Chapter - 5

(a) Controversial work of M.F. Husain.
(b) My Appreciation of Menon’s Work & her Private Collection.
Bharatmata
CONTROVERSIAL WORK OF M.F. HUSAIN

**Controversies:** The announcement led to controversy in Kerala and some Sangh Parivar Organizations campaigned against the granting of the award and petitioned the Kerala courts. The Kerala High Court granted an intermin order to stay the granting of the award until the petition had been disposed of. In early 2008, Husain’s Battle of Ganga and Jamuna, Mahabharata 12, a large diptych, from the Hindu epic, fetched $1.6 million, setting a world record at Christie’s South Asian Modern and Contemporary Art sale.

In the 1990s some of Husain’s works become controversial because of their Portragal of Hindu deities in the nude. The Paintings in question were created in 1970, but did not become an issues until 1996 when they were painted in Vichar Mimansa, a Hindi monthly magazine, which published them in an article headlined "M.F Husain. A Painter of Butcher". In response, eight criminal Complaints were field against Husain. In 2004, Delhi high Court dismissed these complaint of "Promoting enmity between different group by paintings Hindu goddesses Durga and saraswati - in an uncharistable manner hurting the sentiments of Hindus. The controversy escalated to the extent that in 1998 Husain house was attached by Bajrang Dal and art works destroyed. The leadership of Shiv sena endorsed the attack. Twenty six Bajrang Dal activists were arrested by the police protest against Husain also led to the closure of an exhibition in London, England.
In February 2006, Husain charged with hurting sentiments of people because of his nude portraits of Hindu gods and goddesses.

A series of cases were field against him and a court case related to the alleged absence depiction of Hindu goddesses in his paintings resulted in issuing a non bail able warrant against the painter after he failed to respond to summons. There were also reportedly death threats. The artist left the country stating that matters are so legally complicated that I have been advised not to return home. Now living in Dubai and London, he continues to stay away from India, but has expressed a strong desire to return, despite fears that he may be arrested in connection with the cases. A recent Supreme Court order has suspended an arrest warrant for Husain. The law ministry has examined half a dozen works by Husain and told the government that prosecutors would have a strong him for deliberately hurting religious feelings.

Mother India:

In February 6, 2006 issue, India Today, a national English weekly published an advertisement titled “Art For Mission Kashmir”. This advertisement contains a painting of Bharatmata (Mother India) as a nude woman posed across a map of India with the names of Indian states on various parts of her body. The exhibition was organized by Nafisa Ali of Action India (NGO) and Apparao art Gallery.

Organizations like Hindu Jagruti Samiti and VHP have protested persistently against Husain displaying the painting on the websites and even in
exhibitions in north Europe. As a result, on February 7, 2006 Husain apologized and promised to withdraw the painting from an auction.

Meenaxi: A Tale of Three Cities:

Husain’s film Meenaxi: A Tale of Three Cities was pulled out of movie theatres a day after some Muslim organizations raised objections to one of the songs in it. The All-India Ulema Council complained that the Qawwali song Noor-un-Ala-Noor was blasphemous. It argued that the song contained words directly taken from the Quran. The council was supported by Muslim organizations like the Milli Council, All-India Muslim Council, Raza Academy, Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind and Jamat-e-Islami.

Husain’s son stated that the words were a phrase referring to divine sung by the central character played by Tabu. He said there was no intention to offend.

February 09, 2006

Artist attacked for blasphemy (updated with images).

I was just reading about a painter whose work was called blasphemous and whose house was attacked by a mob of 90 militants as a result. Then also attacked an art gallery that was showing his paintings and destroyed 28 of his canvasses. Two other painters whose work was displayed with his at a different gallery were also attacked. He has been the subject of repeated police investing actions in the past and was just booked by the police yesterday for offending religious sentiment.
It might surprise you to know that this is not a story of Islamic intolerance. Instead, this is a story about Hindu religious sensibilities offended by the work of one of India's most famous painters.

Muqbool Fida Husain, a man whose paintings were recently auctioned by Christie's for 2 millions a Canvas.

Hindu groups objected to Husain's pictures of Saraswati, Durga, and Draupadi naked in 1996, when militants noted and are currently objecting to paintings of "Mother India" naked.

Acknowledgement as one of the living legends of Indian art, Maqbool Fida Husain created a public furor by paintings Hindu goddesses in the nude in 1996. Husain later apologized and said he had not meant to hurt the sentiments of any religious group. He even expressed his villagness to go before a committee of three persons: an art critic, a lawyer, and a representative of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad that could scrutinise his entire collection. Husain said he would immediately destroy any things that the committee found objectionable. That suggestion was brushed aside as members of hard-line Hindu organizations ransacked the painter's house in Mumbai and also manhandled artists outside a gallery in Delhi that had Husain's works on display.

The Shiv Sena endorsed the Bajrang Dal's attack on Husain's home. Bal Thakeray said "If Husain can step into Hindustan, what is wrong if I enter his house".

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In the October 11, 1996 incident, a group of Bajrang Dal actionists forced their way into the Herwitz Gallery in Ahmedabad's Husain's - Doshi Gufa, the well known art complex. Armed with tridents and wearing saffron scares they intimidated a lone guard and destroyed about 23 tapes try items and 28 paintings which were on display there. The works destroyed included Husain's series on Hanuman a depiction of the last supper and the famous Madhuri Dixit series. Warnings: Thumbnail versions of the offending images below fold, click to see larger versions.

