, the "one that got away". In contrast to the department's traits of cross hatched strokes, he used vertical strokes that was adopted and followed by many as a mannerism. In all aspects of art concepts, he remained individualistic.

He was overawed by Khalid Iqbal's insight and friendly style of teaching. "Although I did not follow his style, genre or mannerism, I owe all the basic rules of aesthetics to his indirect methods of teaching creative arts." Once he recalled, "Khalid Iqbal took me to the library and showed figure composition of Puvis de Chavannes but passed no comments on my figure composition which was the talk of the day in the department. I was greatly impressed by this indirect method of disseminating knowledge to students. My common interest and liking with Khalid Iqbal was love for cricket and books on war history. We read and discussed books not only on German Expressionists, but German Generals and Admirals too, especially the book *Rommel's Papers* and war historians Capt Liddell Hart and Gen Bayerlein. I owe my art education to Khalid. Had there been no Khalid Iqbal, there would have been no Nagori, as a painter...of whatever merit."

Nagori fell deeply in love with the city of Lahore and its people, and considers Punjab University the best period of his educational life. "Intellectuals of Lahore were my institutions of higher learning," he says. Lahore of the early sixties was the Mecca of art. Art educationists, painters and intellectuals of the highest calibre, such as Anna Molka, Khalid Iqbal, Nasim Hafeez Qazi, Colin David, Shakir Ali, Shemza, Murtaza Bashir, Safdar Mir,

Sufi Tabassum, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Dr Nazir Ahmed, Dr M. Sadiq, Moyene Najmi, Hamid Jalal, Taufiq Raffat, Shaikh Safdar and other friends of Khalid Iqbal and Mrs Ahmed were regular visitors with whom Nagori developed acquaintances and he considers them as his intellectual mentors. Dr Mulk Raj Anand, Dean Faculty of Art and Literature, P.U. Chandigarh and Dr Narayan Bendre of Baroda University helped Nagori in his research on Sikh Paintings.

During the 1965 war, Nagori, a lecturer at the Department of Fine Arts, was asked to paint war paintings. He chose to paint a panel depicting blindfolded Indian POWs from the Fortress Stadium. Nagori laments and misses leaving Lahore. To the great disappointment and annoyance of Mrs Ahmed, he resigned from the post of a lecturer at the Department of Fine Arts, PU in 1966, and proceeded to Cadet College, Kohat. From there, on persuasion from the art connoisseur Wing Comdr. Sulaiman Kayani, Director, at Air HQ, Peshawar, he proceeded to join the PAF as education officer and served at PAF College, Sargodha till 1970.

RETURN TO THE SPHINX

Mohammed Ibrahim Joyo, whom he had earlier met in Kohat, brought Nagori back to Hyderabad to open a Department of Fine Arts at Sindh University. Nagori resigned from the PAF and rejoined Hyderabad in 1970. In the same year, he held his solo exhibitions at Hyderabad and Karachi. His exhibition on the Sabra Chatila theme was censored at Islamabad in 1982. Later this exhibition was held with the help of Mr G.N. Mansuri, Bureau Chief of *Dawn* in Islamabad and sponsored by PFUJ (Barna Group) in other cities.

Nagori, a rebel since his student days, revolted against the establishment's advice and often questioned official press statements. In 1986 his first anti-martial law exhibition (of works carried out during 1982 to 1986) was held at Indus Gallery. This was followed by three other exhibitions on socio-political themes, such as Women of Myth and Reality, Black amongst Blacks, and other thematic exhibitions against violence and issues of the human cause, of national and international concerns. He participated in the exhibition *Pakistan: Another Vision* in London and the South Asian painting selection which auctioned

Nagori's painting at Sotheby's in London. Asia Pacific Museum, Pasadena, USA also acquired his painting *Jai Bajrang*. His anti-violence exhibits, *I am You*, were sponsored by Deutsche Bank/Goethe Institut.

Nagori felt passionately about Art education, especially for Sindh, and worked with several government bodies in his endeavour to improve education, art and culture. He was the Chairman, Curriculum Committee for Art Teachers Training Programme, Ministry of Education, Member of the Curriculum Committee of Higher Education (Fine Arts) at the University Grants Commission, Member Board of Governors of the Pakistan National Council of Arts, and the National College of Arts, Lahore. He was also Advisor to the Ministry of Education, Federal College of Arts and Design at Jamshoro. Throughout the seventies and eighties, he worked relentlessly to establish the Fine Arts Department, University of Sindh and was its first Head. He also served several other institutions as advisor, and helped prepare PC-1 and did spadework for the Federal College of Arts at Jamshoro, and selected 50 acres of land, later to be handed over to Mehran University as a Centre of Excellence, Arts and Design Institute. Often he was frustrated and angry at the lack of support for art education and the apathy. His anguish and disgust were reflected not only in his paintings but also in his writing and public speaking. He wrote a number of articles on art education and read papers in seminars that most often created controversies, and his fire-brand speeches were popular with young art students. He was an admired and sought-after speaker and on all occasions remained "a painter of the people."

International terrorism, threatening "nuclear winter" and stories of periodical massacres sent tremors and transformed his works. He knew of the works of revolutionary artists, who along with their masses, fought against authoritarianism and the tyranny of the military junta; but their significance was revealed after the events at home, and the story of Lakhat in Sindh, a completely wiped-out village turned into ashes, brought out *Black Wolf Crying*. The intensity and maturity in his work, he attributes to the environment of Sindh. Though basically a painter of pure aesthetic grounding, decorative and colourist in the fullest sense, Nagori could not remain unmoved to events in Sindh. He recorded his protests against the unjust order and cried for solace and remedy from the oppressive, callously social and politically tragic situation.

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Professor Dr Marcella Nesom said in a lecture at Smithsonian Institute, Washington in 1991, "Nagori is the only Pakistani painter dedicated to socio-political subject matter. Nagori's paintings are powerful works of art which communicate through daring imagery and strident colour. He is one of the most dynamic and significant forces in the twentieth century painting in Pakistan...." Through expressive, non-descriptive colours, the powerful vibrancy of his paintings was created and pure colours applied directly without mixing. There were those who criticised and felt that grim subjects require grim colours, to which Nagori says it is for his own peace and satisfaction that he adds the colours, and a painting without aesthetics is pointless. This led Sultan Ahmed to say (*Dawn*, 1992) "In the expanding Pakistan art world of perfervid calligraphers and mindless abstractionists, A.R. Nagori, is a painter vastly different or even unique. He is a consistent painter of protest who reacts strongly to the injustices and horrors around us and expresses forthrightly..."

John Ruskin famously observed that all great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts – the book of their deeds, the book of their words and the book of their art, and not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others; but of the three, the only trustworthy one is the last. Seen in this context, Nagori's paintings will provide a penetrating glimpse into an unwritten history. Mark Fineman wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* under the title *Pakistan: Crisis on Road to Democracy* in 1988, "Perhaps nowhere were those troubles placed in sharper focus than in the Indus Gallery in Karachi where an exhibit by artist A.R. Nagori sought to document Zia's legacy in a series of angry paintings..." Nagori's painting authenticates socio-political turmoil and records protests with pictorial and visual comments on his era. The work represents expression and aspiration of the oppressed majority around him, reflections of a society needing social change. It is a synthesis of struggle of the masses represented by an individual, an endeavour to free humanity and art from oppression.

Nagori's work has been widely discussed and written about by the leading art critics of Pakistan and abroad. "Crises of Sindh, both urban and rural is the focus of several canvases...his paintings are like a primeval cry of protest against the injustice he sees around him...." says Zohra Yusuf (*Herald*, 1992). "Nagori is an artist who paints as a native of Sindh

would with rebellion in his heart. It is for this reason that his work doesn't receive any official patronage" (Ahmed Salim, *Star*, 1985). "...like a modern day Cassandra, Nagori points out political failings, economic disparity and social injustice meted out to the silent majority...", says Marjorie Hussain (*Post*, 1992). "His contribution to art in the subcontinent stands out, as no other painter has made such consistent attempts to focus attention on socio-political ills in the country" (Ali Imam, *Pakistan Times*, 1986). "...There is much of the German Expressionist in Nagori.... Other disparate strands, like the social realism of Dickens or Daumier, ... Professor Nagori's exhibition is an example of unrestrained vitriol and a lament for what he views as the diseased state of Pakistan today. When Nagori treats the subject of fear and sorrow in decorative and aesthetically pleasing ways, his work goes beyond gung-ho socialist realism to interesting ambiguities that de-locates his imagery from a specific to a more general context. In this sense, he is the true heir to the tradition of political art pioneered by Max Backmann and George Grosz, displaying the same biting satire and the same dark pessimism, without losing sight of pictorial values. Nagori eulogises the right of the artist to project his spleen – but perhaps so excessively that he leaves no room for hope." (Gregory Minissale, *Herald*, Oct. 1988). "The vitality of his strong lines, tonal complexities and narrative details, packed with shocking exposures of deadly intensity go to intensify the artistic description in a unique visual language (Hameed Zaman, *Muslim*, 1992).

