

CHAPTER - VIII

SOME INDEPENDENT ARTISTS

In addition to the painters who joined the Bombay Group, there were a number of talented painters who were working independently. They did not join or form any group though they were carefully watching the activities of the artists of the Progressive Group as well as the Bombay Group. In consideration of the art-style too, their development is distinct and cannot be compared to the style of the other artists. Here we will discuss the works of the painters Jehangir Sabavala, Akbar Padamsee, Tyeb Mehta and Badri Narayan together with the sculptors Adi Davierwala and Pilo Pochkhanawala. They worked on independent lines and rose to prominence. Their contribution to the field of painting and sculpture is significant and without their mention we cannot complete our survey of the development of art until the 1960s.

Jehangir Sabavala was born in 1922 at Bombay in a Parsi family. He spent his childhood at Bombay except for a few years which he spent in Switzerland and in travelling to Australia and U.S.A. He had his college education at the Bombay University and then studied art for three years. Later he joined the Heatherly school of Fine Arts for two years and left for Paris. In Paris after receiving the training at Academic Julian, he studied under Andre Lhote, the famous teacher of Cubism. In 1951 he returned to India, and though he made short visits to Paris, eventually he settled in Bombay where

he works presently.

Having been under the strong influence of Andre Ihote, Sabavala took keen interest in the structural analysis and his early paintings display this rational approach. The development of his art-style shows most logical transformation.

His early paintings from the 1950s were based on the structural analysis of either the objects, figures or the landscape. The tiny angular planes were painted with bright colours suggesting the shade and light (Plate 80; fig. 179). The forms were outlined clearly with dark colours. After this period we notice the gradual departure in his style. This period in his career was that of experimentation in various ways. The dark outlines disappeared and he started using the forms without contours. Around 1959 he painted series of still-lives by superimposition of geometrical shapes which created a well-knot pattern and suggested much deliberation.

His fascination for the beauty of nature gradually reflected in his painting and the later phase conveyed emphasis on landscape. In his compositions landscape got prominence rather than the figures. The human figures also lost their weight. In his own words they became 'part flesh-part spirit'.¹ The light in his painting became more mystic, imparting an almost ethereal quality to his painting. This phase started by around 1963 has continued during the next decade. The period proved to be very significant in Sabaravala's career. In these years his paintings not only show the prominence given to landscape but also they depicted the majestic beauty of nature. The forms in his paintings, either of figures or trees or

other objects, became more elongated. They were given thin outlines here and there. The surface of the painting also gained a unique textural quality due to the application of thick colours by palette knife. He used the method of old masters in building up the pigment surface of his paintings, layer after layer superimposing the monochromatic rendering and carefully applying glazes. His study of cubism and its structural analysis is reflected in the treatment of the forms in his painting. Sabavala likes Turner for his mysterious light and dramatic colour. The quality of light that Sabavala evolved in his paintings^{is} perhaps owed to his admiration for Turner's painting. Sabavala respects Cezanne as well because he pointed the way towards Cubism. He likes Juan Gris as he was one of the architects of synthetic Cubism and experimented with the same upto his last.² When we analyse why Sabavala admires a particular painter, we are able to pinpoint the source of his inspiration for specific qualities in his paintings.

Sabavala's colour schemes too got transformed. They now reveal most sophisticated subtle tonal values. He also developed a way of presentation of his subjects. He often depicted Christian subjects viz. 'Vespers'³ (painted in 1968) in which usually he painted the figures turning their back to the spectators and going away from them in the direction of some distant place and thus they enter deeper and deeper into the pictorial space. In the above painting the nuns are entering a ruined building of a Cathedral with elongated Gothic arches. In comparison to the space established in the landscape, the figures in the painting look insignificant in

the expansive panorama. Their purpose in the painting is to create a movement within the pictorial space by the direction of their orientation. His other painting of this phase 'Flight into Egypt' is similar in effect.

It is through this phase of his paintings that the critics noticed his achievements. J. Roberts wrote in 'Design' in 1966, "After seeing the paintings and in contemplating the exhibition, the word that describes the exhibition as a whole is 'Quality'. This 'Quality' is the artist's homogeneity, his oneness of thought, execution and design. These qualities like the elements he portrays land, sky, sea, air - combine to form serenity, tranquillity and the assurance found in Mr. Sabavala's 'pure painting'".⁴ Meanwhile Charles Fabri wrote in Statesman about the ethereal quality in his paintings, ".....the reality has been ever further transformed into an almost mystic apparition, forms almost dissolve in the circumbient air. The air is filled with mystery too, often dark and tenebrous, like late sunsets or early dawns, the most of his apparitions appear as figures on vaguely sensed shores of the sea or lakes....."⁵

Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni has pointed out that Sab^bavala stands apart from the two main currents of contemporary Indian Art, He can neither be grouped with those who in the pursuit of indⁱigenous quality, introduce folk elements or colour schemes from miniature paintings, nor he can be classified as belonging to the westernised artists who experiment^{ed} in various ways.⁶ Sabavala's work is based on the study of Indian landscape. His paintings present the landscape as a single whole. His painting the 'Return to the

ancestral land' (Plate 81; fig.183) is a horizontal composition. In the foreground, on the right side a standing figure who faces towards a figure on the left side, directs our attention within the landscape while the second figure in its own turn takes our attention towards a group which is further away in the distance. The ground upto this point is rendered with series of subtle tonal values of greens, blues and greys but the modulation of the surface by thick application of colour by the palette knife gives a strong effect. Similarly horizontal masses rendered in it appear like hills and our eye travels from range after range in search of the horizon. This search is never complete because Sabavala always keeps the horizon line undefined. Upto the upper edge of the painting, series of horizontal lines are depicted. This manner of rendering keeps the suspense upto the last. His figures looking like the leafless tree trunks, become a part of the landscape itself. Nadkarni has rightly pinpointed that, "Indeed the salient quality of a Sabavala painting is its architectonic structure, inseparable as it is from its meticulous colour scheme..... Sabavala's work travels beneath the surface and catches visually the spirit of the ancient mass of land called ^IIndia.It projects a universally valid image of nature itself".⁷ As mentioned earlier the figures are never facing the spectator but with their backs turned they recede into the pictorial space. This gives rise to a feeling of curiosity as to where they are exactly trying to go and what they are searching for. Whether 'this pilgrimage is the painter's pilgrimage' towards a metaphysical truth' is the question posed by Adil Jassawala.⁸ Dilip Chitre has surmised that the

figures in Sabavala's painting, in search of some place beyond the horizon, express a sort of anxiety syndrome, the anxiety of the Parsi clan to which Sabavala himself belongs. This minority community always feels unsafe because they do not belong to the land where it is settled now.⁹ Nevertheless this expression of search, anxiety and sometimes a certain melancholy ~~are~~ ^{is} responsible in enhancing the metaphysical quality created by the landscape built up in his paintings.

Around 1974 Sabavala's paintings suggested slight ^ediviation from the early paintings. Now the figures in his paintings occupied ^aprominent place in the whole space. His painting 'Sorrowing Men' shows bearded men in helpless gestures, with hanging arms and a slight bent in their shaven heads. Another painting of this period "At the Desert's Edge", depicts two seated women with dark complexion, their heads tilted in similar fashion. Both these paintings reveal a carefully built structure of the figures, hands and feet etc.

In his recent paintings along with the hills, mountains and figures, the clouds also occupy a place. The carefully painted structure of the cloud and its representation forming a pattern in the whole design is perhaps due to the influence of Feininger, whom Sabavala admires for his precise, delicate and very personal rendering of cloud, boat and sea".¹⁰

S.V. Vasudev, admires him as "...When it comes to treating a rarified landscape, with the sole emphasis on light and space,

there is rarely any other painter in India who can bring to it a metaphysical feel in refinement of thought, technique and treatment".¹¹

Sabavala has to his credit more than 16 one-man shows, his paintings are included in several prestigious exhibitions abroad.

Akbar Padamsee was born in the year 1928 at Bombay and graduated from Sir J.J. School of Art in the year 1949. He did not become a member of any particular group, though at that time the Progressive Group was at the height of their influence and Akbar several times attended their meetings at the Rampart Row. Akbar left for Paris in 1951 and had several one-man shows there. He periodically came to India and held his exhibited work. Akbar's paintings are often based on the human figure though occasionally he has painted still-lives and landscapes.

His early paintings in early 1950s comprised of two main series—one was that of the 'prophets' and the other was the series of 'lovers'. The first name was suggested by the painter 'Raza'. These included several imaginary portraits resembling Christian saints (Plate 82; figs.184,185,186). The early prophets show a frontality and rendering of the flat tones in simplified areas. These portraits have shaven heads, angular faces and a strange appearance. Their gowns are painted with bold patterns. The second prophet is bearded and suggests a dignified expression yet the gaze is blank. The first two had a certain primitive element in their expression, the emphasis on two-dimensional aspect and a bold outline. In the third prophet volume is suggested with the

help of the rounded shoulders and thick neck. The outlines are now merged with the background. His bearded face and the rendering of the nose and the eyes suggest a person who has suffered much and also invests it with the expression of an enlightened saint.

