

## TANVEER MURSHID AND NATURAL EXPRESSIONISM IN ART OF PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

*This article is about the Paintings of Tanveer Murshid who was the professor of Art in Punjab University and a famous artist of Lahore. His paintings are different in Pakistani Contemporary Art, in terms of painting technique. His work is responsive rather than reactionary and provides food for thoughts. Responsive approach of expression is an effective manner to change declining situation of a society. He rejects the misuse of power, violence, war, on the base of religions and races, for the sake of peace. His paintings also leave a pleasing effect to the viewer. His painting technique, colorful palate, compositions and forms brings the viewer close to nature, spiritual freedom, positivity and peace. Due to distinctive traits of his painting Lahore Museum has acquired two paintings of the artist for the museum.*

**Keywords:** Natural expressionism, Humanity, Obex, Hell and haven, Love and peace.

### INTRODUCTION

In the present scenario of Pakistani art most prominent thing that we feel strongly is versatility. The reason of versatility is multidimensional cultural identity of Pakistan. Geographical, historical and religious factors played a vital role to shape out the cultural diversity. Consciously or unconsciously we adapted the eastern and western cultural norms and we owned it. It shows openness of minds and hearts of Pakistani people. That peculiarity of Pakistani peoples is also reflected in Pakistani contemporary art. Today, Pakistani artists produce excellent paintings from Miniature to liquid art. They produced different kind of paintings and it gives versatility and unique identity to the art of Pakistan. The nuance of our identity is also reflected in the painting of a contemporary artist of Pakistan named Tanveer Mushed. His painting has an element of diversity and versatility in subject matter and technique of painting. His painting leaves a pleasing effect to the spectators. The Free flowing colorful paintings of the artist is an expression of natural spiritual freedom and happiness. His work provokes positive feelings. It encourages a person to see with his own mind, eyes and sprit instead of borrowed eyes, mind and spirit. His colorful palate, flowing colours, natural compositions and shapes

motivates us to come towards nature, happiness, spiritual freedom and peace. Two of his works are now the part of Lahore Museum Collection.

In this paper we will discuss his painting technique, subjects, inspiration and Influence of his work on contemporary art scene of Lahore. In reference with his latest phase of paintings which he painted in 2003 and exhibited in 2005 at Lahore City Heritage Museum<sup>1</sup>. In this exhibition he stated “Art is my nature and nature is my art” In Pakistan usually abstraction or abstract expression is not appreciated by the public as compared to realistic expression of the Paintings. Despite of this fact over all his show left a good impression on the viewers because after a long period something was on the show which in its appearance is not realistic but people enjoyed it with understanding. Because most of the paintings addressed some subject of general or personal feelings of heart and mind which are common in the artist and the viewer’s mind and heart such as, “Sun and flowers both are yellow” and “Memory of the green happening” The first one is a general pleasing experience of everyone as we stand in an open field and see the sun flower in a bright day under the winter’s sun. The sweet, moist, fresh aroma of the sun flower’s fields and restful warmth of the sun reveals in the mind and heart by see this painting.

The second one is an expression of personal feelings. Most of us experience that kind of green peaceful cool and calm feelings when something happens good in our life especially after a hard time. Such as your beloved one comes back to you at the stage when you are sure you lost him or her, or comfort of home feels when you comeback at home after long tired travel and so on. This kind of personal experience leaves cool and calm impression in our spirit as well as meadows leaves in our eyes, mind and heart and becomes a part of our memory forever. Although we often forget the incident but the taste in form of pleasure always retains in our memories. In this paintings artist successfully transmits this feelings by his art work and makes it stronger by describing it as “Memory of the green happening.