Protest was in Nagori's character since the student politics of sixties. Reflecting on a lifetime fighting against injustice, Nagori says, "I participated in the agitation against the University Ordinance of 1958 and took part in anti One Unit rallies at Hyderabad. In Lahore I partook in the Union election and defeated the rightists at Punjab University, who later burnt down the *shamiana* and classes of Fine Arts, and Punjab University elections were nullified. Fearing a student clash at the campus, I was forced to leave Lahore for a short time in 1963. Anna Molka Ahmed intervened and called me back. As a protest against certain policies at Sindh University I resigned from the chairmanship of the department in the early eighties. I protested against NOC requirement for the University teachers and wrote against biased education policies in Sindh. I was one of the signatories who protested against the Federal Government's intention of taking over the Institute of Sindhology. I joined university teachers in their protests over many issues. How can my paintings be different from my deeds, my life?"

In 1970, Syed Nayab Hussain had prophesied, "...Battling with the demons of his own imagination, Nagori went to every Sphinx in places like Lahore, Sargodha, Kohat, Dacca, Chittagong, Kaptai, Rangamati and others. As far as I know these Sphinxes still stand there is one piece. Nagori has come back alive but deeply clawed and bloodied from within. For his own intellect is the one great Sphinx to which he is destined to return continually.... Nagori sits in Jamshoro these days watching the lizards crawl in the sun and chameleons change their colour. His blue dips its fingers into green and his red burrows its head under mystery and suspense and drama. Nagori is about to discover himself, or maybe, discover the futility of his spiritual voyage."

Thirty-six years ago, Nayab had said these words. Today, I ask Nagori if Nayab was right after all, and whether he discovered the futility of his voyage. The issues that he spent passionately fighting against do persist in society. Art education has still a long way to go. The suffering of the masses still continues. Also, I wonder, if the journey was futile, then how come he is not a bitter man, but still retains childlike enthusiasm, hope and spontaneity. Nagori is quiet for a moment and then says, "Yes, Nayab was right. What I have discovered through the years is that Sisyphus-like, we are condemned to repeatedly push a rock up the hill, only to watch it roll down again. Yet, happiness comes from having struggled, happiness comes from being able to make beautiful paintings, and happiness also comes from watching the chameleons change colours under the setting sun. But my happiness is that of Camus's Sisyphus, who when he is at the mountain's foothill, knows that the burden will have to be picked up again, the struggle repeated by others. So long as there are political wrongs to be righted, art has to participate in the popular development of an attitude which leads to a better society. If one is insensitive to the people around, then art is meaningless, existence is meaningless."



2. At Majithia Hall,
1963.

3. Over to the
Ganges, East
Pakistan, 1964.



the
East
1964.



4. Nagori, Khalid
Iqbal, Abrar
Tirmizi, 1962.



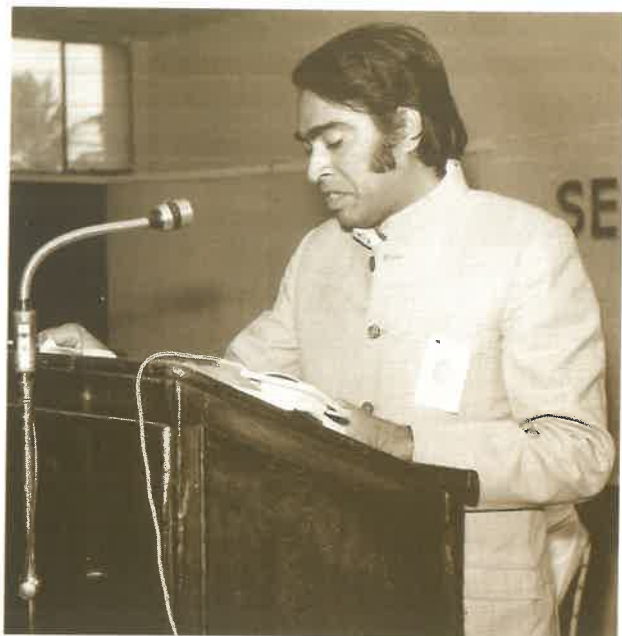
5. Nagori on receiving Wyanna Award – Graduation Class. L to R: Khalid Anis, Tanveer Hashmi, Anna Molka Ahmed, Nagori, Ismat Pirzada, Attiya Mirza, and Fareeda Bukhari. Seated: Ejaz, and Zara Mariam. Lahore, 1963.



6. Nagori as referee – wrestling bout between Ghulam Rasool and Zulqarnain Haider – to decide who is a better painter! 1963.



7. Post-wrestling bravo from Mrs Ahmed at her residence – Nagori, Ghulam Rasool, Riaz, Anna Molka Ahmed, Zulqarnain Haider, Hardy, Raja. Seated: Khalid Mehmood and Khalid Anis.



8. Nagori reading his paper at the Karachi Arts Council Seminar, 1972.

9. Mehfooza, Nagori, Ahmed Pervez, Ijaz Ul Hassan, and Ali Imam: Panel discussion at the Arts Council





10. Sajid Ali Khan, T.Y. Khan, Nagori, and Kamal Ahmed Rizvi – at Nagori's wedding, Hotel Beach Luxury, Karachi, 1973.



11. Family: Nagori, Naveed, Amber Romasa, and Mehfooza (wife). In the background is the portrait of M. Ibrahim Joyo.



12. Painting at Lahore, 1995.



12. Painting at Lahore, 1995.



13. Painting *Jai Bajrang* – Lahore, 1995.



14. Lalarukh, Nagori, Julia, Sabah Hussain, Anwar Saeed, Naheed Raza, and Meher Afroz.



15. Leading Sindhi writers and intellectuals at a reception given by Prof Aijaz Qureshi at his residence in Hyderabad: Lal Jaskani, Barkat Chuhan, Dr Munir Qureshi, Shahid Akhund, Aijaz Qureshi, Prof Omer Memon, Asif Kazi, Mushtaq Mirani, Noor Mohammad, Ibad Rashidi, Zafar Hassan Shah, Jamal Rind, Dr Mubarak Ali, Ahad Abro, Fareed Sheikh, Ibrahim Joyo, Nagori, and Moonish Ayaz. *Photo by Dr Isa Daudpota.*



16. Nagori receiving a memento from Chinese culture diplomats.



17. Mr & Mrs Nagori being received by Indian Consul General, Mr Mani Lal Tripathi.



16. Nagori receiving a memento from Chinese culture diplomats.



17. Mr & Mrs Nagori being received by Indian Consul General, Mr Mani Lal Tripathi.



18. Moinuddin Hyder (Governor Sindh), Dr Noman Galal (Egyptian Ambassador), and Nagori.

19. L to R: Shafi Aqeel, Gulgee, Kohari, Shahid Sajjad, Azim Mian, and Tariq Javed.

Back Row: Mrs Gulgee, Sheen Farrukh, Ali Imam, Bashir Mirza, Kamal Rizvi, Scherer, and Nagori.





