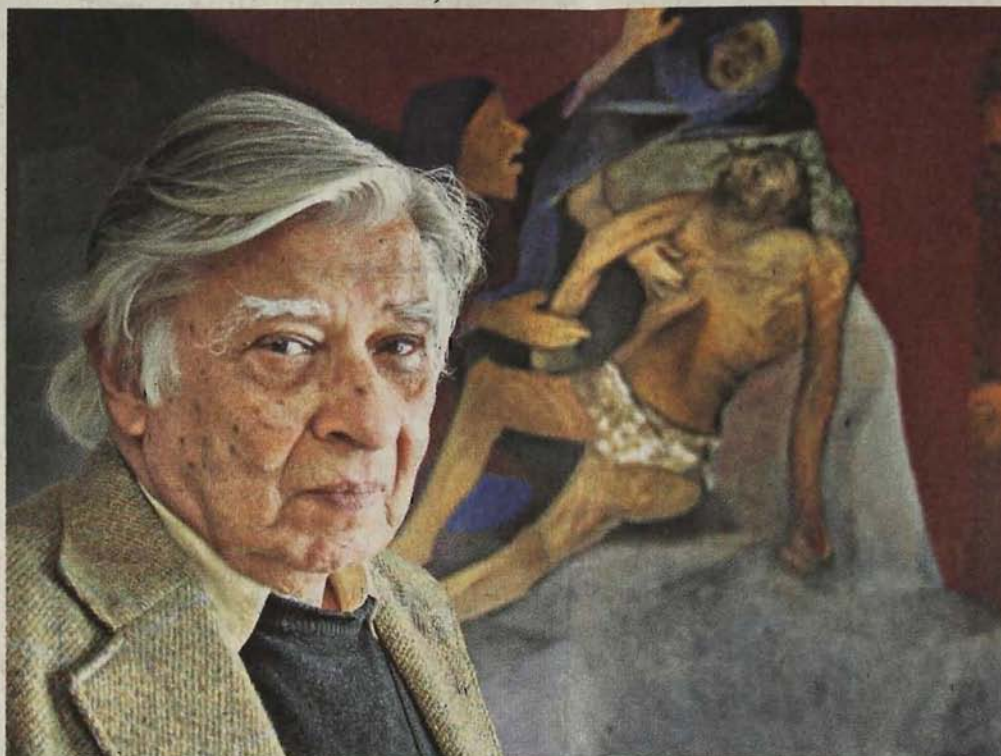


Not a pretty picture

With no safety net, an artist is bound to feel vulnerable, feels Krishen Khanna, member of the path-breaking Progressive Artists' Group

Painting has always been a difficult profession. Earlier the method of support was different. The king played the patron. With British Raj everything changed. In Japan, an artist is a national treasure. The best thing here that can happen to an artist in this country is a Padma award. M.F. Husain was a Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan and they threw him out. I was painting and simultaneously working with a bank for nothing else but financial security. Artists like F.N. Souza, M.F. Husain would hardly sell their works and make money out of art. Husain used to sell his paintings for Rs.50. The State doesn't look after the artist. It is least bothered about us. Modi ji (Narendra Modi) is a good man but he hasn't said anything about art and culture or artists. Getting a few troupes of dance and music from different states isn't art and culture. There is so much more to it.

There is no safety net and one feels vulnerable but in the last few years there has emerged some sort of



CANVAS Artist Krishen Khanna with his painting PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

support in the form of collectors and auctions. Not that I am a big fan of auctions but at least auctions excite the nerve of the market. What can academies like

Lalit Kala Akademi do? K.H. Ara used to wash cars for a Japanese Company in Wakeshwar to survive. Initially, his art didn't give him any money and he was

finally recognised by Rudy von Leyden, a legendary art critic based in India. J. Swaminathan never had much money. His friends would help him and he would

We could have raised the issue of cultural matters and related issues in the Rajya Sabha but nothing like that has been discussed

”

occasionally sell his paintings. Same was the case with Tyeb Mehta and V. Gaitonde. And now their paintings sell for crores.

Renowned artist Jogen Chowdhury is our representative in Rajya Sabha but what has he done? It is just *naam-ke-vaaste*. He sits there observing the proceedings of the Upper House and sketching those. We could have raised the issue of cultural matters and issues related to it but nothing like that has been discussed. Husain was also a Rajya Sabha member. What did he do?

(AS TOLD TO SHAILAJA TRIPATHI)