

## **Chapter 7**

### **CONCLUSION**

The relation of art, artists and society is the focal point around which the present study revolves. There exists a reciprocal connection between the three, which has to be comprehended concurrently. Society needs art, and artists not only for enriching its culture, but also for the very development of humankind. This mutual relationship is consequently set beneath the sociological microscope and an effort has been made to comprehend the diverse nuances of the lives of the respondent artists. An artist is reliant in one way or another on other people around him/her and is enmeshed in a whole series of social relationships.

The making of the artist is a protracted process. Socio-cultural influences have played a central role here. Family, which includes parents, siblings and other extended relatives, emerges as a fundamental institution through which the process begins. The occupation of the parents especially the father did not become one of the parameters of the choice of occupation of the artist. Infact most of the parents did not belong to the artistic field. Nevertheless the consent or dissent of the father in some many ways acted as a catalyst in instigating the artistic instincts of the respondent artists. The

mother on the contrary, in case of majority of the artists does not appear to have any significant part in the artist's decision to pursue fine art as a career. However she does emerge as someone who inculcated and encouraged the spirit of creativity. The early upbringing with a creative atmosphere furthermore played a crucial role in the formative years of the artists. In their formative years most of the artists received encouragement from their parents but in case of some of the artists it was apparent that their parents who initially encouraged their interest in art later discouraged them when they realized that their child wanted to take it up as a career.

There was a gender dimension visible when it came to encouragement given by parents as majority of the female respondents received encouragement to pursue fine arts as compared to male artists. This may be partly due to the stereotypical image of a male who must engage in occupations that require physical and mental strength and fine arts even today is considered a soft career option. The economic instability in the profession of fine arts also reflects the parent's unwillingness to accept fine arts as a career for their child. There is also the expectation that education must immediately convert into money and hence even within the art profession, applied art or advertising was more acceptable to parents than

pursuing fine arts. On the whole there was acceptance of the career in fine arts than expected. Besides parents, siblings of the artists also contributed by providing support to artists in the various phases of their lives especially when they were struggling to earn a name. Even the school art teacher for some was instrumental in shaping their interest in art.

The respondents' interest in art was intensified with the entrance into an art institution. While a few of them succumbed initially to societal and parental pressures owing to which their artistic aspirations took backseat. This pressure usually hinged on their parent's deciding the appropriate education for them. Hence some of the artists entered into educational streams which was not their preference. However they later took up fine arts and pursued training in it. Artists were aware of the difficulties involved in their field and have undergone various struggles to establish themselves. It was evident that access to fine art institution proved to be a struggle for some of the artists.

The paramount struggle for male artists was the financial need. Lack of support from the parents and the resultant financial constraints emerge as the main struggle of the male artists. Female artists did not face this struggle

as they had the support of parents. The male artists in order to overcome this constraint appeared to have a symbiotic relationship, which functioned on the basis of mutual needs. The female artists had a separate set of professional struggles such as technique, style and creating uniqueness in their art similar to some of their male counterparts.

After the completion of the formal training the artist is exposed to the competitive world of art. Financial struggle emerges as the most arduous task in the beginning. Nearly all of the artists after passing out of an art college accepted commission work to sustain them selves; some even did commissioned work while being a student. Majority of the young artists are still struggling to establish themselves in the art circuit; but these young artists are hopeful that they can at least survive on the income they get through sales in exhibitions or through the contracts they have with art galleries.

The fine artist's appearance into the professional art world is usually after the artist displays paintings in his/her first exhibition. This first exhibition is indicative of the fact that the artist has 'arrived'. The success or failure of the exhibition decides the artist's future. The success is often

measured in terms of the number of paintings sold at the expected price. Success for some artists may mean appreciation and large viewership apart from the sale of paintings; while failure would refer to not meeting with either of these expected outcomes of the exhibition.

The artists seek inspiration and motivation to create art from numerous aspects in and around them. The artists are motivated by their surroundings social, cultural and geographical as well. Social surroundings have more influence on the art of the artist's, as they are a part of their daily experiences. Social issues are one of the major themes of the artwork of number of the artists. Anything that moves the artists or appeals to their artistic sense becomes their motivation for creation. The other thing that inspired them was that, for the artists, painting is a desire, a need, an urge, or a drive to communicate and express. For some it is like meditation or doing '*riyaz*' (practice). It is more of a psychological satisfaction that they gain by giving this passion an expression. The need to earn a living also at times motivated them to create. The artist's personal experiences in life, their frustrations, joys and happiness inspire them to paint. Appreciation from society becomes an inspiration to create more art. For the younger group, fame, competition or even demand from art galleries is motivating to

produce artwork. Besides societal appreciation that is the non-tangible element, more corporeal elements such as art galleries also work as a catalyst. The younger artists mentioned that demand from art galleries gives tremendous motivation partly because of the financial returns that they can hope for in the immediate future. It was evident from the responses of the artists belonging to the three different groups that age indicates development in an individual's career, and with each successive stage in the career, occupational socialization becomes more extensive. Women artist are affected by personal experiences like change in their physical and mental constructs. The physical changes are visibly the life stages of adolescence, marriage and motherhood, which are reflected in their artworks.