Sun and flowers both are yellow, by Tanveer Murshid Liquid oil on Lasani wood size 18"x 24"<sup>1</sup>



“Memory of the green happening” by Tanveer Murshid  
Liquid oil on Lasani wood, size 18”x 24”<sup>2</sup>

### **PAINTINGS OF TANVEER MURSHID**

After the 9/11, Pakistani artist produced a variety of work in eastern and western style of the expression and reacted against the political, religious, and social condition of Pakistan. In 2005 an art work was exhibited in Lahore City Heritage Museum in a totally different manner, technique and subjective message by a senior artist Tanveer Murshid. This work brought a feeling of hope, love and peace. It was also different from the other works of art which is being produced now days in Pakistan in the sense of “reaction” and “response”. Tanveer Murshid’s art work is a response not a reaction against the whole political, social, religious instability of this country. His canvas of vision is broader than of others because he fantasized peace and prosperity not only for Pakistan or Islamic world but the whole globe. He worked in a modern and postmodern style at times-modern in a sense of technique and postmodern in a sense of his conceptual subjects of the paintings. His subjects revolve around OBEX, peace, freedom from all negative bounds, love, and happiness for all without any discrimination of nation, race and religion. His some paintings are warnings for negative approach of the human thoughts and most are the message of hope, love and peace of prosperity for all mankind. Sometimes his paintings give a message that he believes only in groups of humanity one that belongs to positivity and the other who believes in negativity.

## SUBJECT AND TECHNIQUE OF THE PAINTINGS

The artist transmits his utmost desire of peace and humanity in a very calm and wise manner. His work of art gives a unique dimension to the postmodern art of Pakistan by giving the eastern wisdom to a western medium and expression. He used a technique of liquid oil painting and rejects the traditional way of painting in which artist draws a sketch with the help of pencil or brush and then paints by using different kind of brushes and mediums. He prepares thin liquid oil paint in a desired consistency and gently pours it on the primed Lasani board with the help of the flexible container. He draws the shape by the natural flow of the paint. This type of painting technique was used by Jackson Pollock for the first time. But Tanveer Murshid's manner is slightly different from Jackson. Jackson Pollock adds action in to the process of painting to channeling by controlling his hand movement during the process of pouring the paint on to the canvas. In some cases, he dropped paints one by one on to the canvas and wait to get the desired result by leaving them for mixing with his inner impulses direct on to the canvas, Tanveer Murshid on the other hand subtracts the action from the process of painting due to his subject of peace, humanity and positivity. As a result, he produces totally different expression from Jackson Pollock and other action-painters. To feel the difference of treatment first we see the "Convergence" by Jackson Pollock's and then "Sense" by Tanveer Murshid.



"Convergence" by Jackson Pollock, size 237.5cm×393.7cm, oil on canvas. Dated 1952, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Date of access 8-8 2014



"Sense" by Tanveer Murshid, liquid oil on board, size 18"x20" dated 2003 <http://tanwirmurshad.wordpress.com>

The painting entitled “Senses” is based on the artist’s idea of OBEX<sup>3</sup>; we discuss it later in detail in next pages. Jackson Pollock’s way of painting is gestural expression of internal fury and anxieties in form of action painting. While Tanveer Murshid did not throw the paints on to the canvas by adding physical gesture or action for the sake of inner impulse. His way is calm with minimum action. He gently pours the color on canvas rather than throw on it. His idea of expression is to leave nature free and enjoy the natural expression of nature through an art activity. He drips the paint on to the board very gently and goes along with the natural flow of the paint with minimum intervention to get the desired result. He uses attractive pleasing colours schemes and composed form with a natural freedom. His paintings like ‘Nothing Fills. The Black Hole of my Heart, Green Is Peace, A Moment in Spring, A Light Day, Sumer Wind, Window In The Rain, Towards Light, The Holy Light, Haven, Hell, Expression of the sun and moon are a reflection of his natural freedom of expression, pleasing color scheme, balance compositions, in a free flowing manner of color application. He composed 70 art pieces in size of 18”x20” on horizontal and vertical boards. Now we analyzed his few works one by one. We can divide his work in to four categories such as Peace and humanity, Cautionary and rewarding, Obex, Love and hope.