The Absence Paintings

Paintings 1: Naked Sita on the long tall of Hanuman

In this paintings Goddess 'Sita' and 'Hanuman' have been depicted in the nude. Sita was never rescued by Hanuman. Further, Sita is the icon of chastity for millions of Hindus all over the world. Here, Husain depsects Hindu Holy figures in violation of Hindu Holy Scriptures.

Paintings 2: Lord Hanuman with His genitals pointing a woman having sexual Intercourse. The title of the painting is Hanuman V. it shows a three faced Hanuman, and a nude couple in sexual intercourse. The erect genital of Hanuman is shown bent in the direction of the female.

(Critique of the 'Hunuman V paintings by noted critic, Shyamal Begchi: "While the brave and valiant Hanuman tries to concentrate on his meditation, the naked figures of Rama and Sita can be seen in the foreground."
Paintings 3: Hanuman opposite Sita on the thigh of naked Ravana
These paintings signed as 'Hanuman 13' by Husain shows naked 'Sita', setting on the thigh of naked "Ravena, while naked Hanuman is attacking him.

Painting 4: Naked Goddess Saraswati Hindus regard Saraswati as the Goddess of knowledge, art and wisdom, she is worshipped as the one 'wrapped in white, pure garment'. Showing Her naked is in violation of Hindu Scriptures.

Paintings 5: Bull copulating with Parvati, with Shiva watching
Paintings 6: Durga in Sexual union with tiger.

In this paintings of Goddess 'Durga'. She is not shown astride, but in sexual union with a tiger. Paintings 7; Nacked Goddess Lakshmi on the head of an elephant 'Lakshmi' is also shown naked, perched on the head of an elephant.

Paintings 8: Naked Krishna with His feet and hands cut off Husain's some other denigration paintings of Deities (available for sale or exhibition on the Internet).

A deity is an aspect of God that performs the various function of the Universe. Regardless of religion or culture. If a seeker of God understands that Lord Hanuman is representative of the ultimate or perfect devotee he would be definitely offended. So also Goddess Durga represents that aspect of God that is responsible for the destruction of evil and is the mother principle of the Universe. In his paintings, M.F Husain has drawn his own mother, daughter, the Prophet's daughter, a Muslim lady and even Muslim poets for that matter with clothes. Why does he not extend the same courtesy to Hindu deities? Why does he not feel the need to disrobe his mother, daughter etc. to achieve artistic
perfection? One has to ask what gives a painter such as M.F Husain the creative license to denigrate Hindu deities and yet not be taken to task.

Mr. Russi Modi has supported and given a good review to this book. If M.F Husain has painted nude pictures of symbols of worship of Mr. Modi's religion (Zoroastrianism) would Mr. Russi Modi support the book and give it a good review?

It is gross insensitivity to depict the symbol of worship of millions of people that have passed the test of time and survived for thousand of years. This is totally unexpected from an artist, that too coming from the very land of the rich and ancient culture. We appeal to all viewers to join us in our campaign to curb this obscene and unrighteous act irrespective of their faith or whether they are atheists.

Recent Protest:- (M.F.Hussain Campaign).

1. Protest Nomination of M.F. Hussain for Bharat Ratna Award.
2. IIC stopped Hussain exhibition due to HJS protest for a day.
4. ABN Amro with draws credit card with M.F.Husain art.
5. Anti - Hindu M.F Husain's show at Dubai.
8. Protest M.F Husain's exhibition at PEM.

Protest nomination of M.F.Husain for Bharat - Ratna, Award.
HJS Lodges complaint against NDTV:

Mumbai:- NDTV, private news channel has recommended 5 names for Bharat Ratna Award.

In its program called 'Bhart Ratna Poll, the channel has invited Public opinion for final selection of one of the 5 nominees for the said award. The channel has recommended M.F Hussain through its poll for this more prestigious Award.

A complaint was registered to the above effect by member of Hindu Janajaruti Samiti(HJS) at Nirmal Nagar Police station, khar (East) Shri Uday Kakade, a senior police inspector assured that the issue would be brought to the notice of the Government. (HJS) has appealed to all proud Hindu to lodge Complaints at local police station in the matter. Also participate in on line Protest drine by sending automated letter to concerned authorities and voicing your protest.

Anti Hindu Media Reports and Answer to them:

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Its time to stop harassing M.F Husain:- The question of why Husain doesn’t paint Muslim figure in the nude is a red harrinng. The Islamic tradition is a different one from either the Hindu or the western; what causes offence in
causses offence in another Islam after all, Prohibits any visual depiction of the Prophet, where as visualizing our Gods and goddesses is central to the practice of Hinduism. The emails and messages still haven't stopped coming in on the Husain painting's of unclad Hindu goddess, but I think its time to draw a line under that debate with one last foray. First, through is like to deal with those who've questioned my own record; many have written to ask whether I have spoken out in favor of freedom of expression else where (I have for decades and continue to do so); whether I have publicity defended Salman Rushdie over. The Satanic verses (I have widely, and in writings as well as in person); and whether I have spoken in favour of the Danish Cartoons of the prophet Mohammed (I have not because I considered them a needless provocation). The last line of questioning. I must say, irritated me; those who draw a parallel between Husain art and a bunch of Cartoons have not began to understand the first things about either.