The visibility and status of women artists indicates that though on surface there are no apparent discriminatory issues, yet there are concealed social interfaces that are indicative of the fact that the field of fine arts is not free from the traditional social conjunctions of patriarchy. The women artists were encouraged by their parents to undertake fine art as their career option. However very few women actually have been able to become completely committed fine artists. The trend is visible cutting across the three generations. Those of them who are practicing are more so doing it because

they have the cooperation of their male counterparts who usually are their husbands. However there are exceptional women artists who are able to carve out a niche for themselves in the male domain. There are women artists who have successfully managed their domestic responsibilities along with their pursuit of paintings. The older generations of women artists have established themselves, though with lesser opulence than their partners. Amongst the middle order of women artists most of them are dynamic and have been able to create their niche in the art world. The younger generations of women artists are in the process of establishing themselves, though apparently most of them lacked the drive of their male counterparts. These male artists appear to face more struggles, also seem to be more self-motivated.

The art created by the artists has to reach the wider art public and the art galleries are a major component that connects the artist and his art with the society. They become the centers for social interaction between art, artists and society. For the artists, art galleries perform dual role i.e. they emerge as a venue for the public display of his/her creation, which reaches out to the society at large regardless of any social barriers. Secondly, the art gallery operates as an intermediary and reduces need to find prospective

buyers for paintings. In other words, art galleries act as a market for their paintings. Art galleries also have additional valuable role to play that of building a network of buyers, and for this they have to undertake promotional activities and publicize their exhibitions to general audience and specifically to their buyers and collectors.

Thus art galleries emerge as the core to the whole activity of art. They operate through a distinctive system, which becomes idiosyncratic of the art world. The sale of the paintings requires business acumen, which is generally not associated as an aptitude of the artists. Therefore artists depend upon art galleries to arrange for the display. There are various ways through which this system operates. The method is when the artist approaches the art gallery owners with his portfolio and they, after looking at it, take the decision whether to exhibit or not in their gallery. If satisfied the artist then is given a slot in the art gallery as and when the gallery is free. Sometimes the artists might also be invited by the art gallery owners to exhibit their artworks, which could be in line with the fixed theme. In some cases artists might also be asked to exhibit in groups.



Another means of getting art works displayed is when the artist and the gallery owners sign a contract whereby the artist would receive a stipend during the contract period and the art gallery acquires a monopoly of selling the artwork that would be created by the artists. When the paintings are sold later, the artists might receive a portion of the profit from the sale of his/her artwork as determined by the artists and the art gallery owners. The other way is that the artists book the gallery and display their work in the gallery and for that they usually have to pay thirty to fifty percent of the sale amount to the gallery owners as commission. Therefore gallery owners become the key benefactor in the deal along with the artists.

Finally, the onus is on the art galleries to carry forward their side of the bargain i.e. to prepare for exhibition. The art galleries have series of functions that they perform that includes fashioning glossy catalogues of the artworks, publicizing the exhibition and the eventual display of artwork. The ambiance of the art galleries is often created attractively so as to give art audience a theatrical experience.

The other important elements of the art world are art critics and the media. The role of the art critic has evolved overtime and it becomes an

essential part of the art world. Today art critic analyzes, evaluates, or judges the artworks. This is done so as to give words to the paintings for a better understanding by the society. Both artists and the wider society usually value their opinions. However, the career of the artists is hinged on the opinions of the art critics does not hold true. Sometimes artists also gain from their judgments. At times they become the emissary of artists as they express in words what the artist has depicted on canvas. They basically act as a conduit between society and the artist. In so doing the art critic have a definite and specific function in the art world.

According to artists of Baroda, media does not assign the desirable attention to the art and the artists. Yet its role cannot be ignored, as it is an important component of the art world. In the media savvy world of today, younger artists have felt it beneficial to maintain good relations with them. Further younger artists are very media conscious and believe that it is one of the ways through which they can become known and famous in the society. The present scenario shows that media is an important means of not only popularizing art but it is also a vehicle of promoting a culture in society that would enable more number of people to appreciate art.

The other vital component of the art world without whom the exercise of exhibiting would be futile is the art audience. The art audience forms a very vital and critical section of the society. There is a substantial relationship that is visible, which is intimate as well as perfunctory. This relationship has various facets that have brought the three elements of art, artist and society to a confluence. The needs are mutual and so are the benefits. One element cannot function without the other. The art audience is broadly divided into two categories, viewers and buyers. The number of the viewers is larger than the buyers, which indicates that the society values the aesthetic appeal of fine art. For the artist the importance of the viewers is maintained in spite of it not being financially rewarding. The reason is that the art viewer's appreciation or criticism brings the artist in direct contact with the reception of his art. The art viewers who visit the art galleries on the other hand are social networking. Some of them usually belong to various creative groups and are keen to know about the contemporary art trend. In many of the cases viewers personally know the artist. Students, family members, friends, neighbors, relatives, teachers and contemporaries of the artists are the major groups that visit the art galleries. They are there to either provide moral support to the artist or to learn and observe. Art viewers react to the paintings at several echelon whereby they may be

intellectually stimulated, emotionally touched, spiritually uplifted or even a combination of all three. They moreover react to the angst that an artist is able to create by juxtaposing their expectations with something out of the ordinary in beauty, form or subject. At the same time there are viewers who may not be able to relate to what they see, yet there is a sublime acceptance, which is expressed simply by their presence in the art galleries.

