

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Art in all its categories and forms is considered an essential symbol of human achievement and some of its creators are ranked among the most celebrated citizens. Generally today the artists enjoy high prestige and esteem and are viewed as a relatively small, esoteric group living within their own world. Some artists are idol worshipped and a few have even become icons of the culture. However, artists have also been targets of criticism, envy and wrath. Contemporary world, more than ever in the last decade or so is witnessing commercialization of art and has created a boom for art market especially in the visual arts. What is the relation between society and the creators of art? Even if art is an individual activity, is it not largely of social origin? Is the distinction between popular art and fine art pronounced? Are the audiences for fine arts drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds or do they come from particular groups? These and many such questions could be answered adequately if we examine them sociologically. Art and artists are a part of the societal environs and it is their dialectical influence, which creates the context of analyzing art, artists and society. Therefore art can be used as one of the parameters to broaden our

insights of society. Some would say looking at art is an excellent way of looking at society.

Art is about communicating a range of ideas, thoughts, and impressions through a specific medium. Art can be displayed in museums, galleries, sculpture parks, public spaces, and even in our own homes. Artists use a variety of methods and a wide assortment of materials, including oils, watercolors, acrylics, pastels, pencils, pen and ink, plaster, clay, marble, and even objects they find in the street. With them the artists create unique and highly personal visions that sometime reflect the world we see around us, and sometimes propose alternative ways of seeing and understanding this world. Artists may also be hired to work on commission for painting someone's portrait, creating a painting for exclusive spaces or to make sculptures to decorate a home or public place, or creating art works for displaying in art galleries.

Art has served many religious, political and social functions, both to maintain structures and to bring about the changes right from the prehistoric to the most contemporary society. Art reflects a worldview; it tells us about the past and the present and at times may even show us the future. From the

cave paintings of Alta Mira¹ to the fascinating paintings of Picasso to those of contemporary Indian artist, M.F.Husain, are all reflections of man's exploration of the world around him. The depictions in art are very much societal. It is a truism to state that works of art reflect and are affected by various socio-economic, political, familial, religious and educational institutions.

The relationship between a particular society and its various forms of art have been discussed and analyzed by many philosophers, historians, and theologians in the past but sociological perspective in the study of art is relatively recent. It may be because sociology as a discipline is also recent. Early art-historical writing had a strong sociological character. But in the Middle Ages most writings and discourses about issues regarded as social – the family, morality, and polity was integrated with theological discourse as a part of the religious sphere. It was only with the Renaissance and Reformation that secularization of thought made progress.

¹ Cave near Santander, northern Spain, famous for its magnificent pre-historic paintings and engravings. The paintings, dating to 14,000 – 12,000 BC, were first described in 1889. Altamira cave's roof is covered with paintings, chiefly of bison, in vivid red, black, and violet. Other figures, in a simpler style, include wild boars, horses, and a hind, as well as eight engraved anthropomorphic figures and various handprints and hand outlines. Engraved artifacts and other material remains suggest that the site may have been a centre for seasonal gatherings. (Britannica Ready Reference Encyclopedia, 2005:67; New Delhi)

Globally, sociological interest in art is more recent to middle of the 20th century. It was in the early nineteen fifties that a separate session on the sociology of art was included in the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association; and thereafter research in this field of sociology gained impetus. It is documented that until nineteen seventies, sociologists only showed a marginal interest in arts. The term 'Sociology of art' was indexed in the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences in 1968. It is now a well-established 'sub-discipline' of sociology. Within a few decades, the field has produced its own 'classics', and has fostered professional associations and regular conferences. Since nineteen seventies Sociology of art as an area of research formalized and developed being more pronounced both in terms of the European context both in theory and research. The European scholars developed interest in understanding the relation between art and society much earlier than their counterparts in America.

In India, from the early twentieth century art historians, archaeologists, Indologists and scholars carried out interpretation of Indian art that led to better understanding of Indian art. While there are a number of works globally, in India attempts by sociologists to explore arts were

sporadic. The earliest endeavor was by Radhakamal Mukherjee (1948) and D.P. Mukherji (1947, 1958); and more recent researches were those of O.P.Joshi (1985), Vinayak Purohit (1988). Their works are discussed in a later section.

The present study on visual artists (painters and graphic artists²) views artists as a community engaged in the pursuit of their profession – creative painting and producing art works. The focus of the study is on the network of relations, which the artist has with family, friends, art teachers and the art related world comprising of art galleries, art critics, media and the global economy. Furthermore, sociology of art acknowledges the creativity, the inborn talent, the trained skill and special capacities of these individuals who are called artists. The purpose of this study is to understand and look for ways in which social factors interact with creator and his creations which give a comprehensive view of sociological perspective of art and artists.