His series of lovers created a stir. In these paintings he painted a couple in the nude with the hand of the male figure resting on the breast of the female. In another painting the male is wearing a robe with chequered pattern while the female is nude and carries flowers in one hand. The figures were painted with flat tones and bold dark outlines. This unabashed nudity and suggestive gesture, offended some conservative spectators and a suit was filed against Akbar for painting an obscene picture. The long discussions in the court room about the norms of paintings and moral bindings on a painter are interesting in the sense that they reveal the popular ideas about art in those days,¹² and secondly, because it in a way established the freedom of the painter. Another painting of the lovers (Plate 82; fig.187) is more interesting. Here the nude couple with similar gesture as in the previous painting but who are seated on a bull at once changing the connotation suggest the eternal couple of Purusha and Prakriti incarnated by Shiva and Parvati. The treatment of the figures conveys angularity and the rendering of the thick colour though applied in distinct areas but has a certain textural quality about it.

The early paintings were perhaps influenced by Akbar's association with the Progressive Group, from whom were ^edrived the simplicity of form, dark bold outlines and frontality. However,

as Geeta Kapur points out, Akbar "handles the sacr~~ified~~ rather than profane aspect of an image" while Souza uses religious subjects for the purpose of "committing sacrilege".¹³ Akbar's imagery underwent various important changes. The heavy black contour gradually disappeared and the figure was depicted with a subtle modelling. The nude was now clearly demarcated from the dark background with the torso depicted in light colour while the soft tonal values gave a certain plasticity to it. The dark backgrounds created a feeling of enclosed space. Thus Padamsee shows interest in "a condition....not a particular person".¹⁴ His women are a general statement about womanhood and not related to particular woman.

Around 1950s began his first involvement with landscapes which can be more rightly called as the city scapes. He also painted still-lives consisting of ordinary kitchen utens^sils. These were painted with bright colour and realistic rendering. However, the objects are not necessarily grouped together. They were nevertheless link~~ed~~^{ed together by} the tonal values of the background. His cityscapes show the environment of a European city rather than Indian atmosphere. They reveal a strange kind of silence as no figures are painted and even the houses are depicted without windows or doors so that no sign of habitation is conveyed. The source of light creates interesting patterns in these paintings.

Around this period his figures became elongated and slender. The paintings now were painted in greys only. They were modelled with subtlety of tones. The compact background disappeared and

they depicted in open-air suggesting unlimited space. Their slightly tilted heads added to their grace but surprisingly he has not emphasized the sensuous beauty of woman. His women convey a sense of quiet suffering in their solitude which at once elevates the quality. According to Akbar 'Forms without ache are futile'.

The landscapes in this period have reached a monumental level. They are larger in size and show panoramic views of tropical cities. His Greek landscape is the best example, (Plate 83; fig. 189). The cluster of houses treated in simplified geometrical forms though in greys gives rise to a visual effect as if they are treated in many colours. This is the achievement of Akbar's careful application of tonal values in greys. Gieve Patel says that he was ^{simply} ~~just~~ captivated by his grey paintings. "Nothing I had seen in the city till then had moved me". The possibilities of what one can do seemed tangibly present before me in those grey paintings".¹⁵

Akbar came to India in 1968 to settle at Bombay. His landscapes after 1968 show considerable change, now infused with an Indian atmosphere, mainly that of Rajasthan, which he visited often during this period. His landscapes with hot sun and rocky terrain has a source unmistakably from the Indian environment. Since 1970 his landscapes show certain distinct feeling of solitude and the rendering expresses as Geeta Kapur describes "Sensuous delight of the luxuriance of nature"¹⁶ with a feeling for the rich grain of the soil, the mineral rocks, the foliage and the transparent lake with the reflection of the moon. The solitude in his painting is perhaps due to the influence of

Chirico⁰ whom Akbar admires immensely.¹⁷ (This solitude is the kind of plastic solitude which Chirico defines as the "contemplative beauty offered to us by the artist's genius of construction or formal combination".¹⁸) Thus this reconstruction of the objective phenomenon turns it into an aesthetic form.

These paintings have a gripping influence on the spectator. The colour planes interact in the manner that there arises a feeling of pulsating energy. Akbar calls these as 'Metascapes'. He turned from figures to landscape probably because it gave him more freedom to deal with the space and experimentation of colour.

This experimentation is related to his research in the phenomenon of colour when in 1969-70 he was awarded the Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship. In the portfolio of programmed drawings, titled 'Syzygy', he has explained the method based on three primary colours and simple mathematics with a number code.¹⁹ By substituting for the numbers a matrix of word-concepts one can compose complicated harmonies by the juxtaposition and combination of various numbers. Thus Akbar uses complex colour harmonies and for that he makes several colour diagrams. He prepares the colour schemes on the basis of their complementaries and then they are applied with thick strokes of palette knife which retains their brilliancy intact, and render exceptional luminosity^s and richness. The secret of the success of his metascapes is mainly due to this quality in his colour.