## **PEACE AND HUMANITY**

### **GREEN IS PEACE**

This is a beautiful example of his work. A cool green vertically composed panel of 18” x 20” in size has title “Green Is Peace”. There is no traditionally painted leaves in the painting but it; contains in it the deep expression of a sweet smell, freshness and coolness of a vast green area or a garden in a spring morning. Without seeing the title this panel transmits peaceful relaxed feelings, due to the use of different tints and shades of green colour. The soft flat broad stroke in deep and middle olive green shades in background adds a reciting quality and effect of a dense forest tree. While the thin flowing lines in foreground in pale green shads adds an effect of branches full with newly growing shoots and foliage, dancing freely on the beat of the slow blowing wind. The application of green colour on white background reveals the facts that artist response against the international image of Pakistan by saying “green is peace” because this colour symbolized emotionally positive feeling. It gives us the ability to love nurture, ourselves and others unconditionally. Green is a mixture of yellow and blue, it indicates the mental clarity and positivity of yellow with the loving calm intuition of blue, inspiring hope and a generosity. This is a color that has a strong sense of right or wrong, inviting good judgment. It sees both sides of the equation, weighs them up, and then usually takes the moral stand in making appropriate decisions. Green promotes love of nature, family, friends, pets, home and the color is good host. This color narrates faithfulness and patience, giving us determination and strength to cope with adversity. It symbolizes prosperity, abundance and gives a feeling of safety.

Through this painting he conveys the message of peace for the country as well as for the whole human races. He said “May God keep the green leaf safe from the fire which prepared by the humans for the destruction of each other”

### **NOTHING FILLS THE BLACK HOLE OF MY HEART**

In this Painting he produced blood red poppy flower against the deep blue background by using the push and pull theory. The red poppy flower naturally emerges from the back ground and gradually mixed in to the background from the edges by creating soft effects petals. Poppies have long been used as a symbol of sleep, peace,

and death: Sleep because of the opium extracted from them, and death because of the common blood-red color of the poppy flower<sup>4</sup>.

In Greek and Roman myths, poppies were used as offerings to the dead and during the 1st World War; red poppies have become a symbol of remembrance of soldiers who have died during wartime. A second interpretation of poppies in classical mythology is that the bright scarlet colour signifies a promise of resurrection after death<sup>5</sup>. A message which imbed in the colour and form of the painting is the message of peace on earth. It also shows deep condolence with the people who died during the brutal war process. The wars which are always fought between the humans on the bases of regional, national or international conflicts of states, religions, races, economic or social philosophies. The human history is full of use of this kind of issues for the massacre of humanity. It also shows the deep sorrow of the artist for partial unjust behavior of the powerful nations against the weakened one in order to break the universal law of just which is set by God for all humans without any discrimination. Poppy flower of the painting also conveys the message of hope for those who never get justice throughout this life against the brutal group of humans.



“Green is Peace” by Tanveer Murshid, liquid oil on board, size 18”x20”

Dated 2003 <http://tanwirmurshad.wordpress.com>

As we know poppy flower also symbolized the “Day of Resurrection”, so artist reminds them that day through this image in the sense that it is the day of the ultimate justice for the all believers of God. He used deep blue colour in back ground. Blue colour strengthens his message of peace because blue symbolizes trust, honesty and loyalty<sup>6</sup>. It is sincere, reserved, quiet, and doesn't like to make a controversy or draw attention. It hates war, conflicts and likes to do things in its own way. From a color psychology perspective, blue is reliable and responsible. These colors show an inner security, confidence, control and do the right thing in difficult times. It symbolizes peace and tranquility above everything else, endorsing both physical and mental relaxation. It reduces stress, creating a sense of calmness, relaxation and order. The free flowing gradual mixing of bright colours such as yellow, orange and red in to a deep blue background with black center leaves an impression of balance, freedom, hope and peace on eyes, minds and hearts of the viewer. As the painting says “Nothing fills the black hole of my heart” except peace. Without knowing the in-depth philosophy of his painting his painting over all leaves a pleasing effect as the desire of peace. He transmits the feelings of peace prosperity and beauty, freedom, happiness, calmness through his paintings to the viewers. These whole pleasant feelings appear in his paintings in the form of spring, flowers, butterflies, moon and sun with a peaceful romantic atmospheric natural expression. Such as in “Spring”, “Flowers”, “Two Flowers”, Moon and Flower. In his paintings the wind blows peacefully, the branches dance elegantly, lyrically, freely with the flow of the wind. Flowers bloomed happily with butterfly under a sun and provide soft loving warmth in a sweet cool moist green. atmosphere. In some paintings such as moon and flower they rest peace fully under a charismatic cool moon light.