But its time to acknowledge that one category of objection cannot be lightly by dismissed, I wrote a few weeks ago about those readers who, while fully respecting Husain as an artist and with out expressing any of the communal bigotry that I found particularly distasteful about this affairs nonetheless expressed anguish at seeing representation of goddesses in the nude. They wrote of their hurt that images they worshipped should have been so depicted, many asked why Hussain has not depicted figures of other faiths, including his own, undressed. Several added that this was because Hindus are a
push over other; faiths are more robust in their self-defence, where as Hindus like me are all to willing to accept being insulted.

There's lot to be said about all this that one can't fit into a single Sunday column. But some points must be made. First I don't feel insulted by the paintings because (un like the Danish Cartoons) no insult was intended. As I've explained before, Hussain is no Johny - come - lately; he is a major artist, a national treasure, one with a long record of being in pin by Hindu Mythology as a major source of inspiration for his work, His paintings of Goddesses are consistent with 50 years of his paintings of other ironies Hindu images, clad and unclad. I saw the paintings in that context his critics saw judging them out of context (and by some emails received, grossly exaggerated what the paintings depicted a Hindu Delhi Subordinate Services Selection Board tua website falsely alleges that Husain shows Durga in sexually relation with a tiger, some things it would take a fervid imagination to see in his picture. Husain saw his paintings as being with a millennia Indian tradition in which nudity has been widely used in art including on temple walls. So did but I accept that's not enough.

Husain as an artist has long used from to suggest ideas beyond form; images in his works are both less and then realist depiction of what they portray. His paintings are full of metaphors and allusions; the body, he has often said, is a representation of something form less illusory (maya). As a Hindu, I did not see his goddesses as literal depictions of the images I worship. I believe in the unpins hadic view that the Divines is essentially knowable and
that all worship consist of human beings stretching out their hands to them which they cannot touch. But since we humans, with our limited minds need something more specific to aid our imaginations, we visualize God in forms that we find more easily recognizable. Hinduism in accepting that need also gives its adherents an infinite variety of choice about how to imagine god that's why there are 333,000 names and depictions of the divine in Hindunism each Hindu may pick the ones he wishes to venerate them.

There's nothing more authentic about a Raja Ravi Verma images of Saraswati then that of a calendar artist, each is imagining the goddess according his own sensibility. As a Hindu I had no difficulty in according Husain the same right.

The question of why Husain doesn’t paint muslin figures in the nude is a red herring. The Islamic tradition is a different one from either the Hindu or the western, what courses offence in another.

Islam, after all prohibits any visual depiction of the prophet, where as visualizing our gods and goddesses is central to the practice of Hindunism, But having said that, one has to accept that people of good faith may well have been offended and if, so its not enough to tell them they should not be Husain himself accepts that if you hurt people un internationally, the right thing to do is to apologize. And he has done so, more than once.

Since when have Hindu become to ungracious that we refuse to accept apologies?
On his current visit to the U.S.A, Husain was asked by a radio interviewer how he felt about the controversy as a Muslim" The 92 year old master bridled I am an Indian and a painter that's all, "he said. As an Indian and a painter he has brought immense honour to our country and our civilization. Is it right that in the tenth decade of his illustrious life, he should live abroad, fearful of beings hounded and harassed if he sets foot in his native land?

I appeal to the very sense of decency that some reader's claim Husain has violated Let us put this matter beyond as, accept his apology, and with draw the multiple cases that have been field against him and which have destroyed his peace of mind. The persecution of Husain does not show. Hindus acting in robust self-defence; it shows us as petty and small minded. What does it say about us a society if, instead of offering our greatest living artist an honored place, we tell him he is not welcome in his own sake as a civilization.

M.F Husain

This article concerns M.F Husain, the Indian artist for the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, see Husaynbin Ali. For the late king of Jordan. M.F Husain, (Bora September 17, 1915 Pandharpur, Maharastra) Popularly known as M.F Hussain is one of India's best known artist. According to Forbes Magazine, he has been called the "Picasso of India"

After a long successful career his work suddenly became controversial in 1996, when he was 81 year old, following the publication of an article about nude images of Hindu dieted painted in the 1970 s.
Husain comes from a Muslim Indian family. His mother died when he was one and a half years old. His father remarried and moved to Indore, where Husain went to school. In 1935, he moved to Bombay and was admitted to the Sir. J.J School of Art. He started off by painting Cinema hoardings.

1940-1965: Husain first became well known as an artist in the late 1940s. In 1947 he joined the progressive Artist's Group, founded by Francis Newton Souza. This was a clique of young artist's who wished to break by the Bengal School of art and to encourage an Indian vant garde engaged at an international level. In 1952 his first solo exhibition was held at Zurich and over the next few years, his work was widely seen in Europe and U.S. In 1955, he was awarded the prestigious Padma Shree prize by the Government of India.

Appreciation M.F. Husain work:

The artistic community has been supportive as well as critical. Krishan Khanna one of Husain's contemporaries, stated that "It's not just Husain's but the entire artist immunity's lives which are at stake. Anybody and everybody can file a case against us now. Anyone can infringe upon our lives". Others who have expressed anger at the "vicious campaigns" against Husain, include filmmaker Saeed Mirza, social activist Nafisa Ali, theatre personality M. K. Raina and a host of other artistes, art critics and art gallery owners. Salil Tripathi, writing in the International Herald Tribune, notes that Hindu goddesses have regularly been portrayed in the nude by Hindu artists. Tripathi asserts that,
“It is hypocritical to place curbs on Husain's artistic freedom. What's more shameful is that a government that claims to be the secular alternative to Hindu nationalists is threatening to prosecute Husain. This does not do India proud; it adds to India's disgrace.”