His metascape in 1978, (Plate 83; fig.190) shows an extensive view with mountains and a rocky surface. The yellow and green mountain ranges give the effect of a desert. What is most daring

is treatment of the largest portion of the middle ground which has a very stimulating textural surface due to the rendering of thick colour with palette-knife. The red in the foreground creates a dynamic balance with the yellow-brown in the distance. The tension between these two areas makes the middle area more lively.

Padamsee's metascapes reveal always a new kind of handling of the vast area every time posing ^{of} a new challenge. He says that the idea of using the sun and the moon in the metascape originated from Kalidasa's description of 'Asta-Murti' in the *Abhidynana Shankuntalam*.²⁰ The 'Asta-Murti' are the eight visible forms of Lord Siva, explaining the process by which the artist deals with reality and how the new form created exists on the mental plane as a distinct entity to be recreated by the sensitive spectator.

Geeta Kapur compares Padamsee's landscapes with those by Swaminathan and Ramkumar. She remarks, "Swaminathan's landscapes demand communion, otherwise they appear and disappear like apparitions. Ramkumar's ask for sentimental identification. Akbar's hold you in abeyance. They are materially concrete and in that lies their ancient secret, the secret that requires contemplation. And in their very contemplation they appear so remote, it seems as if the elements have congealed in the light of contemplation".²¹

One is tempted to compare his landscape with those of Sabavala also. Both use the mountains and vast fields in their landscapes. While Sabavala's takes the spectator inside the pictorial space from the foreground upto the horizon which is unlimited

since the horizon line is deliberately left undefined. The tonal values are subtle and they merge gradually. The forms are almost weightless and all this creates^a certain haunting and ethereal quality. In Padamsee's paintings, the luminous surface, instead of suggesting such a movement, keeps our attention stuck to certain points. His surfaces show a certain robust strength compared with the delicate nuances of Sabavala.

Tyeb Mehta, born in 1925, studied drawing and painting under S.B. Palsikar at Sir J.J. School of Art, Bombay from 1947 to 1952. It was the period when the Progressive Artists' Group created a stir amongst Bombay public. Tyeb was watching the new movement keenly. In 1954 he went to London. When he came back the Progressive Group was disbanded and a new Group with the name, the 'Bombay Group' has^d been formed. Tyeb observed their shows carefully and also participated in their discussions.²² However, he himself again went abroad in 1959 and stayed and worked in Europe till 1964. He held his first one-man show in 1959 which had attracted the attention of critics. His early paintings showed a commitment to the figurative trend. The figures were simplified and rendered with broad masses of flat tones. However, the volume of the figure was emphasized. He did not bound his figures with the outlines (which he used in a very subtle way afterwards). Since then though he tried to distort and disintegrate the human form, human being has remained the main concern of his paintings. He used colour symbolically viz. yellow for sun, and black for night or for absence of light or enlightenment. Thus, he tried to evoke emotional response through colour.

His paintings from 1964 onwards are based on distortion of the human figure, as for example, his 'Situation' painted in oils on hardboard in 1964, 'Falling Figure'²⁷ (Plate 85; Fig. 194) painted in oils in 1965 and 'Reclining Figure' in oils on canvas painted in 1966. Out of these, his 'Falling Figure' is more significant as it symbolically portrayed ^{the} fall of human beings into nothingness which was suggested by black void. It highlights the unavoidable destruction of the human being. He created the contrast by rich blues and oranges as juxtaposed with the black of the void. This painting won the National Award at New Delhi. Tyeb painted several versions of this subject later on and in these his rendering became simple and sober as well as the figure received more distortion. The thickly applied colour strokes of his earlier paintings were now replaced by comparatively thin paint and sober harmonies. The same chromatic sophistication we find in his 'Reclining Figure'.

The later phase displayed flat tones in addition to this sophistication. Now large flat areas were painted with bold colour relationships and he started bounding his images with very thin line at some places. The two-dimensional effect became the essential part of his later paintings. Now the figure was sometimes kept intact while sometimes it was disintegrated totally. The dismembered parts of the human body viz. face, hands, feet etc. were scattered and again assembled together. Hand were painted with tender gesture, open or splayed in the manner of seeking support. The greys and blacks fill the major part of the canvas and add to the agonized expression displayed by the face with a slightly open mouth. This facial expression suggests a kind of

mute protest. A significant use of ^{the} diagonal marked the paintings of this period. The series, entitled 'Diagonal', was painted by him in the period from 1969 to 1971. This was after he received the Rockefeller Fellowship in 1968 and spent a year in the United States. Geeta Kapur remarks about the figures in these paintings that, "his figures, unlike Padamsee's, are trapped in a continuous moment of terror and unlike Souza's they are the victims, though perhaps.....in their stances there is a dumb protest".²³

Recently there are discernible two new tendencies in his paintings. In some, the figure is conceived in a symbolic relation to the bull which is according to him an embodiment of power. The energies of the human being and the bull are matched, united and then transformed into the other by suggesting transformation of limbs. So sometimes the human figure has a leg of a bull. It takes the expression to the level of mythic dimension.