20. At an exhibition by
Jamil Naqsh.



21. With an Egyptian artist
and Pakistani poetess
Kishwar Naheed,
Karachi, 1998.

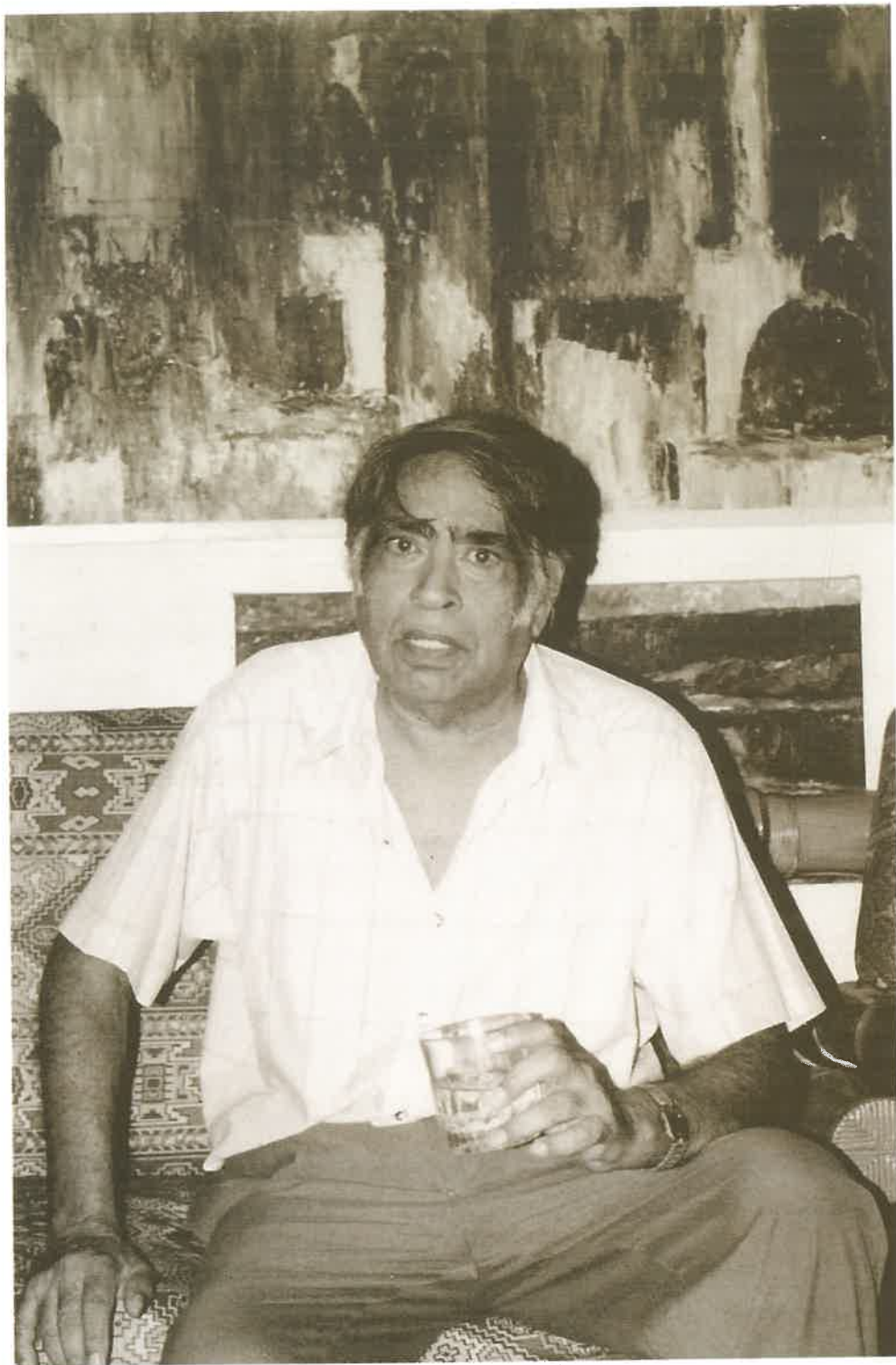


22. Nagori, Bashir Mirza, and Abrar Tirmizi.

23.



23. Nagori with Ali Imam.



24. Nagori at home,
Karachi, 2005.



25. Women of Dhanmandi, Dhaka – Oil on canvas, 24"x24" – 1965. Collection of Dr Aziz Khan, USA.



26. Sargodha Landscape – Oil on board, 24"x36" – 1970.



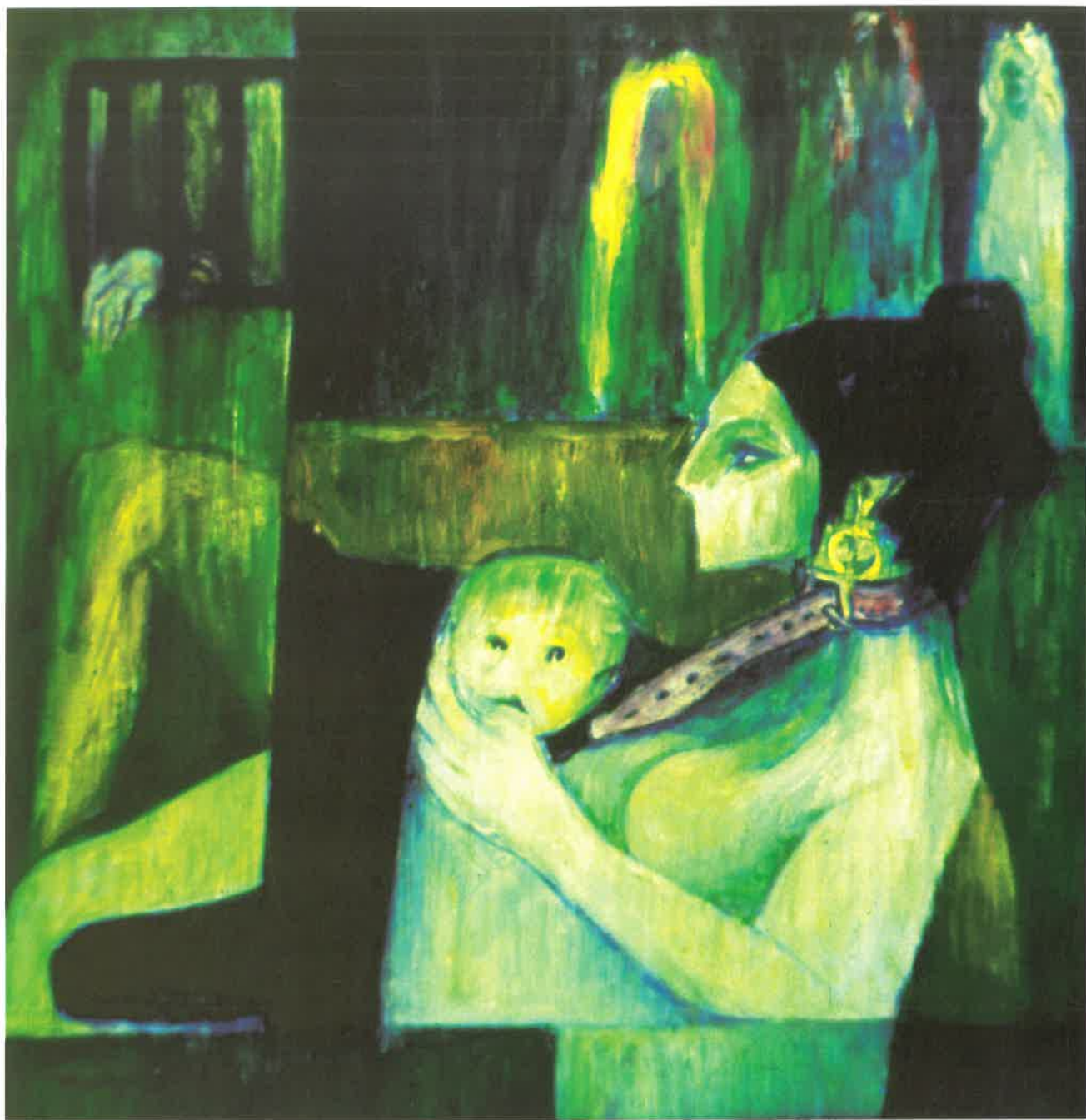
27. Figure composition –
Oil on canvas,
1972.



28. Amber and Naveed. Figure composition – Oil on canvas, 24"x48" – 1984.



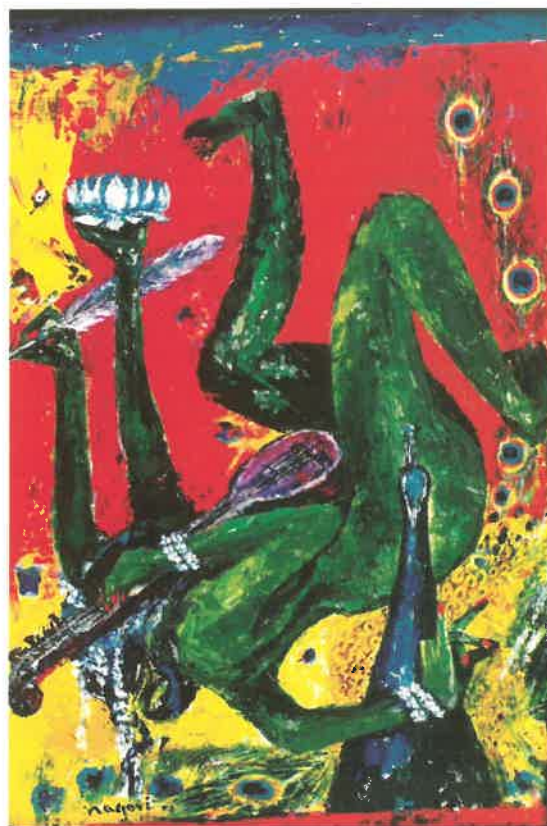
29. Amber and Naveed. Figure composition – Oil on canvas, 24"x24" – 1985.



