

# Inspiring women to assert rights

Ershad Kamol

THE blazing red canvas featuring the ongoing struggle of the women across world dazzles the eyes of the viewers. The huge canvas titled 'Kholo Kholo Daar', full of symbols and images, is in deed an epic that narrates oppression, identity crisis and sufferings of the 'universally women'.

Artist Monica Jahan Bose's universally young woman figure, may be the artist herself, stands at an open window, wearing only a red sari blouse and a white cloth or slip around her waist. Depiction of blouse so boldly on the canvases may be interpreted as provocative, since it is usually a garment hidden under a sari, but the blouse appears repeatedly as a much used symbol of her artworks to depict womanhood.

But only this part of the painting does not give the complete picture of her epic urging women across the world to be conscious of their rights. Her bare arms in the painting are spread wide open as she reaches out to the world. One hand seems to be moving towards a doorknob, near a streaming Bangla text proclaiming 'Kholo kholo daar (open the door)', first verse of a Tagore's popular song.

Just below the red sari blouse, Bose has painted bare stomach and naval — perhaps a symbol of womb, the sign for creation. At the level of the womb, a blossoming lotus has been depicted as the symbol for the meaning of this painting as well as the show—an opening of a new door.

She has contrasted this image by depicting two veiled women in the bottom of right foreground.

There are other symbols such as a moon, a sun, a heart and hot pink

coloured red boots on the huge crimson red canvas that reconciles cultural differences through transcendence of all differences seeking instead to express the universally human — like love and joy, and using red to represent heat, energy, passion and blood.

Inventing her own unique language appropriated for expressing her complex conceptual ideas and her multi-dimensional thought process, Monica Jahan Basu has reconciled cultural differences through integrated combining and juxtaposing on the picture plane Western and Eastern symbols in a fragmented fashion.

The canvas, in deed narrates, her fascinating biography, which provides insight into her work: born in England, to Bangladeshi parents—one Hindu one Muslim—and brought up mostly in the

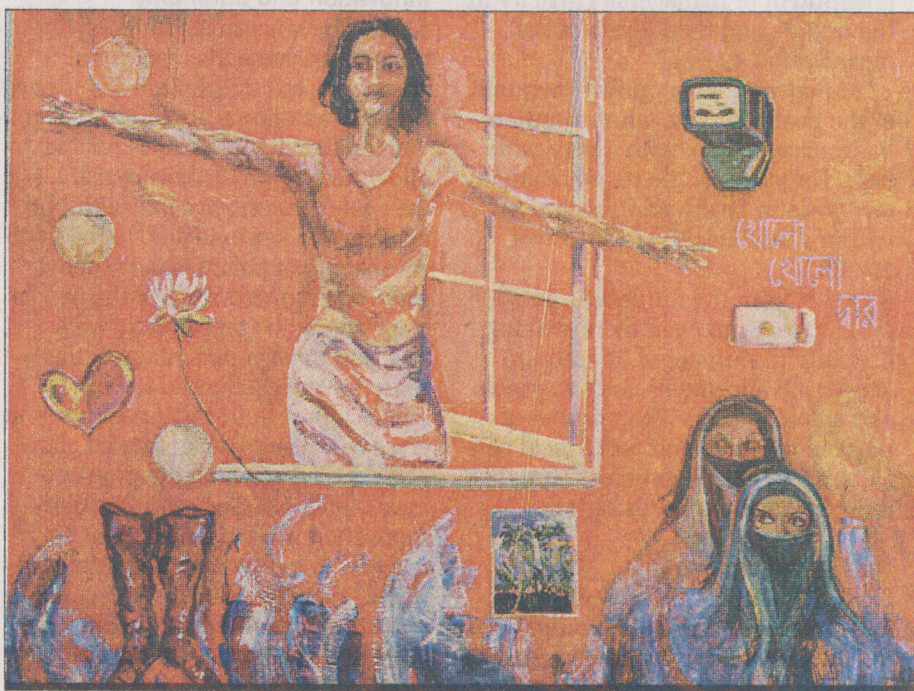
US, at present living in Paris.

In fact, the painting titled 'Kholo Kholo Daar 2' is one of the eight huge vibrant paintings of a series having the same title. This series is exhibiting at Dhaka Art Centre. But, this is not the only series by Basu on display at the exhibition. A total of 28 paintings are on display under three series.

Through the water series, Basu has raised the global warming issue for the audience. Use of romantic colours in this series features her fascination to the environment.

Another interesting series on display is portrayal of landscape of Dhaka city. This figurative vibrant series is, in deed, a realistic presentation of roadside view of Dhaka city: full of posters, banners, dirty and busy.

The exhibition will end on July 26.



Kholo Kholo Dwar, acrylic on canvas, by Monica Jahan Bose.