



# 'Ours is a retrogressive society'

— Professor A.R. Nagori

**T**he senior artist, human rights activist and art teacher adds: In our case it is not possible to ascribe a national character to art in the geographically deformed situation in the post-'47 and '71. Our history, according to the establishment, begins after partition. Nowhere in the world does art abruptly get a national character. The continuity of history for hundreds of years creates civilization and national characteristics, which in our case may be confined to provincial entities. Like other strata of life, art is a reflection of the quality of life. Painting identity at the national level does not exist in my opinion, in any context, least a global one.

Art thrives on freedom of expression. One can gauge the freedom enjoyed in an obscurantist environment from the last attack on the fine art department at Karachi University. Not only the KU but at other higher seats of learning a similar situation prevails. In such circumstances, where our youth are pursuing education in perpetual fear and harassment, how could one expect to find our strengths or an edge to build upon? The art scenario is one of gloom, as is any other field of progress in Pakistan.

Our weakness is that we are a retrogressive society that defies progress, innovations and challenges, which are the ingredient, basis or language of art that our youth are not allowed to obtain and the teachers are hesitant to teach. Educational freedom is the key to overcome the blockade in our progress.