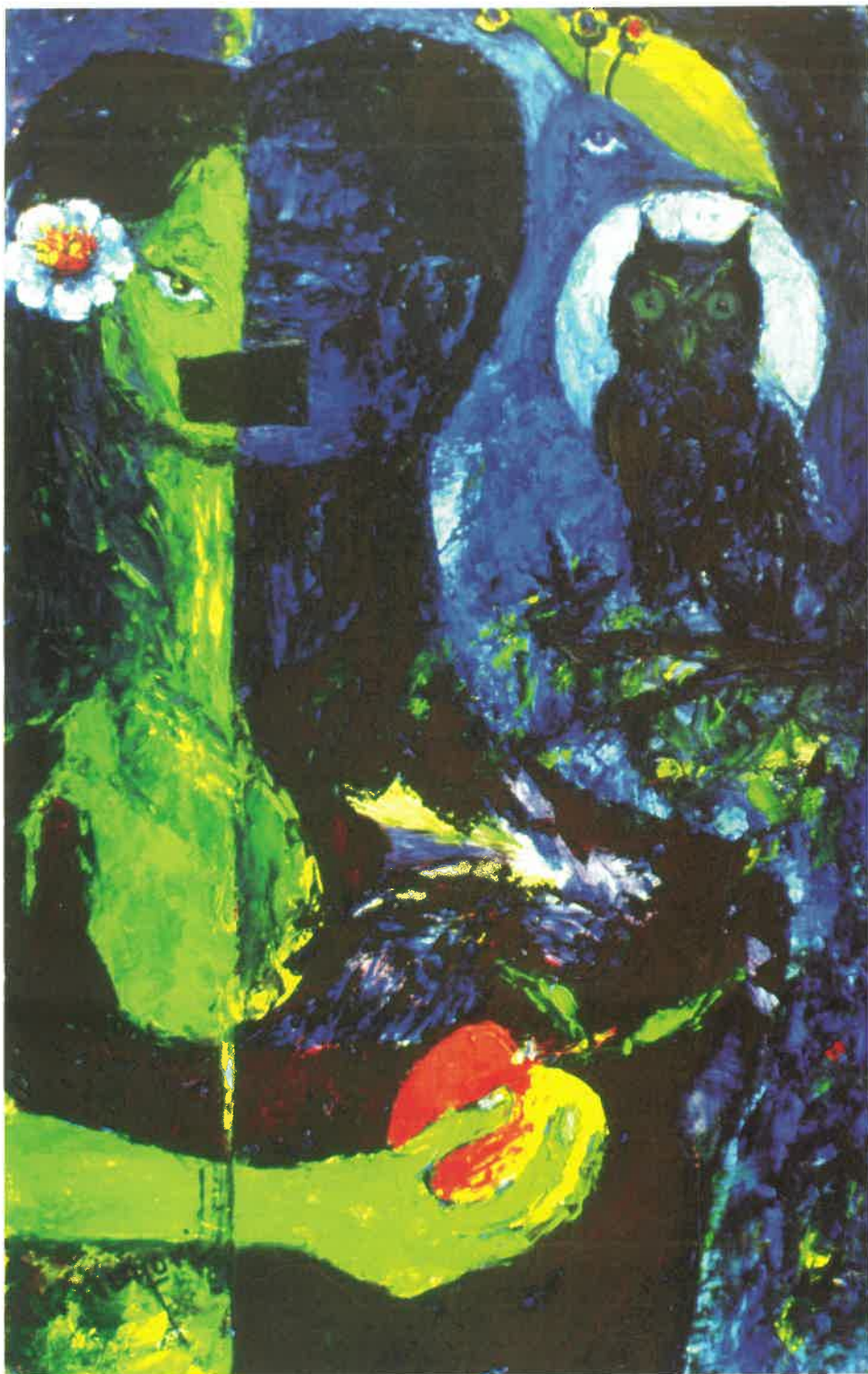
30. Multan Jail – Oil on board, 1985. Collection Mr Anwar Rammal.



31. Circle – Oil on board, 1986.
Collection Sohail Usman Ali.



32. Falling Saraswati – Oil on canvas,
1993. Collection Prof Dr Marcella Nesom.



33. Eve – Oil on canvas.
Collection Prof Dr Burke,
Department of
Psychology, London
University.



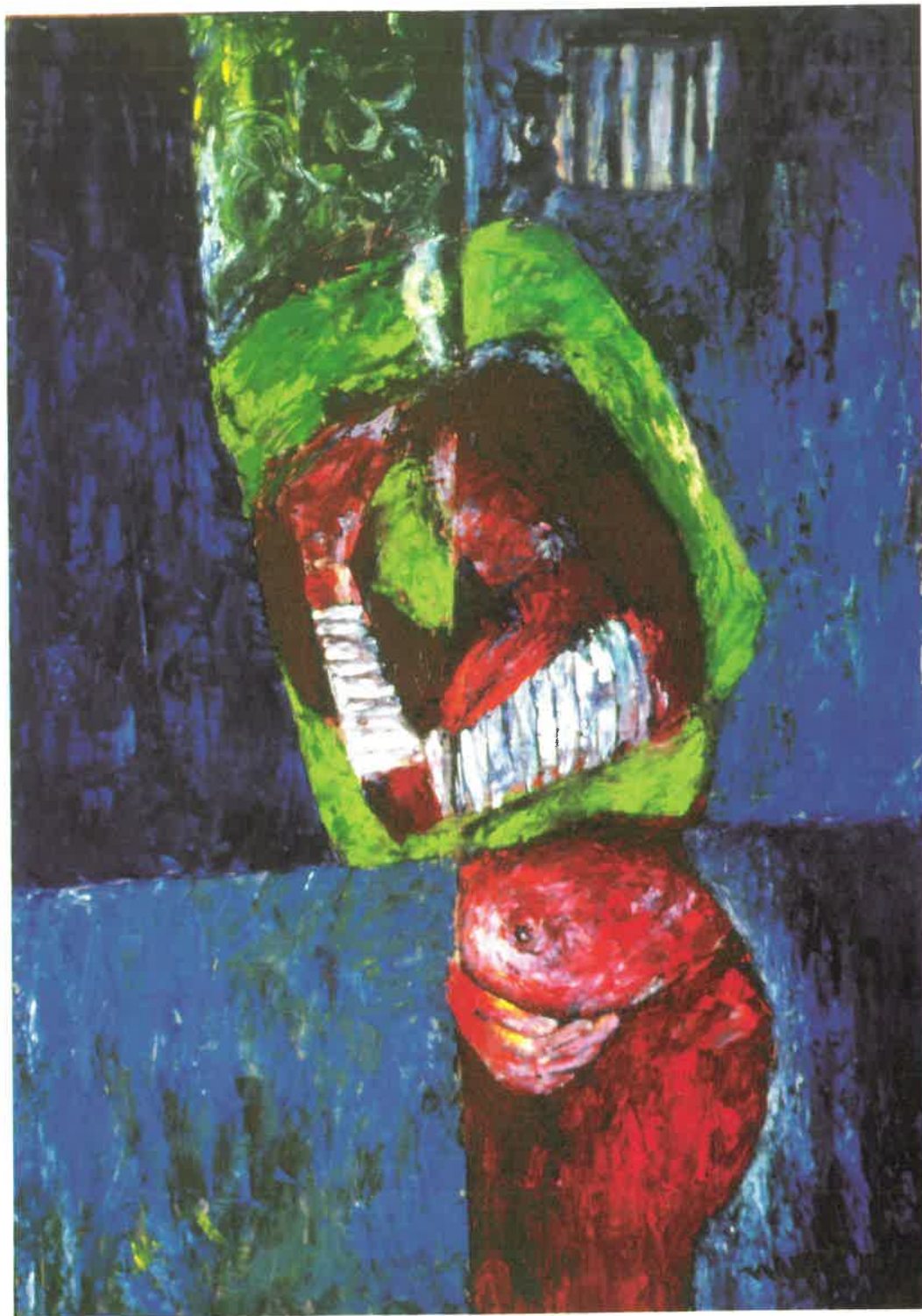
34. The Chair –
Oil on canvas,
1992. Collection
Dr Scherer,
Director Goethe
Institut.



