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## Irfan alludes to Nirvana with Buddhist symbolism



By Ameer H Ahmad

**KARACHI:** An exhibition of miniatures depicting Buddha by Abdul Irfan would be displayed at the Citi Art Gallery until March 24.

Unlike many other artists, Irfan refuses to work with gouache and follows the traditional art of miniature painting by sticking to water colours. Littered with Buddhist symbolism, his work allegorically speaks about the mystic Buddha using lotuses, stupas and the chakra.

His paintings feature Buddha in his various postures of meditation. Using the thinnest of brushes, he creates exquisite detail and shadows in his work, illustrating Buddha's rejection of his royal birth and single-minded devotion to God. Irfan has painted the headgear and *chhatri* hovering above Buddha in several pictures, but not actually adorning his head to symbolise his aversion to royalty.

Bearing resemblance to the statues of Buddha, the artist keeps him unadorned



throughout his works and continues to allude to Buddha's denial of worldly desires and titles. There are around five paintings portraying silhouettes of women who fail in enticing the saint away from his devotion as he continues serenely meditating in the paintings. These women in sensual positions are flanked by Buddha's sense of enlightenment and complete disregard for worldly desires. Embodying wisdom traditionally attained through meditative development in one painting, Irfan expresses the power of prayer in another by painting a man erupting from the ground symbolising that man can overcome anything if he prays.

In another painting, metaphorically referencing towards man's desires and the resultant disrespect for God's orders, the painter depicts Buddha as the King of Hearts in a puzzle, perhaps pointing towards the achievement of nirvana through denial of worldly goods.