Badri Narayan has created a distinct place for himself in the art/scene of India by the merits of his paintings as well as by his versatility. Badri was born in 1929, at Secunderabad. He did not receive any sort of formal art/training. From the age of 19 he started his experiments in painting and exhibited his works too. Badri Narayan experimented in several media. In the beginning he painted in water colours followed by oil painting. For many years he has been painting ceramics at Vitrum studio. He combined in his paintings the folk imagery with simple manner of unfolding the subject/matter. He also turned to graphics. His series of ink-resist drawings were appreciated by the critics. For that he either used the wood-cut method on the Nepalese rice

paper or the Lithograph on the handmade paper. He found that these methods were most suitable for his style with emphasis on linearity. With these experiments Badri continued to paint ceramic tiles and other ceramic ware, especially dishes. He also executed murals in ceramic and glass mosaic too. Badri's paintings as well as his tiles delineate very sophisticated colour schemes especially his use of red can be compared to that used in the ceramic wares during the high Renaissance period (when the use of Raphael-red became particularly popular).

Badri is essentially a figurative painter. He handles the subjects with simplicity. His paintings are never cluttered with too many figures. There are often the female nudes as well as the bearded male figures. Their contours rendered in bold black line remind of Byzantine icons. Like them these figures too have big eyes and certain angularity of form. Badri uses the bearded man as an emblem of the patriarch or saint symbolising the qualities of uprightness and honesty. While the female nude symbolises womanhood. Badri's subject-matter is varied. He paints ~~the~~ subjects from Hindu mythology as well as Buddhist mythology. But with these he also paints secular subjects like 'Homage to woman'²⁴. His 'The Hunter, Virgin and the Unicorn'²⁵ in pen and ink conveys clearly a Christian connotation, while his other paintings depicting 'Narayan creating Urvashi' suggests affinity with Hindu Mythology. His 'The Great Foul' is taken from the Kukkuta Jataka, while his 'The Dying King' was taken from Maha-Suddosana Jataka. The last two were displayed in his exhibition in the year 1963 at

Bombay. But whether it may be an oil painting like 'Homage to Woman' or the 'Still-life With Roses and Fish'²⁶ or it may be a water colour, Badri's painting unmistakably emphasizes the two-dimensional quality with its flat colours and the bold black lines like in the stained glass windows. This shows similarity to the mediaeval Christian paintings but the figures with big eyes and comparatively larger heads perhaps give the Indian feeling to his figures.

Charles Fabri has rightly pointed out that "his oils and linocuts have a brutal force occasionally reminiscent of M. Rouault, with bold outlines in black at other times he achieves an almost stained glass effect, with the broad leading imitated by his black outline."²⁷ However, Rouault's paintings emphasize the brutality by very thick patches of colour while Badri prefers comparatively softer texture.

Nissim Ezekiel also agrees about the quality of sophistication in Badri's paintings. He writes, "He is not a naive or a primitive though he stimulates the techniques of both. What I discern in him is a kind of sophisticated innocence".²⁸ Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni points out the same attitude in his paintings. He remarks, "Here is an artist who has not been bothered by an effort to find his 'roots'. He has found them as instinctively as, say, Jamini Roy but with more welcome sophistication".²⁹ This sophistication becomes more lively in his water colours and ceramic tiles. He uses a gorgeous red, black, grey, orange and blue. His paintings have a colourfulness which is similar to the dreamworld of a child.

Critic Jag Mohan too admires Badri Narayan for his 'delightful series of colour'.³⁰

Badri Narayan has ventured in the field of literature for children as well as writings on Art. He has written and illustrated short stories and verses for children. He has also written several articles in prestigious magazines, like Lalit Kala Contemporary. Amongst these should be mentioned the article 'Artists Of The Third Epoch',³¹ which conveys that he is conscious about the dilemmas and the contemporary art activity. His talks on T.V. as well as Radio mostly for young listeners on the subjects concerning Art have been much appreciated. Especially his talk on 'Temple Architecture of India' on T.V. is much admired. Whenever he takes part in the discussion on art or artists he makes it at once lively. I remember his analysis in the T.V. programme held on late A.A. Almelkar after his sudden death last year. In the discussion on the qualities of Almelkar's paintings Badri pointed out very precisely the significance of the style of Almelkar's paintings. Badri's work has been preserved in various private as well as public collections. He has more than 20 one-man shows to his credit and has participated in several collective shows in various European countries as well as U.S.A. He is the recipient of many prizes and awards.