35. Bully – Oil on board, 1991. Private collection, Karachi.



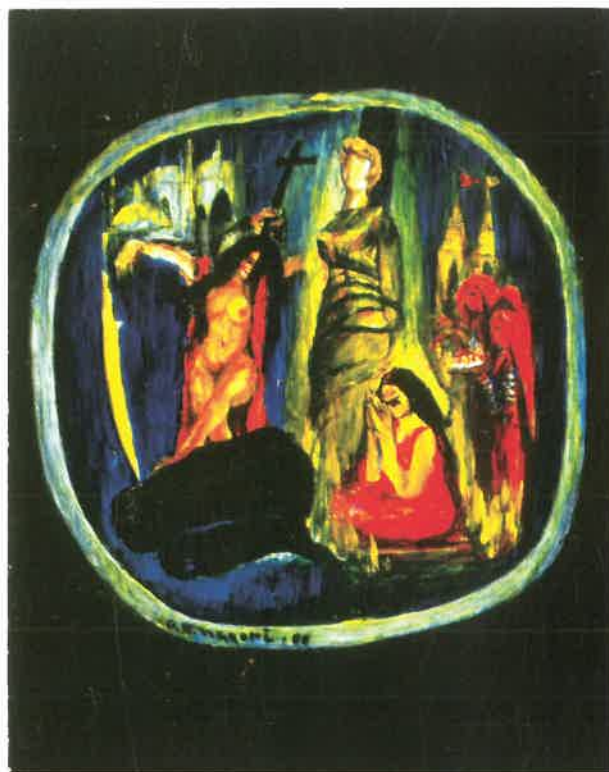
36. Rupa & Bull – Oil on board, 1986. Private collection, Lahore.



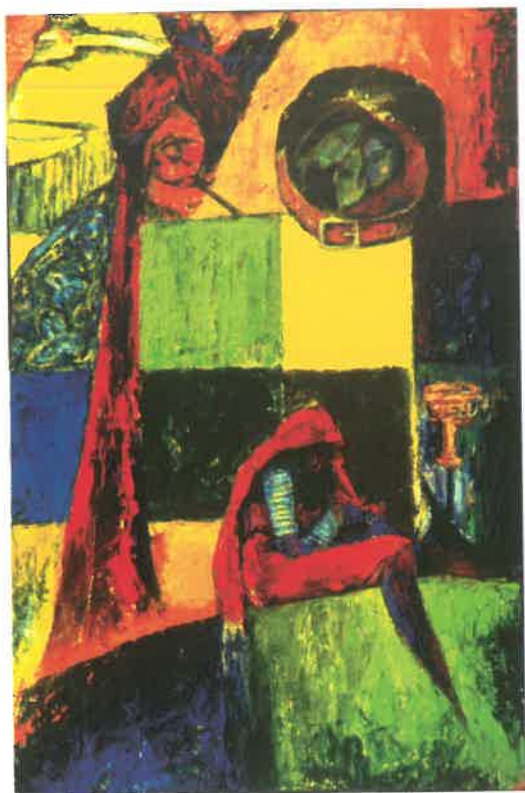
37. Tharri Couple
– Oil on board.
Collection
Peter Hoschelle.



38. Serpent runs through – *Women of Myth & Reality Series*, Oil on canvas. Private collection, USA.



39. The Golden Sword:
Death of a Princess – *Women of Myth
& Reality Series*, Oil on board.
Collection Dr Aziz Khan, USA.



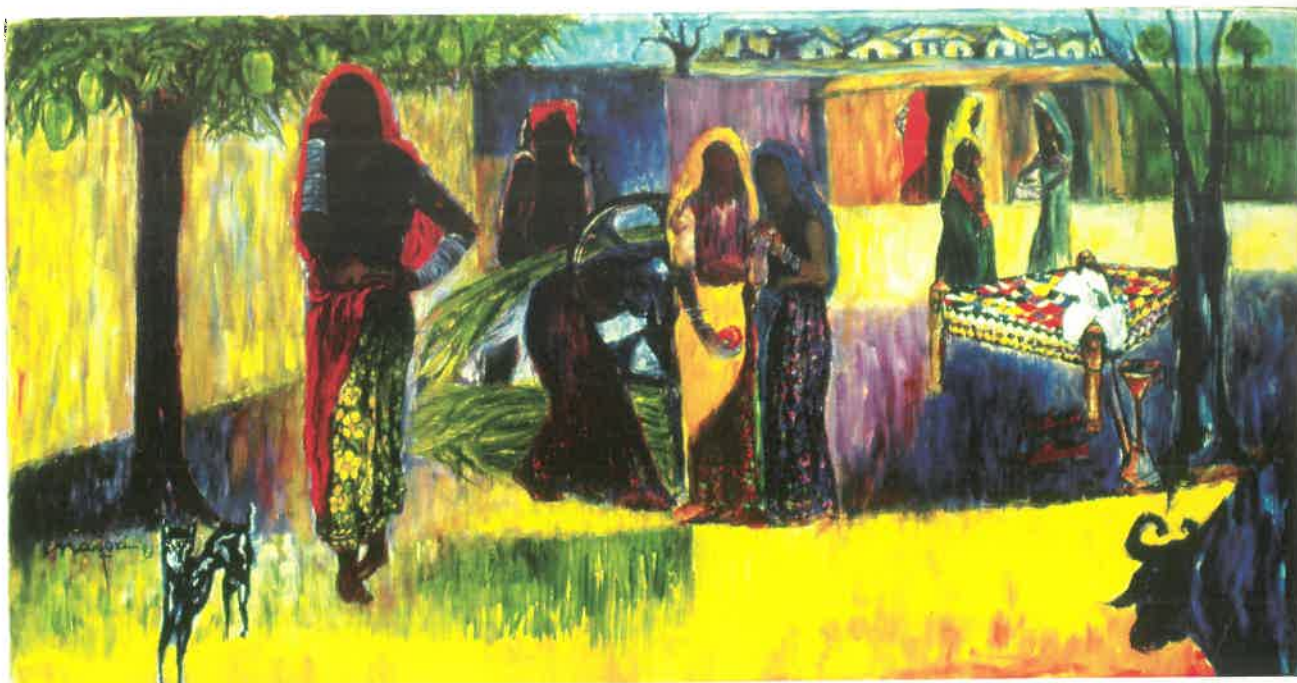
40. Serf Women – Oil on canvas,
1992. Private collection.



41. Odalisque – Oil on board,
1991. Private collection.



42. Mother & Child – Oil on board, 20"x30" – 1984. Private collection, USA.



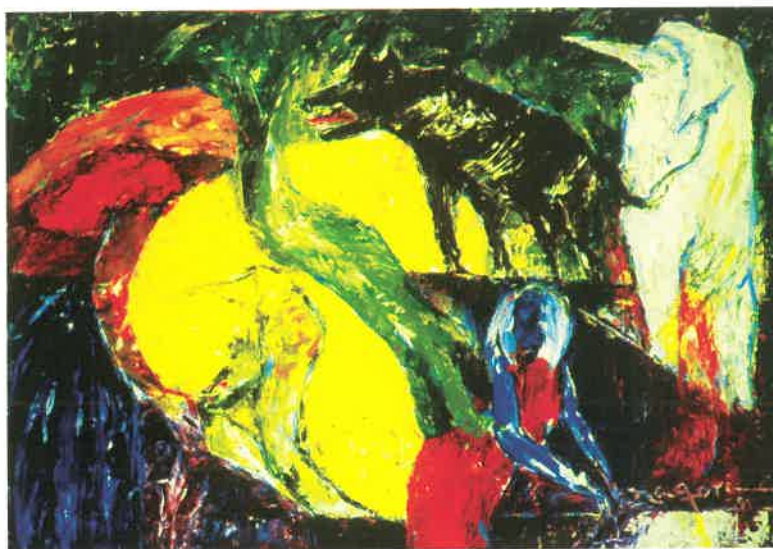
43. Absentee Landlord – Oil on canvas, 24"x48" – 1993. Collection Sheila Saigol.