“Nothing fills the black hole of my heart” by Tanveer Murshad liquid oil on board, size 18”x20” dated 2003 <http://tanwirmurshad.wordpress.com>



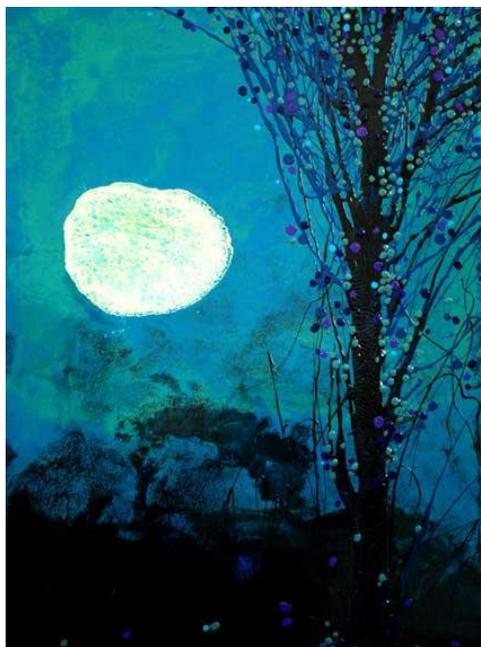
“Two flowers” by Tanveer Murshid, liquid oil on board, size 18”x20” dated 2003 <http://tanwirmurshad.wordpress.com>



“Spring” by Tanveer Murshad liquid oil on board,  
size 18”x20” dated  
2003 <http://tanwirmurshad.wordpress.com>



“Flowers” by Tanveer Murshid, liquid oil on  
board, size 18”x20” dated  
2003 <http://tanwirmurshad.wordpress.com>



⇐ “Moon and flowers” by Tanveer Murshid liquid  
oil on board, size 18”x20” dated 2003  
<http://tanwirmurshad.wordpress.com>

## **CAUTIONARY AND REWARDING**

Along with the subject of peace some of his work looks like cautionary and rewarding. These paintings motivate the feeling of positivity in human for a positive act for the cause of ultimate peace on earth. The advices that we read and listen from our childhood, we see them for the first time in form of painting in Pakistan. His way of advice is unique, he coheres it with the nature and one can understand multiple meanings from the paintings. For example, “Hell is there where the heart burns” and “The heaven of the heart”.

### **HELL IS THERE WHERE THE HEART BURNS**

In this painting he used the warm colours scheme such as orange, yellow, red, brown and black to transmit the feeling of fire or hell. The bad intentions and the bad deeds create the feeling of burning heart. The injustices and the other sins in which humans involve and try to destroy each other for the sake of worldly benefits. In this struggle to get more and more benefits by hook and by crook and ignore the values of humanity they adopted the way which causes to harm week person and they suffer due to the brutal act of bad human. So he warns to wrong doers avoid the bad deeds because at the day of resurrection the people find hell near to them due to all hearts which burns in this world due to their bad deeds.



Hell is there where the heart burns” by Tanveer Murshad liquid oil on board, size 18”x20” dated 2003 - <http://tanwirmurshad.wordpress.com>

A boiling sea in the foreground, volcanic mountains in middle ground and the burning red furious sky in the background conveys the feeling of hell and warns to stop and motivates us to think a while what we are doing in our lives and where we are going after the life.

**THE HEAVEN OF THE HEART**

In contrast of the above mentioned painting “Hell is there where the hearts burns” he paints another painting under the title “The heaven of the heart” The green meadows in the foreground, use of green shades, and the cool refreshing water sprigs and canals in the middle ground serene relaxing loving affectionate sky in background transmits the feelings of joy, peace, harmony, reconciliation, contentment, happiness and comfort to the heart minds and eyes and elevated the feeling of hope and reward for the good deeds. The good acts fill the heart of the human with the feelings which men feel to stand in front of this picture.