“Other Indian artists have expressed criticism. Satish Gujral has gone on record to ask him whether he will be bold enough to treat icons of Islam in the same manner J However Gujral says he deeply regrets the way Husain was treated and forced into an exile because of what he terms "the mob culture". According to a senior Hindu artist and former President, Bombay Art Society, Gopal Adivrekar.”

“Nothing is bad in being creative but the artists should not go for such artwork, which may hurt the sentiments of a segment of the society.”

Writing in The Pioneer, Chandan Mitra wrote,

“As long as such a law exists in the statutes, nobody can be faulted for approaching the courts against Hussain's objectionable paintings, nor can the judiciary be pilloried for ordering action against the artist for his persistent and deliberate refusal to appear before the court.”

“In response to the controversy, Husain's admirers have petitioned the government to grant Husain the Bharat Ratna, India's highest award. According to Shashi Tharoor, who supports the petition, it praises Husain because his "life and work are beginning to serve as an allegory for the changing modalities of the secular in modern India - and the challenges that the narrative of the nation
Nudity isn’t obscenity, it’s just art

It is not often that an individual judge in our country wins the plaudits of the artistic and creative community. But that is what Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul of the Delhi High Court has just done. His landmark judgement of May 8, upholding number of petitions submitted by great Indian painter Maqbool Fida Husain, not only ensures that his dedication and courage to the cultural renaissance of his beloved country.

Justice Kaul begins by quoting Pablo Picasso: “Art is never perfect, it ought to be forbidden to ignorant innocents, never allowed into contact with those not sufficiently prepared. Yes, art is dangerous. Where it is chaste, it is not art.”

 histórica de la cultura de la India a la cultura de una raza femenina. La plena de una obra de arte —motivada esencialmente por anti-ai-Sham bigotry— ha sido Hussein, que se autoproclamaba co-incluido en la difusión de la mujer y el dañado de la India de un bien. Justice Kaul’s judgement has now disposed of several of these cases in a learned, closely-analysed and meticulously-footnoted ruling.

The judge goes on: “Today Indian art is comfortably coming of age. No art of style, expression of the art in the visual arts, from naivety to abstraction, expressionism, derives its power from the artist’s emotional connection to his perceptual reality.”

Husain’s paintings are hardly intended to provoke lustful thoughts: in fact, the judge notes, as an artist he “actually celebrates nudity and considers it the purest form of expression.” In the case of his painting of “Bharat Mata”, which had offended several petitioners, the judge ruled that “the aesthetic touch to the painting dwarfs the so-called obscenity in the form of nudity and renders it so picturesque and insignificant that the nudity in the painting can easily be overlooked.” The complainants who had objected to the painting being available on a website could always choose not to look at it, the judge said, adding: “It seems that the complainants are not the types who would go to art galleries or have an interest in contemporary art.”

“Art and authority have never had a difficult relationship until recently,” the judge observes in his ruling. His judgement goes a long way towards reconciling the two. He also raises larger questions, vital for our free society, to which I will return next week.

(Picasso has said), Yes art is dangerous where it is chaste, it is not art.
Be more tolerant towards creative fields

Last week I wrote about the landmark judgement by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul of the Delhi High Court on May 6, upholding a number of petitions submitted by a Meerut-based lawyer, Mr M F Husain. The nonagenarian artist had sought the dismissal of various cases filed against him for allegedly offending public decency and morality by his "obscene" use of nudity in his paintings, particularly those of Hindu goddesses and of "Bharat Mata". While the judge's ruling had taken care of the legal aspects of the case, his larger observations on the case deserve the attention of every thinking Indian.

The most important of these, I believe, is his rejection of the tendency of thin-skinned (or over-sen-sit-i-vated) people across the country to claim to be offended by art and literary works. If you're easily offended, he argues, don't read the book, look at the painting or open the website that offends you, but don't prevent the art or writer from enjoying his constitutionally protected freedom of expres-sion. What is vital, according to Justice Kaul, is to look at the work of art from the artist's point of view — his or her intent rather than the hypersen-sitive viewer's reaction. Let he be promptly denounced by the Hindutva brigade as a deranged pseudo-secul-arist, the judge wisely cites Swami Vivekananda's words in defence of his approach: "We tend to reduce every one else to the limits of our own mental universa-and begin privileging our own ethics, moral-ty, sense of duty and even our sense of utility. All moral conflicts arise from this pro-pensity to judge others. If we in-deed must judge at all, then it must be accor-ding to his own ideal, and not by that of anyone else. It is important, therefore, to learn to look at the duty of others through their own eyes and never judge the cus-toms and observances of others through the prism of our own standards."

But Justice Kaul goes even further in exten-ding the boundaries of the permissible in India. Nu-dity and sex, he argues, have an honoured place in art and litera-ture: "In the land of the Kamasutra, we shy away from its very name?" he asks in surprise. "Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder and so does obscenity... (In Indian tradition) Sex was embraced as an integral part of a full and complete life. It is most unfor-nunate that India's new 'puritanism' is being carried out in the name of cultural purity and is bound to ignorant people are vandalising art and pushing us towards a pre-Renaissance era."