44. Sindhi Mother & Child – Oil on board, 1998. Private collection.



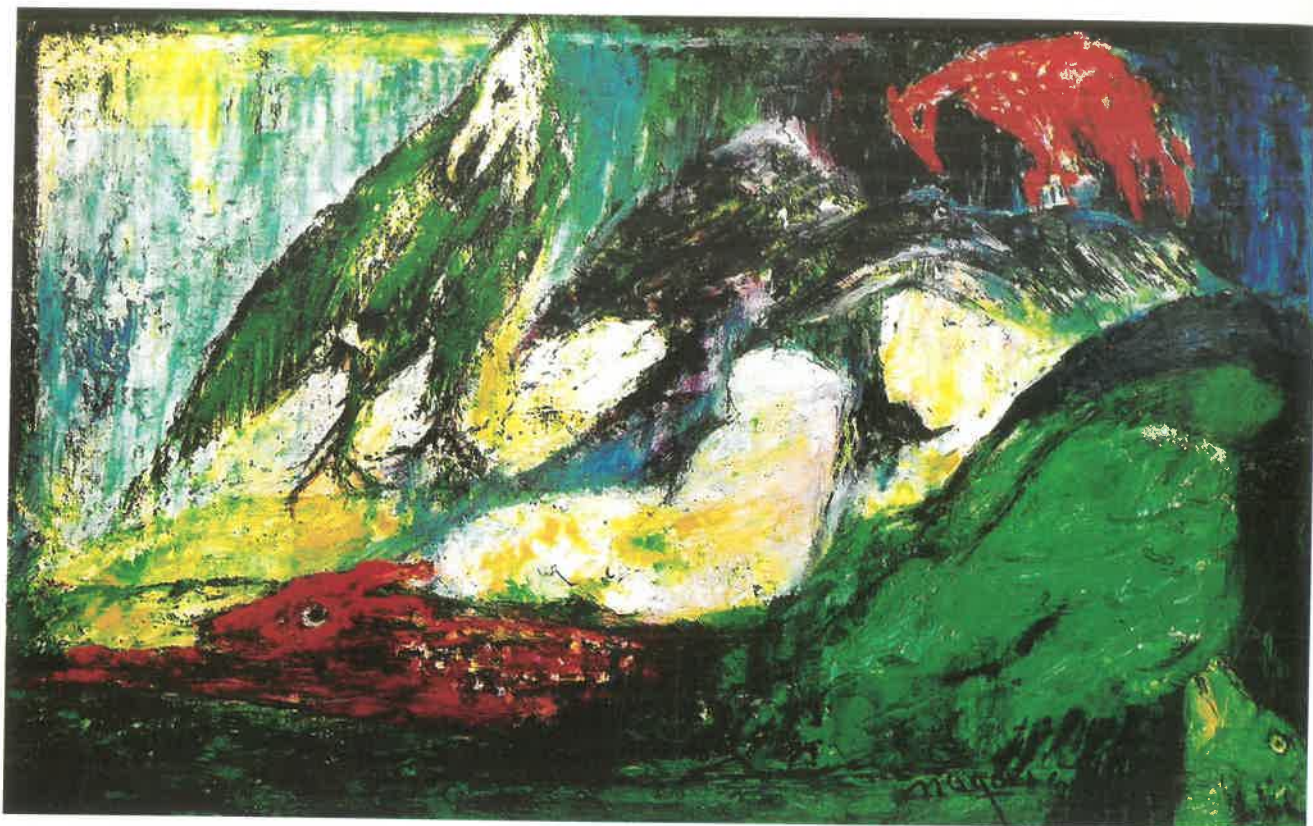
45. Olympia – Oil on board.
Collection Romana Hussain.



46. Predator – Oil on board.
Collection Dr Maria Lohmann.



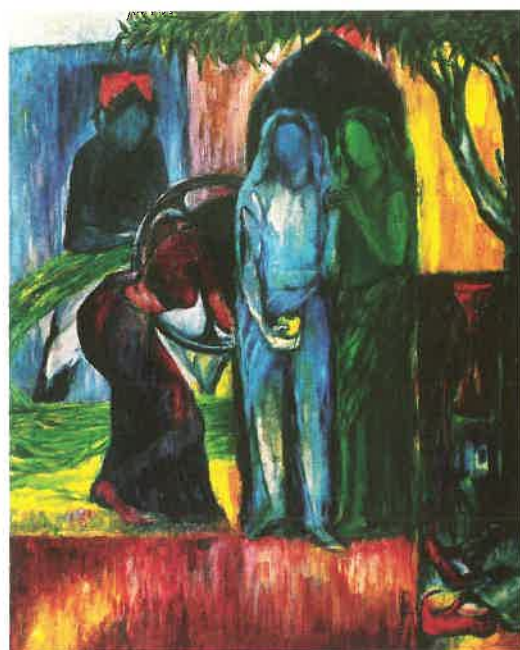
47. Assembly Line – Oil on board, 2003. Collection Adrian Hussain.



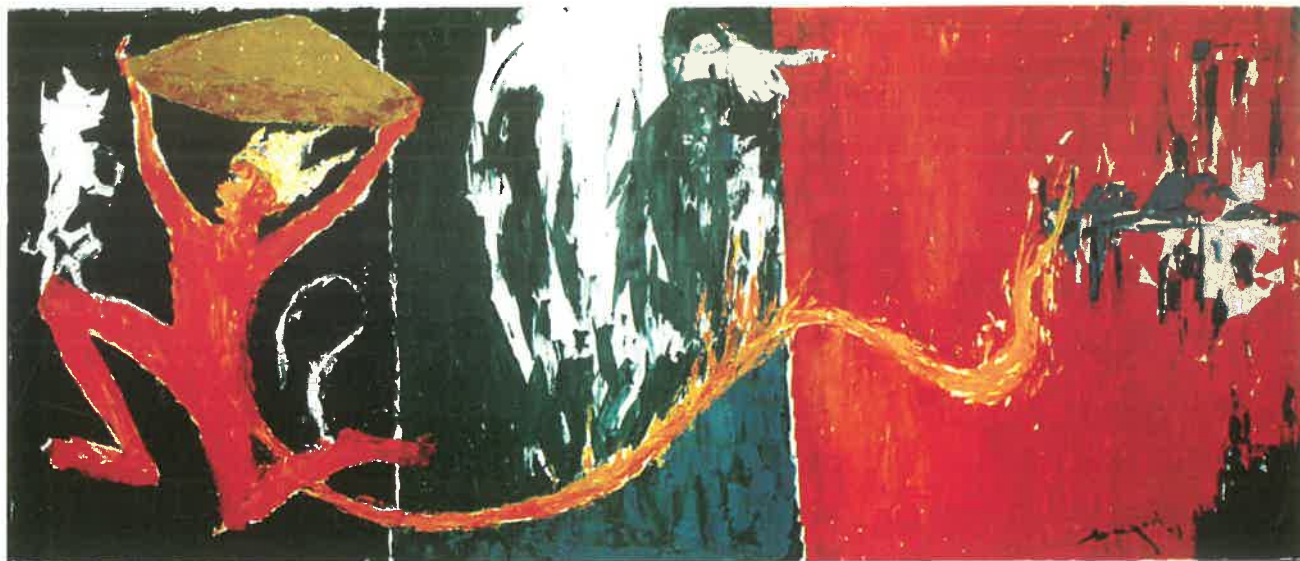
48. Vultures over Green – Oil on board. Collection Naiza Khan.



49. Junkies 1 – Oil on board.



50. Fodder – Oil on
canvas, 24"x30" – 1994.



51. Jai Bajrang – Glory to the Monkey King – Acrylic on canvas, 27"x63" – 1993. Pacific Asia Museum, USA.



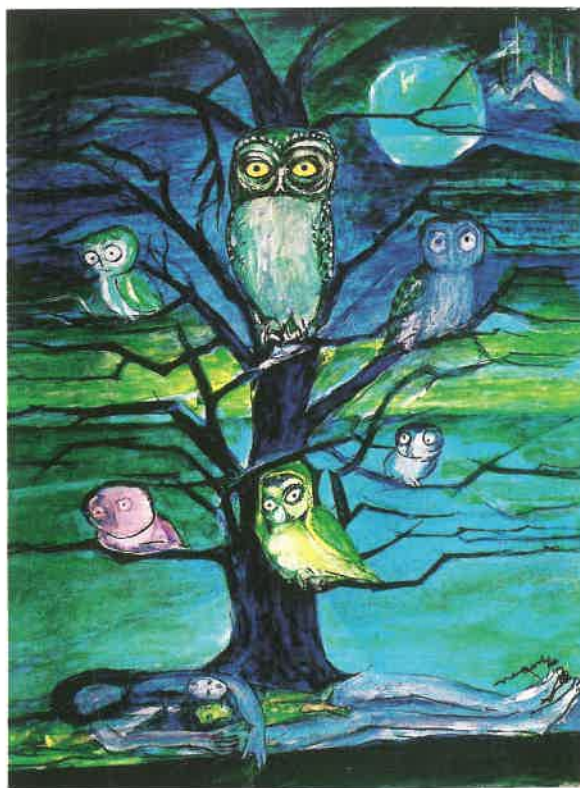
52. War or Peace – Oil on board,
2004. Collection Imran Mir.