“The heaven of the heart” by Tanveer Murshid, liquid oil on board,  
size 18”x20” dated 2003 - <http://tanwirmurshad.wordpress.com>

**OBEX**

Some paintings of Tanveer Murshid is based on his idea of “Obex”

According to him:

“In my world “Obex” is a kind of feeling which appears in the mind and vanishes before becoming a thought and leaves taste in mind and never appears or happens as a thought or idea or as a thing. Obex can never be considered as an idea because an idea is like a thing, constructed with thoughts in mind. Obex is black matter, which appears and the mind cannot capture its contents but after it is happening a kind of feeling captures the mind and it creates an unknown state. And when it vanishes before forming a thoughtful map and leaves a kind of feeling, no one can say it’s nothing because it is a happening which happens with everyone. It changes one’s mood, makes everyone thoughtful and releases ideas. It is a fact that Obex is a part of our life. Due to Obex sometimes there is an unknown depression and sometimes an unknown pleasure or a joy. It drives our nature and life but we know it not as a thing. Due to Obex, there are people who do not change their mind or choice and stick to their attitude and cannot find reasons to explain their self. So how can one deny the Obex state? The feelings of Obex cannot be explained in any language except the language of liquid paints which create unknown textures containing natural spaces. Obex affects the mood of the viewer communicating the taste of the unknown, mind to mind, soul to soul and self to self. I paint with liquid colours because only liquid colours mix naturally and form unique visuals according to their nature and meanings, supporting each other to convey the feelings & emotions and agony & ecstasy. These are my paintings because I choose & select colours and make their combinations according to my requirement. I mix my paints on canvas to the desired effect and finish up where I feel it is done. Thus each & every work becomes my art and in my art, art becomes nature & nature becomes art. Both blend in each other to establish “Nirvana” the ultimate joy<sup>7</sup>.”

On this subject his paintings such as “Before imagination” “Feelings emerge” “Blurred ideas”



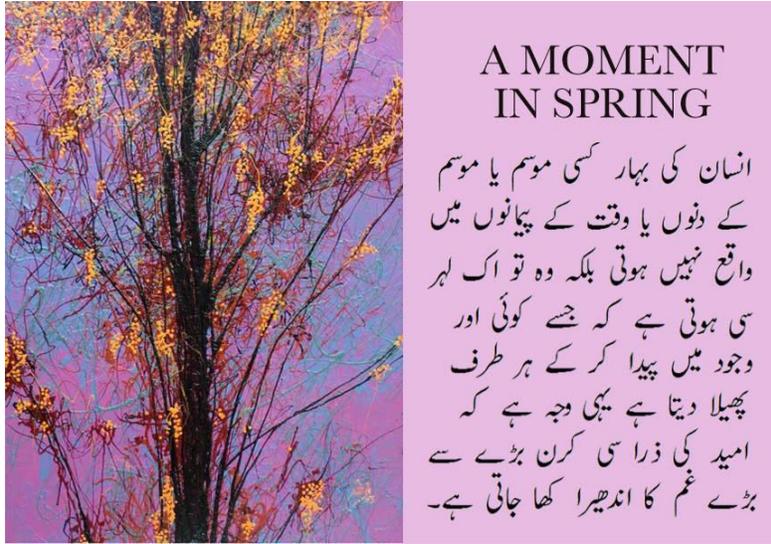
“Before imagination” by Tanveer Murshid, liquid oil on board, size 18”x20” dated 2003, Donated by Qarshi Foundation, Lahore Museum Contemporary Paintings Gallery Collection

## LOVE AND HOPE

Along the subject of peace and humanity or other subject as we discussed earlier, he also addresses the human sentiment. Here we have discuss it under the subject of Love and Hope Such As”, “A Moment in Spring”, “She Blows Like A Breeze In My Mind” Honey Of The Moon, Summer Wind. But we discussed here only one. He addressed the sentiments which rise in a person when he loves someone with the core of heart his paintings are like the smile of the “Mona Lisa” convey that feeling of love and hope in which a person is captivated at the time when they see the painting.

### “A MOMENT IN SPRING”,

The panel is filled with the pink and silver gray background shade along with a brown tree full of the yellow flowers in foreground.