This is wonderful language in a High Court judgement. Readers should remember that India, unlike the US, has no absolute right to freedom of expres-sion; in our country, Article 19 (3) says that freedom of speech can be curbed by "reasonable restrictions... in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India; the security of the state; friendly relations with foreign states; public order; decency or moral-ity or in relation to contempt of court; defam-ation or incitement to an offence."

In other words, a differently-minded judge could have easily interpreted the language about public order; decency and morality more nar-rowly. We, Indians are fortunate that a series of judgements over the years, culminating in this one, have tilted the balance decisively in favour of our freedoms. Justice Kaul is sensit-ive to the charge that liberal attitudes to art and obscenity reflect the inclinations of a privileged minority and that most Indians might in-deed be offended by the kind of art his judgemen-tal project. He writes: "Democracy has wider moral implications than mere majoritarianism. A crude view of democracy gives a distorted picture. A real democracy is one in which the exercise of the power of the many is conditional on respect for the rights of the few. In real democracy the dissenter must feel at home and ought not to be needlessly looking over his shoulder fearing cap-itivity or bodily harm or economic and social sanctions for his unorthodox or critical views. There should be free-dom for the thought we hate. Freedom of speech has no meaning if there is no freedom after speech. The reality of democracy is to be measured by the extent of freedom and accommoda-tion it extends."

These words should give heart not just to M F Husain, but to artists and writers across the country, who in re-cent years have found themselves the victims of other people's hyper-sensi-tivities. "Intolerance," Justice Kaul writes, "is utterly incompatible with demo-cratic values. This attitude is total-ly antithetical to our Indian psyche and tradition." He goes on to warn that the criminal justice system 'ought not to be invoked as a convenient recourse to ventilate any and all objections to an artistic work' and be used as a 'tool in unscrupulous hands to violate the rights of artists. The judge declares that, "A magistrate must scrutinise each case in order to prevent vexatious and frivol-ous cases from being filed and make sure that it is not used as a tool to harass the accused, which will amount to gross abuse of the process of the court... (Apart from the harassment element there would be growing fear and curtailment of the right of the free expression in such creative persons."

He decodes "the large number of inci-dents of such complaints... resulting in artists and other creative persons being made to run across the length and breadth of the country to defend themselves against criminal proceedings initiated by over-sensitive and ill-educated persons, including for publicity."

Let us hope his words are heeded and that the remaining cases against Husain — there are still three pending — will also soon be withdrawn. In the meantime, Justice Kaul's ruling is a remarkable charter for artistic freedom in India. "I have penned this judgement," he concludes, "with the fervent hope that it is a prologue to a broader thinking and greater toler-ance for the creative field. Every thinking Indian concerned about freedom of expression should join in the applause."

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Sunday Times June 1, 2008
AFTER HIS BRUSH WITH TROUBLE, M.F. HUSAIN FINALLY ENJOYS A STROKE OF LUCK

COURT QUASHES CRIMINAL CASES

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The Delhi High Court has dismissed criminal proceedings against celeb painter M.F. Husain. The artist, who lives in self-imposed exile in London and Dubai, was accused of hurting public sentiments through some of his paintings. The court ended the judgment on the note that “a painter at 90 deserves to be sitting in his home and painting his canvas.”

In his 74-page judgment, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul said all allegations against the 93-year-old painter are baseless. “A painter has his own perspective of looking at things and it cannot be the basis of initiating criminal proceedings against him,” Kaul said in his order.

“The court has also observed that, in India, the pursuance of an artist is being carried out in the name of cultural purity and a host of ignorant people are vandilising art and pushing us towards a pre-renaissance era,” the court observed.

Akhil Siwal, Husain’s counsel, said, “This judgement is historical and prominent. It gives a strong feeling to the fight against intolerance in our country and recognises the importance of debate within legal society rather than misuse of the criminal justice system.”

The court observed obscenity is nowhere to be seen in his paintings, and that it was his perspective of looking at things.

In September 2007, a Supreme Court Bench headed by Chief Justice K.G. Balakrishnan directed that a criminal case against Husain would be shifted to a court in Panchkula in Maharastra to the Patiala House Courts here, where two similar cases against him were pending.

Senior advocates Harish Salve and Mukul Rohatgi, then appearing for the artist, submitted that six criminal cases were pending against him in various courts across the country and it would be appropriate that a general order be passed that, in future, any complaint against this artistic work will be transferred to Delhi. 

Do you think the court’s decision is a victory for freedom of expression?

Express your views. Write in and share your opinion with Delhi.

ARTISTS SPEAK

“This is a great judgement. Imagine a person of his stature facing such humiliating allegations.”

— SATISH GUPTA

“In the case of Husain, he has been accused of committing various offences like hurting religious sentiments, promoting enmity between different religions and promoting obscene material. The canvases which showed a naked woman symbolising Mother India with a large part of Kashmir shorn off to accommodate the Himalayas had offended the right Hindu groups in India and abroad.

The controversial Bharaatmata painting first surfaced in February 2006 in an exhibition ‘Art for Mission Kashmir’ organised by Nita Ambani and the Appaswamy Gallery. Organisations like the Hindu Jagriti Samiti and the Vashishta Hindu Parishad protested against Husain saying it was an affront to Mother India.

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The controversial Bharaatmata painting first surfaced in February 2006 in an exhibition ‘Art for Mission Kashmir’ organised by Nita Ambani and the Appaswamy Gallery. Organisations like the Hindu Jagriti Samiti and the Vashishta Hindu Parishad protested against Husain saying it was an affront to Mother India.