Although Pansare and Bakre had made bold but uncertain attempts in breaking new ground as far as sculptural activity in Bombay was concerned, but the most decisive ^{ent} experimentation has been the contribution of the two Parsi sculptors, Adi Davierwala and Piloo Pochkhanavala. Surprisingly enough, both were not trained in the discipline in any art school.

Davierwala, born in 1922 at Bombay had his schooling in a Christian boarding school in Coonoor (in the Nilgiris). As a school boy he carved little wood-blocks by pen-knife. He wanted to be an artist all along but according to the wishes of his parents he had to join V.J.T.I. in Bombay and after getting the diploma in 1945 he started working in a Pharmaceutical concern in the city as a ^chemist. However, his urge for art led him to devote every moment of his time outside the factory hours to read, listen to music and to draw. He writes "Those long years of service were both a boon and a frustration. Whereas they afforded me a means of livelihood, they were frustrating because I could not develop an interest in chemistry. In fact my interest in art was doubled, with the result that I was neither a good chemist nor a full-fledged artist".³³ In such state of mind he tried painting but discovered soon that he had no feeling for colour and needed more resistant material to express himself. Fortunately around the same period he came across the autobiography of Jacob Epstein and a book on the sculptures of Henry Moore and these had a profound effect upon him. At about the same time he met N.G. Pansare in a book-stall by chance. This casual meeting proved to be a significant one in

his career as a sculptor because Pansare encouraged him to exhibit his sculpture at the annual exhibition of Bombay Art Society, where he exhibited his early attempts in wood-carving. In 1950 he won his first award in the career as a sculptor (Bronze Medal) and then started a long chain of awards including the Governor's Prize by Bombay Art Society and the Gold Medal of the Indian Sculptors Association which confirmed his self-confidence. At last in 1959 he gave up his job to work as a full-fledge sculptor.

His early works were carved in wood and marble, conceived in stylised forms. His wooden sculpture 'Mother and Twins' exhibited in B.A.S's exhibition in 1949-50 had a high polish and its convex and concave planes revealed the influence of the sculptures of Moore. The patterns of its grains helped in enhancing the curves of the volumes. His another sculpture 'Combat' exhibited in the year 1952, with its entwined figures and emphasis on the weight of the bodies reminded the sculpture of Epstein (viz! Jacob and the angel' by Epstein³³). His early works in wood and marble displayed a unique integration between a literary idea and its highly personal transformation in visual plastic form. His sculptures of this period bring out the deeply felt concepts and the kind of despair going on in his imagination. His 'Oedipus' in pink marble and 'Judas' in wood are the characteristic examples. He has compared Judas to Brutus. Both were the victims of the conflicts within their minds which brought them self-destruction. About his 'Judas' he says, "I chose Judas because he till today symbolizes mankind in all his power to think, doubt, Judge and decide....."³⁴ Judas

is in profound thought, one hand gripping his hollow cheeks, his deep-set eyes brooding, contemplating his act. His head is firm. He rests on one foot, yet the other foot seems to compel him to walk to his doom.... the grains of wood further express his torment; the agony which finally destroyed him. Davierwala's works thus symbolise the human-being in his eternal doubts and beliefs, the man at cross-roads. He says, "To those few who have some understanding of my work; I have revealed universal loneliness of man".³⁵ His sculptures in metal restricted to modest size followed soon. This phase was marked by a new aspect in his sculptures, which led towards abstraction. These suggested a full understanding of human and animal anatomy and how it can be stylised. The components of human form were separated and through the use of exaggeration and sometimes distortion they were re-assembled. His 'Leda and Swan' and 'Falling Man' (1962) (Plate 80; fig.197) are the fine examples of this style. The figures of these sculptures had a character of joints similar to the limbs of insects which suggest the capacity of movement. The reasons for the emergence of these qualities are found in Davierwala's own statement about his sculptures.³⁶ Because he did not have any formal training, and ventured in the field of sculpture straightaway through carving, he was not well-versed in modelling. When he started using metal for his sculpture, this became a problem. The absence of art-foundries in Bombay was also another handicap. His knowledge of woodcarving solve his problem here. He carved out his form in a very soft wood called 'Sivern', and to avoid the undercuts, he cut this form into sections, each

sections having no undercuts. These sections were cast in metal by an industrial foundry. He did the finishing of these cast forms by his own hands and welded them according to the original idea in wood. This was comparatively cheaper and convenient (as it could be cast in a small foundry) but had the disadvantage of exposed welded joints.