² Graphic artist creates graphic art which essentially refers to drawing rather than a painting. The term includes everything from the simple sketch to all types of printmaking and typography.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the present study is to broadly examine the relationship between art, artists and society focusing on contemporary fine artists of Baroda city, in Gujarat state of India.

The specific objectives of the study are to understand:

- 1) The world of the creator i.e. artist by
 - (i) examining the social background of the artist
 - (ii) understanding the role of parents, friends and teachers
 - (iii) understanding the artists' image, and status in society
 - (iv) understanding the motivations, inspirations and struggles of the artists
- 2) The role of the institutions by
 - (i) examining the role of art school and formal training in art
 - (ii) comprehending the role of art critics, art galleries, media in the art world
- 3) The world of the consumer by
 - (i) examining the nature of relation between art audience and art
 - (ii) understanding the relationship between the artist, art audience and buyers

All these would be understood in terms of socio-economic, socio- cultural and socio-political context.

Raison d'être

Baroda artists and their art enjoy an international reputation. The teachers and students of this Faculty have had a huge impact in the world of art both nationally and internationally. However until now there has been no sociological study on them and the present attempt is to fill this lacuna. This study explores the relationship between art, artists and society belonging to Baroda through a sociological lens. Besides, whatever research, has been done in the field has focused exclusively on the most visible and successful artists. However the present research has tried to include representations from artists belonging to the young, middle and senior groups. The study has also included women artists and their voices that are generally overlooked and unheard. This investigation facilitates better understanding of the various stages that the artist undergoes to finally 'arrive' in the art world. In addition to popular and successful artists, the focus is also on upcoming as well as new entrants into the profession of fine arts. It is an attempt to understand the social processes of cooperation, competition, conciliation and conflict within the art world.

ART, ARTIST, SOCIETY - *Conceptual Deliberations*

ART

According to Hauser 'Art is always concerned with altering life. Without the feeling that the world is, as Van Gogh said, "an unfinished sketch" there would be little art at all' (1982:11). There is no consensus amongst scholars as to what art is? In layman's world, the word 'art' is widely used to refer to any kind of activity from cooking to hairdressing. The word 'art' is derived from the Latin word '*ars*' meaning 'skill'. In the twentieth century, debates arose over the definition of art, and by the turn of the twenty first century, a variety of new media (video or installation art) further challenged traditional definitions of art. In fact art challenges precise definition because it has varied forms. Art involves creation, making something new, which implies 'calling into existence of what previously had no form or feature' (Read 1958:113). Creativity and aesthetics are usually the elements that are associated with art. 'As commonly acknowledged, the creative impulse is the primary force in all the arts. The musician is inspired to create things that are good to hear; the writer is inspired to create things that are good to read. The painter, the sculptor, and the craftsman are inspired to create things that are good to see' (Mago 2000:1). Visually pleasing forms in the art language are referred to as aesthetic forms.

Aesthetics is the theoretical study of beauty, which has been associated with arts especially the fine arts. Aestheticism as a movement began in the nineteenth century as a reaction to prevailing utilitarian social philosophies. It brought forth the belief that the work of art need not have any moral, political, educational or religious use beyond its existence as a beautiful object. In contrast to aesthetic specialists, social scientists start from the premise that art should be contextualized, in terms of place and time in a general sense, and more specifically, in terms of institutional structures, recruitment norms, professional training, reward, and patronage or other support. Sociologists direct attention to the relation of the artists and their art to political institutions, ideologies, and other extra aesthetic considerations. (Peterson 1976)

Art in its broader meaning involves both skill and creative imagination in a musical, literary, visual or performance context. Art provides the person who creates it and the people who receive it with an experience that might be aesthetic, intellectual, educational, informative, and cognitive or a combination of these qualities.³ Herbert Read (1956) stated that art must be recognized as the most certain mode of expression which

³ "Art", Microsoft® Encarta® online Encyclopedia 2000 <http://encarta.msn.com> ©1997-2000 Microsoft corporation. Accessed on 12th January, 2002

humankind has achieved. The creative arts denotes a collection of disciplines whose chief purpose is, compelled by a personal drive, to create material works which reflect or echo a message, mood, and language for the viewer to interpret. The visual arts in particular painting, sculpture, drawing, conceptual art and installation art are regarded as 'Fine arts', whereas furniture, industrial design, graphic design and others come under the umbrella of 'applied art'. Within each art form, a wide range of genres may exist. For instance, a painting may be a still life, a portrait, a landscape or compositional.⁴

Fine Arts and Popular Arts

The Renaissance or cultural rebirth which occurred in Europe, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought about a change in the field of art and most significantly has been crucial for the differentiation of 'arts' from 'crafts'. This led to the emergence of the term 'Fine Arts', which is the translation of the French term 'beaux arts'. It gave a new connotation which broadened the parameters of art and included in its fold various other features such as painting, sculpture, music, poetry and architecture. All these elements were concerned with beauty or which appealed to certain sections

⁴ Terms like portrait and landscape have become part of printing lexicon with computers becoming part of every day life.

of the society who were considered as having exquisite elevated taste. This taste still lingers in the contemporary society as well.