ARTISTS SPEAK

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Naked Lord Hanuman and Goddess Sita sitting on thigh of Ravana

Muslim poets Falz, Galib are shown well-clothed

Full Clad Muslim King and naked Hindu Brahmin. The above painting clearly indicates Husain’s tendency to paint any Hindu as naked and thus his hatred.

Naked Bharatmata - Husain has shown naked woman with names of states written on different parts of her body. He has used Ashok Chakra, Tri-colour in the painting. By doing this he has violated law & hurt National Pride of Indians. Both these things should be of grave concern to every Indian irrespective of his religion.

Out of the four leaders M. Gandhi is decapitated and Hitler is naked. Husain hates Hitler and has said in an interview 8 years ago that he has depicted Hitler naked to humiliate him and as he deserves it! How come Hitler’s nudity cause humiliation when in Husain’s own statement nudity in art depicts purity and is in fact an honour! This shows Husain’s perversion and hypocrisy.

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Goddess Durga in sexual union with Tiger

Prophet's Daughter Fatima fully clothed

Goddess Lakshmi naked on Shree Ganesh's head

M.F. Husain's Mother fully clothed
Does Husain deserve award or punishment?

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<th>Paintings by Raja Ravi Varma</th>
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<td>Goddess Lakshmi</td>
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<td>Famous Saraswati Painting</td>
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Ravan, Sita and Jatayu (As per Ramayana)

Naked Lord Hanuman and Goddess Sita sitting on thigh of Ravana
F. Husain loped into our home carrying 10 kilos of his spectacular life in his arms. An exceedingly well-packaged life, complete with a price tag. “Fifty-three lakh,” he announced proudly, placing the monumental tome on my dining table. I thought your life was worth much more I joked, as Raisa Husain, his beloved daughter and occasional muse, slid her father’s magnum opus – MF Husain in oils – out of its stiff black case. It was definitely a Kodak moment, and I was ready with my idiot-proof camera.

Olympus, Husain’s latest tour de force is this – a 428-page volume of 96 actual-sized, neatly framed reproductions of his vision. Limited edition 1,500 copies at Rs 8,888 per copy. Of course, Husain’s 88th birthday gift to himself and to the world. An energetic, defiant and superbly confident answer to rivals and critics who’ve accused India’s only real living master of not having produced any serious work recently. Husain stuck his chin out, wagged his paintbrushes in the air, placed a proprietorial hand over the gay book and said, “Ah hole! I would love to be around when that happens.”

Husain’s work evokes strong, impassioned responses – many of them overly critical. But these 86 canvases will pose a challenge to the harshest critic. As I turned each page, my initial exclamations of astonishment and unflagging lines confronted me with an impertinence that’s staggering. Kamasutra of colour is one way of describing its sheer visual impact. Husain points out the exuberant shades, greens, reds, blues and says, “The Kamasutra could only have been written in India. The Western sensibility could never produce such sensuality.”

Eighty-eight oils painted in 40 days, in impersonal suites of hotels in four cities – Paris, Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi. It’s a feat that defies competition. An artist’s life in pictures! An immoral chronicle close to nine decades! A unique autobiography! Call it what you wish. Husain has done it. And he’s not being coy about the achievement.

In my case, I’ve never known him to be coy about anything. He can afford not to be. Take his current show yes – the one featuring the 88 oils. Husain has shrewdly decided to offer 22 canvases each in three bandhini-packed galleries around India. That’s not here’s the catch. Ten of these payments will have to be paid for upfront by gallery owners. At Rs 5 lakh a pop for a canvas no bigger than 2’ x 2’, it makes each canvas a really, really pricey buy. Besides, gallery owners keen on hosting the exhibition, have to put down Rs one crore each, before a single painting is seen, much less, sold. The remaining 12 can be exhibited but not flogged. Husain has put a moratorium on the sale for a year. By then, he says, figures, the huge... around the book will be sufficient to pump up the prices. Good for him. Good for the gallery owner. Good for the customer. Husain isn’t thinking about earning fresh storage space in his attic, he knows he won’t be needing it. “From now on, I will only sell my work in sets of five and 10 to serious collectors. I’m not interested in selling to someone who merely wants to decorate his/her walls,” he announces bluntly. Similarly, Husain has also decided to restrict conversations to people he can have a meaningful dialogue with. “I don’t want to waste my time with fools,” he declares dismissively. Of late, his most intriguing encounters, not surprisingly have been with scientists and doctors.

“No fluffy talk as he puts it. Does he hang with other painters? Not really. Does he admire any younger artist’s work? No, I don’t...”
Mushilkusha
Harad Hai

MF Husain sends home images of his latest paintings that reflect his deepest longing and dearest wish while exiled in Dubai

Husain is noted for his unorthodox public taste in his work. My first ever article for the papers was an interview with him for HT. I was a painfully shy freelance journalist. It was an interview with him for HT and hadn't a clue how to do it. So I timidly set out and hadn't-a im suite ahead. I went into Shridharani Gallery to look at the exhibition called Shivelambara. This was an installation called Husain's spiritual connect with Naushad's great music in Miyaqul-Azm, that fuelled his painting fire, like the autumn winds. The lines are powerful, purposeful and executed with an almost violent intensity. Anyone with half an eye can make out that the painter has made himself while in the grip of strong emotion. But let other art critics analyse this series. What we'd like to get across here is Husain's great musical talent. He has bought a ticket into heaven. His paintings don't come from the usual movie stills. The artist's music, his latest paintings that reflect his deepest longing and dearest wish while exiled in Dubai. The lines are powerful, purposeful and executed with an almost violent intensity. Anyone with half an eye can make out that the painter Husain has made himself while in the grip of strong emotion. But let other art critics analyse this series. What we'd like to get across here is Husain's great musical talent. He has bought a ticket into heaven. His paintings don't come from the usual movie stills. The artist's music, his latest paintings that reflect his deepest longing and dearest wish while exiled in Dubai.
The Raman effect on Husain