After this an interesting factor entered in his expression. It had in Jaya Appaswami's words, a "Preoccupation with lightness and flight".³⁷ Significant works of this phase include the trilogy composed of "Thunder Bird" (1964) (Plate 87; fig.198), 'Meghdoot' (1964) and 'Storm King' (1972). These suggested creatures poised for flight or commanding the wind. As Dnyaneshwar^a Nadkarni puts it, it combines 'strength with delicacy a feeling of aerial weightlessness with weight and solidity'...³⁸ In his sculpture 'Thunder Bird' he has assembled small abstract shapes derived from the forms of Bird's feathers or wings and the total result is one of the lightness and indicating the moment before action as in the famous Greek statue of the Discus Thrower or Michaelangelo's David; because of this quality it displays the potential of immense energy. His other works of this period are various versions of Icarus which are also connected with the suggestion of flight. About his sculptures of this^{period} Ratan Parimoo rightly describes ~~of this/quality-it-displays-the-potential-of~~ ^{that they} ".....are dynamic and overwhelming by frequent use of protruding thrusting forms jutting into space. Instead of applying found forms he fabricates separate parts out of metal sheets and rods which when put together create an interplay of angular, spiky contours straight lines, convex masses and voids".³⁹ This phase of his

sculpture can be roughly marked from 1962 to 1968. Towards the end of this period he began to prepare shapes which were more abstract and they were based on the conception of purity. He also used multi-media in executing these sculptures. His 'Genesis' (1967) and 'Galaxy' belong to this period.

In 1968 he was awarded the Rockefeller fellowship which enabled him to visit America but this visit did not change his style. However, as he said, he had evolved certain direction in his sculptural constructions and in New York, he found that his "style was confirmed". Nevertheless certain forms became more geometrical, more machine-like because that is America. This is the basic difference between America and India".³⁸ He was also impressed by the finished look of the American sculpture, its precision and mechanised aspect. His sculpture in 1969, like 'Break through' (1969) 'Study in light and colour' (1968), 'The Great Flame' (1969). He also made use of magnets skillfully in some of his works like "Animated suspension" (1970) which expressed utter sophistication with combination of simplicity of form and grandeur of conception.

"There is undoubtedly a miraculous new dazzle of genius about the works of his post-American period.....Davierwala seems to be saturated with his American experience and at the height of his cerebral power" says Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni.⁴⁰ His sculptures now were of small size, may be due to his ill health (he had been advised by his doctor not to lift heavy weight and avoid exertion). His choice of light material in last phase and smaller sizes and simplicity of form was the solution to work until the last. But

these added beauty ^{and} ~~of~~ ^{to his} grandeur/works. He was not one to give up easily. Even in the last days he kept himself busy with sketches in his large-sized sketch-book and alongside were written premonitions of death expressed in very touching language. Gieve Patel was very right in his remark in 1971, "he is the only sculptor here to have produced a body of work over the years that is consistent in authenticity and understanding".⁴¹

Without mentioning

^ Piloo Pochkhanawala our survey of the contemporary sculpture will not be complete. Piloo was born in 1923 and spent her childhood at Zanzibar. She had a college education at Bombay and got a bachelor's degree in Commerce. She started her career as an advertising designer and designed exhibitions for advertising agencies. Her visit to Europe in this connection and subsequently to the museums brought her into contact with the works of the wellknown sculptors of Europe and America. She was very much influenced by the works of Picasso, David Smith, Alexander Calder and Henry Moore particularly. She was fascinated by the vitality and the formal vigour expressed in their work.

After her return, an urge to carry out some experiment in the field of sculpture lead Piloo to handle various materials for it. She did not have any initial training for this and so met Pansare, the renowned ⁴² sculptor of the time, who guided her and encouraged her to use freely any kind of material which she wanted to explore. He also advised her to start from the theme which had deeply impressed her mind.

Piloo started with a series of versions of a seated woman as she felt that it was a symbol of the total acceptance of fatalism. In these figures she did not render the details of the face or the body but a simplified form of a seated figure with slightly inclined head expressing the quality of suffering and perserverence. Her early works express a strong linear rhythm. She experimented with materials like wood, stone, molten lead and cement. With these she also developed a discipline to prepare the drawings as a guide for her sculpture. She also resorted to carving, constructing and modelling.

She received the first recognition for her work in 1954 when she received a silver medal in Bombay Art Society ~~for her~~

and another silver medal of the All-India Sculptors' Association. This encouraged her to have her one-man shows in Bombay from 1955. In the same year she also won the first prize ~~for her sculpture~~ in the Bombay State Art Exhibition.