Feelings emerges” by Tanveer Murshid, liquid oil on board, size 18”x20” dated 2003  
<http://tanwirmurshad.wordpress.com>

At one glance it looks so beautiful and pleasing. In the language of colour, this painting indicates the need for acceptance, support, unconditional and romantic love, compassion and understanding, cherishing, romance, warmth, hope, calm, sweetness, innocence, feminine and natural energy due to the use of pink. The use of yellow from a color psychology perspective stimulates mental faculties; it activates the analytical brain, happiness and fun. Yellow is uplifting to the spirits it helps to create enthusiasm for life and can awaken greater confidence and optimism, communication of New Ideas related to the expression and integration of new ideas and thoughts. Yellow relates to the head not the heart. The yellow flower balanced the negative meanings of the pink which relates weakness and immaturity. Brown colour of the tree and branches conveys the message of security, protection and material wealth stability, structure and support. Relating to the protection and support of the family unit, with a keen sense of duty and responsibility. It indicates quality in everything a comfortable home, the best food and drink and loyal companionship. It is a color of physical comfort, simplicity and quality.

And the use of silver gray shows the compromise it restores equilibrium and stability to both feminine power and spiritual energy. It protects itself from outside negativity, reflecting the energy back to where it began. The symbolic meaning of the painting conveys an ideal state of love, and hope. According to him “The spring of men is not bound in form of a season but it is a ray of hope which someone lights up in ourselves which removes all sorrows of life.

### **HONEY OF THE MOON,**

It has a message of hope by saying it (When relations become vague then the light of this moon descends in to the future, its coolness is as curative for all suffering as honey) the light blue colour with yellowed spots of melting honey transmits the feelings of cool moonlight of a full moon in the night of spring seasons and sweetness of honey. It leaves a sweet charming fantasy effects against the depressed and sad dark blue colour of the background.



“Honey of the Moon” by Tanveer Murshid, liquid oil on board, size 18”x20” dated 2003

<http://tanwirmurshad.wordpress.com>

**CONCLUSION**

To see all the work of Tanveer Murshid we can easily judge that his work is totally different from the work of main stream's artist of Pakistani contemporary art. It is different in terms of the subjects and way of paintings technique. His subjects provide food to thoughts. As compared to other contemporary artists his work is responsive rather than reactionary. To adopt responsive way is a wise and effective manner to change a bad situation as compared to adopt a reactionary attitude. He rejects violence, war, and misuse of power on the base of religion and race for the sake of peace on earth.

In lieu of this, he gives the message of peace, humanity, love, hope, positivity and natural freedom of soul. His natural expression towards ultimate peace and spiritual freedom reflects in his work in form of attractive calm and soothing colour schemes and flowing technique of liquid oil paints. This technique of painting is very unique and also supportive to transmit the feeling of natural freedom of the mind heart and soul. His painting proves his statements about his paintings. He says,

“One can see even the fastest wind blowing peacefully in my work. Thunder has become laughter and movements of nature have become smiles because it bears now the signature of positivity”

“I dream peace, not war and I fantasize prosperity of everyone on this earth. So let's eliminate all who talk about negativity on tribal, national and international level.

“Sun, moon, stars and rain are bearing out their potencies, demanding nothing in return, but men's touch to nature is venomous, tortuous and corruptive, almost always.

In conclusion we can say Tanveer Murshid's work brings something new and unusual which we never observe in the history of Pakistani art in terms of its style and technique. His style is totally against the traditional way of paintings. He breaks the law but not for the sake of inner impulses like the western artist, he breaks it for the sake of an expression which leads the people toward beauty, harmony, balance and ultimate joy of spiritual freedom without distorting the sensible logic. His freedom is spiritual and is not based on materialism like the west that causes the destruction of nature, humanity and beauty.

**NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Lahore City Heritage Museum is extension of Lahore Museum in the adjacent building.

<sup>2</sup> <http://tanveermurshad.wordpress.com/gallery-of-tanveer-murshads-paintings>

<sup>3</sup> For OBEX, see same pp11-12

<sup>4</sup> L. Frank Baum, Michael Patrick Hearn, *The Annotated Wizard of Oz*, p. 173, date of access 20,8.2014

<sup>5</sup> Robert Graves, *the Greek Myths*, 24. 15 p. 96, date of access.10,8 2014

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.empower-yourself-with-color-psychology.com/color-blue.html>, retrieved on. 11-8-2014.

<sup>7</sup> Personal interview by the artist 20014

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