The art audiences being the substantial receivers of the art, the prospective buyers are the essential component among them. They are the ones who invest in the art and are responsible for making the artist into a 'brand name'. Recently the number of the buyers of art has increased due to the globalization of Indian economy, which has made Indian art accessible to the international market. The buyers consequently become an essential component in the whole set up. In fact they are the focal point of the entire art activity. The artists create art, but it would be of little value if it were just viewed. Along with the aesthetic appeal, the pecuniary stimulus to the artist also runs parallel. Therefore it is the buyers who with their demand for art have also become a motivating factor for the artists to create. The buyers acquire art for different reasons, some of which include the aesthetic appeal of the art or for interior or exterior adornments of their office and homes.

Above and beyond this, the buyers purchase art because it enhances their social status. Financially as well art becomes an asset that is measured to be a good investment. The elite, that is, the moneyed classes often are the expected buyers and art is more so the privilege of the richer section, and this in turn gives it flair of luxury.

The investment boom has led to a certain section of the buyers buying art on the recommendation of the gallery owners, dealers or sometimes artist friends. Thus their buying is without knowing the artwork or the artists. The art gallery owners themselves also hoard the artwork as an investment, till their protégé becomes famous enough to fetch a higher price. There is a concurrent point of discussion in the art circuits regarding the fact that generally the artist has no share in the resale of the paintings. Over this issue there is a friction that is visible between the artist and the secondary market operators.

The importance that is attached to buying and investment also tends to generate conflict between three components namely art, artist and the society. The artists create art but it remains a solitary activity, till it is viewed, commented, criticized or appreciated, and eventually invested in.

Explicitly art becomes collective activity. Thus art world through a variety of interwoven activities and collective social process creates the reputation of the artist. The enhanced reputation becomes a collaborative course of action to produce further art. The reputation of the artists is measured with their ability with the aid of art galleries to sell their artwork at a high price, which in turn hikes its reputation more. Conflict arises when the appeal of the artwork does not remain the only parameter and investment is made on the basis of the reputation of the artist. Investors want to buy the artwork of the artist, who is popular and reputed, and the artist once established has to produce according to the need of this demand and may have to even adhere to certain style of painting, thereby allowing to let go off the essence of art that is creativity. The choice is of course optional and not all the artist follow; but the younger artists are more disposed to this growing trend. The artist community which is numerically tiny is today gaining increasing visibility, which prior to 1980s was limited. This is mainly due to the art investment and media attention it has received. Further fine arts which seemed to be sacred or divorced from mundane concerns are today tied up with the expediency of money, commerce and investment.

The production approach propounded by Becker was chosen for the present study as it enabled a holistic understanding of the art world and has led to the significant understanding of the various processes in operation within the art world. In line with Becker's production approach, it is evident that artists directly or indirectly depend on the people and social structures who provide them support and these may include family, friends, teachers, art critics, art dealers, art gallery system, buyers, systems of patronage and the art audience. The artists and their relations to these social structures may range from simple, direct relations to relations of great complexity that involve intermediaries and networks. Thus there is a dense web of connections among the various elements within the art world.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Every study has certain limitations. This study has its own limitations, as it is a research in social sciences. The nature of the study design was to unravel on the basis of the responses of the artists the relation between art, artists and society. This implied that the quality of data depended on the extent to which the artist was willing to share varied information including sensitive information about personal life. Certain features of artists' life were not forthcoming, as the focus of the research was not on the esoteric aspects of the artist's lives.

The second aspect is that the attempt to quantify certain aspects such as creativity with reference to sociology may have been found wanting. The responses have been superimposed into categories, even though some of them cannot be categorized into watertight compartments.

Third limitation comes from the fact that the study was conducted in a small city like Baroda, as compared to cities like Mumbai and Delhi, some information may have not emerged which could have added to the already existing data.



Another limitation was that though the tool was a semi-structured interview schedule it became more like an interview guide as the responses of the artists determined the flow of the interview. Further, the data which emerged was more of qualitative nature.

In the early stage of research, i.e. during the pilot study, data with reference to income was not forthcoming, as artists have no regular standardized income. It became problematical to categorize artists' income and later formulate it into definite income groups. To resolve the issue their income groups were avoided. The class of the artist wherever mentioned was on the basis of the artists own perceptions of their class.