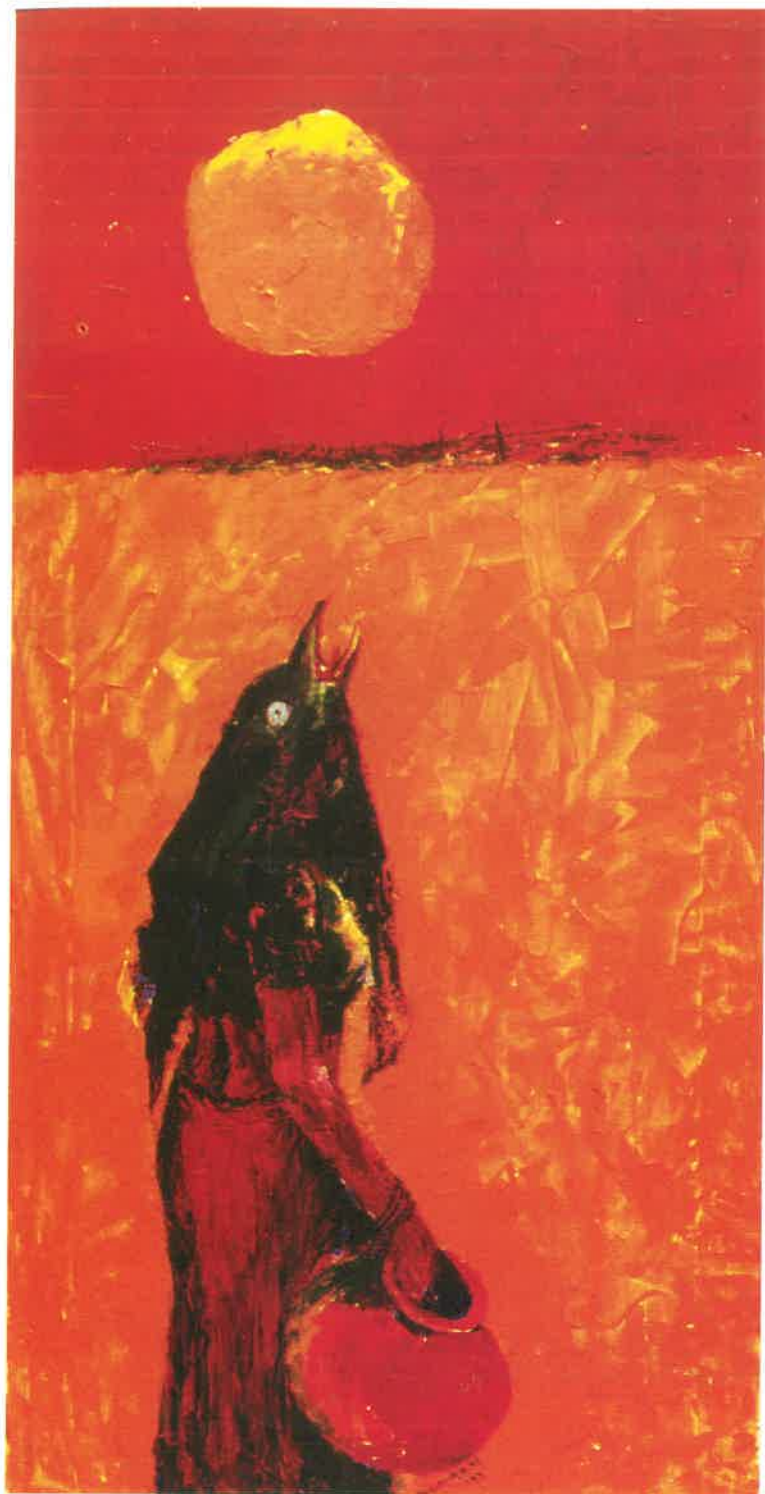
53. Push cart delivery in rubble
city – Oil on canvas, 2001.
Collection Zohra Yousuf.



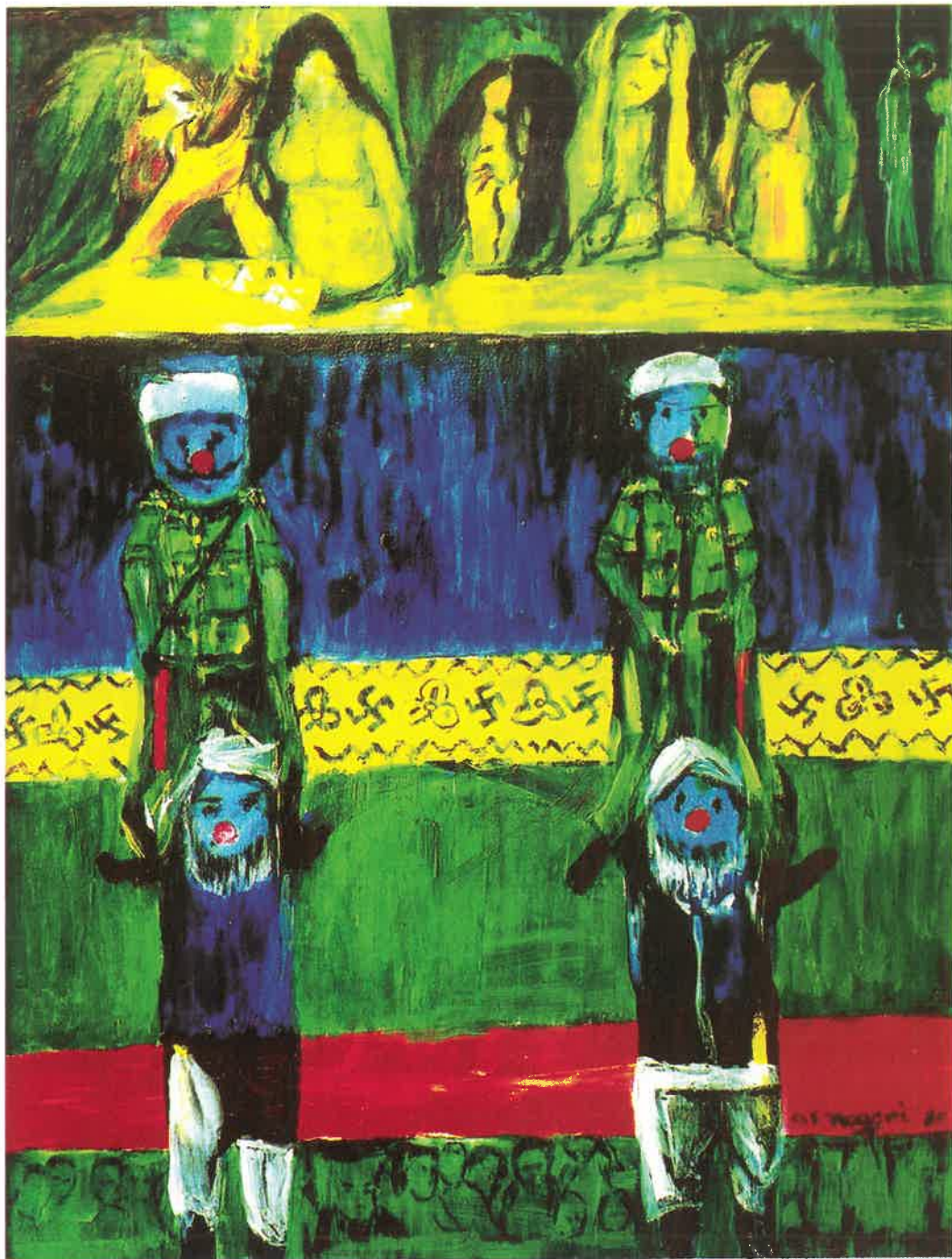
54. Zindabad – Acrylic on board,
1985. Private collection.