SCIENCE NEWS: Health's answer to C. A. Raman's prove the high and mid-frequency in the

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the effect on Husain
Title: Swami Jogratna
MY APPRECIATION OF MENON'S WORK HER PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

This book is inspired by a very special bond with the work of Anjolie Ela Menon. Some years ago, Anjolie participated in exhibitions of contemporary India painting in New York, sponsored by Art wave U.S.A. As she prepared for each show, half complete paintings lay about my apartment filling it with much more than just the heady fumes of turpentine and pigment. It was the presence of these nascent pictures, which seemed to breathe and come to life in such proximity to me, that made me want to explore the artist's work in greater dept. An added impetus, I soon discovered, was that a book on her oeuvre would be the first of its kind on a major contemporary Indian woman painter since 1945, when a book was published on the legendary Amrita Shergil. The present volume covers thirty-five years of creative work.

It is a romantic assumption that, for easel painting, the artist stands or is perched on a high stool before the canvas. But Anjolie, for one, paints crouched on the floor, surrounded by a clutter of rudimentary tools, brush and sponge, with music at full volume. In those months of exhibitions in New York.

The book is now done. The paintings in it will endure and give pleasure to many more than their immediate owners. I deeply appreciate the generosity of Anjolie's collectors in permitting our photographers to invade their lives and homes at all hours. Many friends, well-wishers/ and my family helped to see this book through to completion, to each of whom I am grateful, I am especially indebted to Naina Kanodia and Amrita Jhaveri in Bombay, Vikram Singh and Rajaraja Menon in Delhi, and Vidur Chandy and John Isaac in New
York for their help in putting this volume together.

Finally, I would like to thank Isana Murti for his perceptive essay on the artist on whom he is an authority, and my co-conspirator - Arun Bhansali of Artwave International, New York

without whose contribution it would not have been possible to start or sustain this undertaking.

Blue Nude January 2005 oil on Mesonite

(Indira Dayal)
Colour of Passion To Anjolie Ela Menon

Eccentric, volatile outspoken, Anjolie Ela Menon's personality makes an impression as strong as her art. Teena Baruah enjoys an intriguing encounter with the first lady of Indian art.

In the past 10 years, P Chidambaram has been the only person to visit Anjolie Ela Menon's studio in Nizamuddin Basti Delhi. In November last year, the finance minister painted a canvas with Menon for a fund-raising event for unprivileged children. He was caught off-guard by a tattered curtain at the entrance, and Menon told him, "This is where the other half [of Anjolie] lives."

A tiny workspace with used and unused canvases and crushed colour tubes, it is her hideaway. No phones, no visiting friends or family. Harmony, though, was allowed in for our cover shoot. The degree of anonymity it enjoys is accentuated by the absence of guards. "Friends in this basti are my best protectors and they allow me a possibility of solitude says Menon. For now, though, security is not an issue - the studio is fairly empty apart from two canvases she painted when she was 15 and some palm-sized faces for her next show.

"I get 10 to 15 calls a day from galleries and auction houses for paintings, but I have nothing to give them. It's impossible to do a solo show, says Menon, 66, whose last big work was a triptych, titled Yatra, which explores religious themes -the Asian Art Museum, New York, acquired it in May 2006- Her recent exhibition at Dhoomimal Art Gallery in Delhi was a group show - with a difference - with her architect son Raja Raja Menon and two young granddaughters (Raja's daughters), Indeera, 8, and Madhavi, 11. Titled
Menon-Ji-Tis (pronounced 'meningitis'; Menon quips art is spreading like a disease in the family), Uma Ravi Jain of Dhoomimal thought of the idea three years ago when she first saw Indeera's and Madhavi's work — the girls were then 5 and 7.

It reminded Menon of her own introduction to art. The artist discovered her passion for paint in the ail room of Lawrence School Asansol. Her guru Susheel Mukherjee initiated her into oils when she was 11. By 12, she was sure about her talent - she had won the Shankars national art competition held for schoolchildren every year, and one of her paintings, Sailing Boats, had been bought for Rs 100 by Dr Zakir Hussain. Over the years, she saw several artists' works. M F Husain's bold lines and that surfaces but not his subject matter influenced her. And he saw in her a promising artist.

By 17 she had her first solo show, organized by Husain for her in the capital's Lodhi Estate. "Without Susheel [my teacher] and Husain [my mentor], I would have been just another burnt-out child prodigy. “Thankfully she says, she is there to tram Indeera and Madhavi, recycling every loose sheet and painting old greeting cards or using them in collage. For Menon-Ji-Tis, the girls' simple, happy acrylic sketches nestled close to their father Raja Raja's structural drawings and their Dadu’s (Anjolie) melancholic figures.