But soon she found that rather than any other materials the metal was far more stimulating so she learnt all the techniques concerning it, viz. welding, ^{rolling} ~~thing~~, cutting and weaving metal forms. Subsequently her sculptures now were more related to the assembling or building the structure rather than carving something out of the block. Piloo herself says, "to turn and build through the welding flame necessitates tense and concentrated ⁺ ~~al~~terness. I find this as the swiftest means of translating the idea into a sculptural reality....the discarded metal has inherent forms and shapes and often a single piece of scrap starts off a whole series

of ideas. This method of work gives me a lot of scope for creative experiment."⁴² Scrap/~~material~~ thus provided immense possibilities and variety of forms for the sculpture. From these she fabricated large-sized single figures with a suggestion of dance movements. Pileo's varied interests in theatre, drama, classical dance reflected in this way in her works. From her childhood her mind was repeatedly thinking about death as an inevitable element for a living being. Her series on 'Death/~~masks~~' are the result of the same. For these works she used masks in ceramics on ^athe background of steel. In the masks she successfully expressed the last moment when the person struggle for breath. The juxtaposition of the steel against the ceramic enhanced the effect. The 'Dying crow' (1962) similarly expresses the last moment which is full of agony and helplessness. The Death/~~mask~~ series "not only gives a hint of erosion but also stresses the duality of life!"⁴³

After her second visit to England this depression was wiped out by the meetings with eminent Western sculptors like Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Paolozzi etc. and the zeal for creation was again strengthened. She also found that thermocol/~~e~~ as an aid can help immensely for the metal casting. After return from Europe she tried to explore the qualities of thermocol fully for her metal-scapes. After much experimentation she developed a technique of her own to burn lines and textures in theromocol~~e~~ with a soldering rod. Sometimes she also uses a blade wherever it is necessary. The molten aluminium alloy reproduces all these textures very faithfully.

Piloo's exhibition of metal-scapes in 1974 included small metal sculptures but they suggested potential quality of vital force if enlarged in a bigger scale. Her awareness for textural quality of the surface becomes more revealing. Full exploitation of this quality of the material is seen in her 'sun-blast' and 'embryo'. In these she also used the juxtaposition of the plane sheet of metal with the textural portions. According to her own ideology, the plane, smooth surface suggests growth and rough ones indicate decay. And in this kind of treatment as Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni points out, "the concept is paralleled by the physical continuity of the two kinds of surfaces."⁴⁴

Her constant curiosity about the cycle of the life by recreation and death has been given an expression in her latest works. Her idea about the mystic continuity of life and growth on one side and death and erosion on the other gave rise to the sculptures like 'Time Cycle', 'Spark', 'Ascent'. She says that in the blooming of a bud is the inevitable factor of decline, and that 'Time is the best Sculptor' and is the essence of everything. This concept was dynamically expressed in her 'Embryo', 'Threshold', 'Unfolding', 'Erosion'. These not only give the evidences of her adventurous exploration but one finds it as S.V. Vasudev has remarked, "... reverberating to the distant reaches of mind, bringing into play the force and fury of the elements, accentuating the greater drama of the creative encirclement of Birth, Growth and Death and summoning the indestructible time cycle that envelop the universe at every turn of the wheel".⁴⁵

With the above ideology, another subject which was continuously dealt with by her was the love of sea. From her childhood when she stayed in the house near the seashore this affinity was developed in her mind. Her sea-scapes having the vertical forms assembled with comparatively smaller forms in between are fixed on a horizontal plane flat base. The effect of the interplay of tensions created by voids in the vertical forms is enhanced by the horizontality of the base as well as the subtle textures of the surface. Piloo sometimes uses skillfully the juxtaposition of the stones found in riverbeds which have fine polish and smooth surface, with the mechanomorphic forms of the metal as in her 'Atomic Couple' or in the 'Steel nest'. This gives fascinating results. Piloo's tendency to juxtapose contrasting types of forms is also revealed in her 'Ascent' or her '^{Storm}~~Storm~~ Swept', (Plate ⁸⁸~~91~~; fig. ²⁰⁰). Here the smooth metal planes are broken at places which create small triangular forms. These together with the thin wire forms are skillfully arranged to display effectively the feeling of the force of the destructive ^{Storm}~~storm~~. Piloo's drawings also need special mention. They have become more significant due to the dynamic force which is their inherent quality. The critic has rightly pointed out that, "The forceful strokes, the curvilinears and the thought provoking forms heave a strong impact. On an apparent level they may appear to be the basis of her sculptures. Actually, they proclaim their own raison d'etre".⁴⁶

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