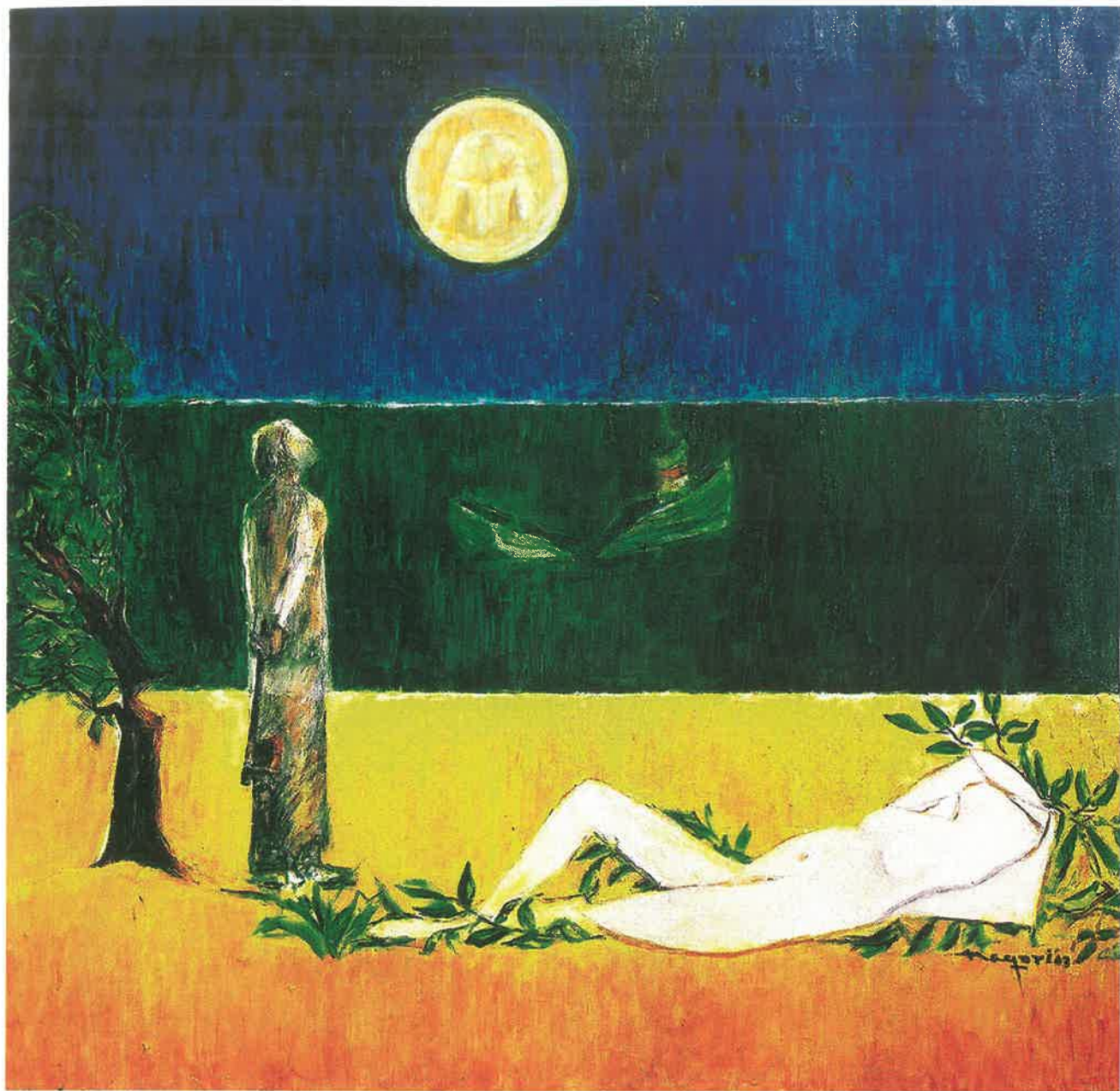
55. Secretary Bird – Oil on
board, 2004.



56. Tharri Bird – Acrylic on canvas, 18"x36" – 1993. Collection Maniza Naqvi.



57. Junkies 2 – Oil on board, 1985. Collection Sohail Usman Ali.



58. Kari Karachi – Oil on board, 24"x24" – 2003. Collection Wahab Jaffer.



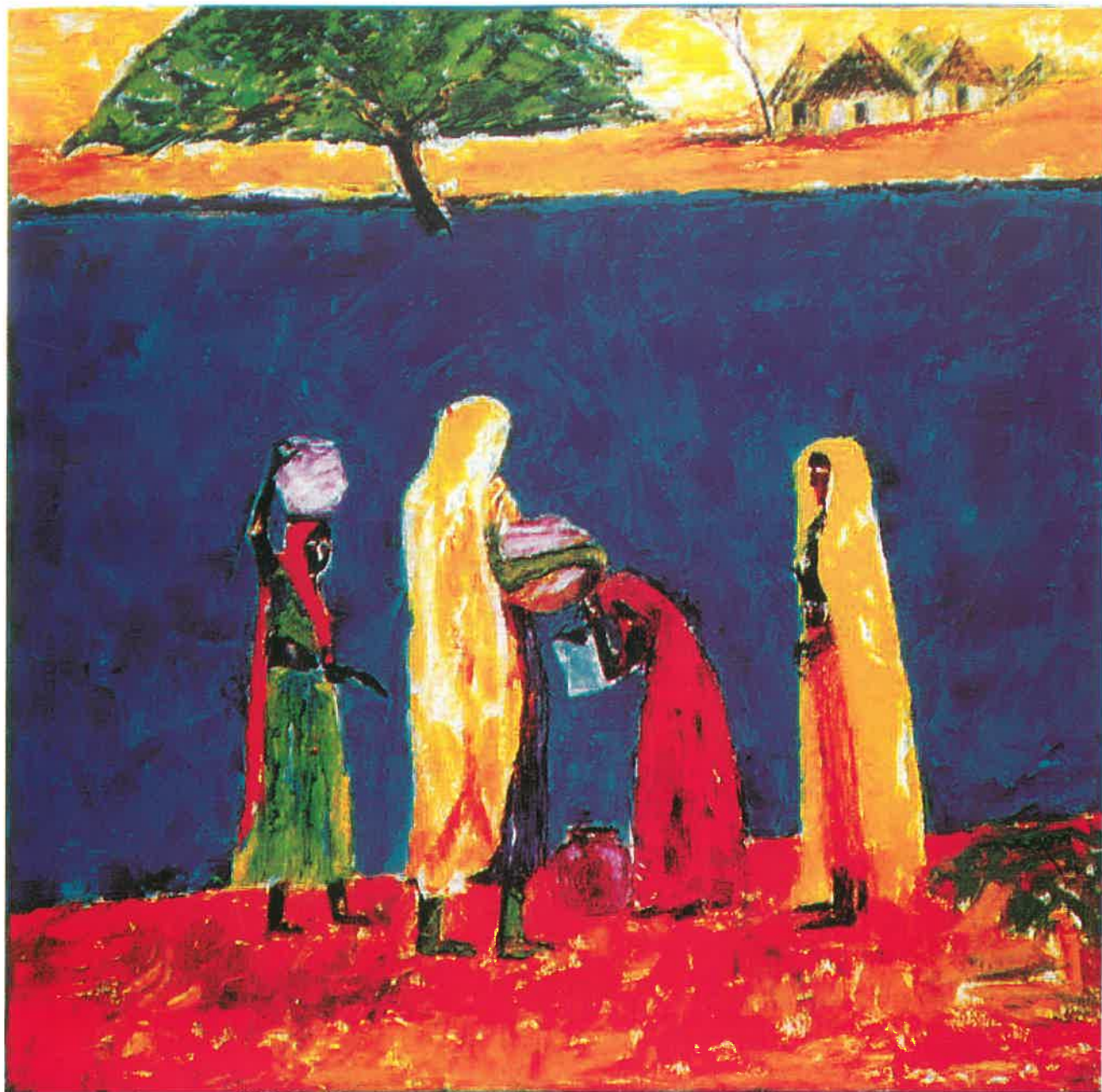
59. Paradox – Oil on board, 24"x24" – 2004.



60. Kari facing Eclipse – Oil on canvas, 18"x18" – 2004.



61. Tharri Landscape 1 – Oil on canvas, 2004. Private collection.



62. Tharri Landscape 2 – Oil on canvas, 18"x18" – 2004. Collection Mr Tariq Rangoonwala.



63. Tharri Landscape 3 – Oil on canvas, 18"x18" – 2004.

"With a touch of Modigliani and a whiff from Ajanta Caves, Nagori follows Al-Ghazali, who in contradistinction to the Greeks' perception of sensual beauty, holds that a sixth sense, a sort of super sense, is responsible for the appreciation of beauty. Every great painter, every great artist and every lover of beauty possesses this sixth sense in its fullest degree which is the source not only of creation, but also of appreciation."

– Syed Nayab Hussain

"Like a modern day Cassandra, Nagori points out political failings, economic disparity and social injustice meted out to silent majority."

– Marjorie Hussain

"Nagori's paintings are powerful works of art which communicate through daring imagery and strident colour. He is one of the most dynamic and significant forces in the 20th century painting of Pakistan."

– Dr. Marcella Nesom

"It is rather strange that a painter of such committed sensibilities should remain isolated simply because of his non-conformism or self-imposed censors. His contribution to art in the sub-continent stands out, as no other painter has made such consistent attempt to focus attention on socio-political ills in the country.... Paintings are not just an expression of agony but are very painterly.... The exhibition is just a trend-setter and could be emulated by other socially committed painters as reflection on life could also be aesthetic and a creative expression."

– Ali Imam

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