Today, all her works sell out on the first day of a new show, including Menon-Ji-Tis. At Christie's and Sotheby's auctions, her work fetches anything between Rs 15 lakh and Rs 70 lakh right now, there's not a single new painting in her studio. And when there is, she is selective about where to, show
and who to sell it to. Menon's biggest collector Dinesh Javeri, who bought 35 of her paintings, passed away recently. He began to buy her work when she was unknown and paid her Rs 3,000 for the first painting he bought. His daughter Amrita inherited his collection. Industrialists Harsh Goenka and Yash Birla and friend Lalita Ramdas are her other collectors. While Birla wants to build on Ms collection, Menon's family is also planning to set up a gallery-cum-art centre of her works. It will be tough, she says, as most of her works are part of private collections.

Menon never believed in preserving for posterity. So she veered from one event to the other, her style as unique as her mentor's. "I have often joked with MAQ [what she calls Husain] that what I lacked most was a long white beard," she says. "MAQ thrives on exhibitionism."

Though she adds that exhibitionism doesn't go down too well with her, Menon herself has never been a wallflower. She wore antique silver jewellery in the 1960s when everyone wore gold; she then switched to a kaftan, to which her children objected. Once, she went to fetch her son from school and left her hair open, only to be dismissed as someone who didn't look like a mother. "And what should a mother look like?" Menon asked him. "Sari, tika, bun."

She continued to wear a kaftan and her hair open, though with a big red bindi on her high forehead.

Ironically, a journalist once wrote that her image of motherliness was very boring. "Much as media might will me to break out I am quite content with the reality of the world I live in," she says, her voice booming with
authority and stubbornness. A rendezvous with Menon is particularly interesting as she rarely camouflages her volatile emotions when *Harmony* asked her to smile for photographs, she hissed "I never smile while painting, I am not a middle-class housewife smiling at the camera." The only two emotions she guards herself against are envy and anger.

Menon's reality is her style, which is also evident in her home next to Humayun's Tomb in Nizamuddin East. Two flights of stairs bring you in conversation with a wall of paintings, some autographed by Menon. Who needs a nameplate? Once inside, you can't escape the mischief in design. Pillars inside rooms stop prying eyes from seeing too much; corridors lead not to rooms, but walls of paintings like art galleries; and, of course, there are windows that offer no view as they are works of art. As soon as you settle down on the drawing room sofa, notice the eyes. Facing you is a canvas of an eye peeping through a worn fabric. Across the room another eye watches you from a kitschy cupboard and four melancholic faces stare at you from a painted trunk-cum-coffee table by the couch.

**I'M DRIVEN BY SOMETHING STRONGER THAN ME**

How would you describe your new work?

It's a departure from my earlier paintings: new technology and materials have freed me from the constraints of canvas and paint. Also, there is an element of chance in the new work which is what *Mutation* is all about. There is satire and irony in this series. The old imagery reappears in a new form, often mocking itself. It is an though in have distanced myself from these
images but on now remaking them in a new mould, without exercising absolute control on the result.

The title piece of my show is a picture in fine panels. The same woman exists simultaneously on various planes, in altering states of being. In xenobia, II there is an overlapping image of two nudes the painting could be hung in reverse and still read true.

“Is Time Juxtaposed in your paintings rather than Extended in the traditional way of Indian narrative paintings?”

I want there to be no time neither the architecture nor the garments of my protagonists pinpoint an era. In narrative painting you need many figures. My paintings allow only one thing to happen.

“Are you an obsessive painter, seeking to obliterate time?”

I’m not obsessive, but I am driven by something stronger than me. It I don’t paint for a few days, I feel restless and upset. I try to do my riaz every day sometime just put some colour on a blank, white surface. Some times, yes I paint like mad, like in Madras upto 14 hours a day. I was working for the New York exhibition aching all over, exhausted, painting even in my dreams, working at six and getting back to work.

One day seven, I couldn’t even stand. Seeing this large body of my own work looming in front of me; I felt I never wanted to paint again. So, I took off for the beach alone, stood knee deep in the foaming, monsoon sea, trying to erase the visions which swam before my eyes. On day eight, I was back at it. When I returned to Delhi, I slept for three days, as though I was mortally ill.
Little Madhavi, my eight month old grand daughter, sat prying my eyelids open with her tiny fingers, bringing me back to life.

“What about the voices within?”

It is the voice within, as you put it, that has driven me, and revealed itself in my work it has a volition of its own and manifests itself unexpectedly.

“How do you cope, then?”

Coping with what is within has been a life long struggle. At 56 I have begun learning that the search for love expresses a very strong need in women.

We want to share the inner life but one can’t share the religious life, for example. The ultimate lesson in life is ultimate loneliness.

“You know there is this myth you seem to have created about you that you are an ordinary woman, happy house wife……”

I remember a well-known woman journalist who came to interview me, who tried to provoke me to say I was unhappy, bitter or some thing like that. Finaly she lost her temper and left saying, you know I don’t believe a word of what you know I don’t believe a word of what you’ ve said.

“Well, if I believe you, I give you credit for making your life happy, successful, and creative?”

I happen to be married to a good man, have two wonderful sons and now a darling grand daughter! And my daughter-in-law, I must have done something good in my previous life to deserve her! But happiness is another thing, a fragile state, elusive and ephemeral. I some times think it doesn’t depend upon externals at all.
The creative turmoil, which often leads to a state bordering on depression or melancholia, has no reasons, and its cure lies only in the fulfillment of one's endeavor as an artist. It has nothing to do with relationship it has only to do with the self. There in lies the inherent and ultimate loneliness. In this, the struggle is one's own. No one can help.