Renaissance witnessed another major impact on arts. It created a distinction between Applied and Fine Art. Before Renaissance Fine Arts were not explicitly named, nor distinctly recognized. The use of the term 'Fine Arts' is closely bound up with the history of academics of art, which is usually academics of 'Fine Art' (Mago 2000). Most forms of art today fall under two main categories - Fine Arts and Applied Arts. These two forms of Arts have a certain distinctions, Fine arts originally referred to arts, which have little or no practical function and are valued in terms of the visual pleasure they provide or their success in communicating ideas or feelings. Applied arts have more practical functions and are more often used to describe decorative and visually pleasing functional objects. Artists who cater to applied arts or crafts are usually referred to as commercial artists, designers, artisans or crafts people. The term commercial art is sometimes used instead of applied art in which art products are produced to promote commerce.

According to some sociologists the term 'art' and related terms such as 'artworks' are historical inventions, which were initially used centuries ago. Sociologists are skeptical of the distinction of high or low cultural forms, as for them all categories and forms of classifications are products of social fabrications (Inglis and Hughson 2005). The terms 'popular culture' and 'mass culture' are supposedly opposing to 'art'. The American critic Clement Greenberg divided the world of cultural objects up into two categories – 'avant-garde art' which was made by individuals possessed of vision and thoughtfulness; and on the other side was 'kitsch', a term which describes mass culture. For Greenberg 'kitsch' is mechanical and it operates by formulas (Inglis and Hughson 2005 : 13). These days the distinction between popular and fine arts is distinct but at the same time there is a continuous interplay among them.

ARTIST

In order to comprehend art within the social constructs it is imperative to also understand the artist. Till recently the dominant perception of the artist, especially in the west, was that an artist is an 'isolated creator' who creates art which is a unique expression of his aesthetic vision. In common parlance an artist is someone who creates something – music, poetry, dance,

painting, sculptures and so forth. 'A work of art is the expression of a complex ideas stimulated by the artists' perception and experience. The inspiration is influenced by the setting, era, philosophy, and activity which determine the quality of life around the artist' (Kingston 1980 : 16).

Artist is a descriptive term applied to a person who engages in an activity deemed to be an art. The artist is said to blend his/her inner feelings and ideas with creative energies and art techniques to express and communicate through chosen medium. It is also used in a qualitative sense of a person being creative in, innovative in, or adept at, an artistic practice. Artists may be unique, creative people; however they are influenced by the socio-cultural context in which they live. Even the choice to be an artist can be culturally influenced. Artists are also considered as harbinger of social change.

SOCIETY

Society refers to a group of people who share a common culture, occupy a particular territorial area, and consider that they constitute a unified and distinct entity. Both art and artist are interacting within a social milieu. The society lays the foundation for the interaction between art, artists and

the social environment. When the artist is painting, it is an individual activity; and when it is ready for display it becomes collective engagement. An artist creates an artwork and displays it to the art audience, which reacts to it by viewing, buying, patronizing and at times investing in it. Society's involvement does not start and end there but in fact an artist is greatly influenced by various factors and elements of society. Art and the artists being the components of society, sociological perspectives about them are immensely significant; and it is here that the field of sociology of art can provide the much-needed approach.

SOCIOLOGY OF ART

Sociology as a field has broadened in the past few decades and sociological perspective to study arts has also gained momentum. Sociological study of art basically addresses the ways in which social relations and institutions impact upon the creation, distribution and appreciation of art works.

Sociology of art is an area of sociological analysis, which includes within its compass a concern with exploring the visual arts, music, theater, literature and cinema. Such analysis can focus on artists and their

socialization, the patrons of art- rulers, museums, publishers, dealers and their particular values and interests; also the broad publics or audiences, any of the class values, broad cultural themes or the changing socio-economic conditions that in various ways support or influence the forms of artistic expressions (Jary and Jary 1991: 604).

Operational definitions

ART

In this study, art would refer to the act and process of making artworks (paintings and graphic art), which require skill and creative imagination especially in visual context. It would include only the original artwork. The study does not include sculpture, murals, architecture, music, performing arts and literature.

A painting refers to the expression of ideas, emotions and experiences with certain aesthetic qualities, in a two-dimensional visual language on a flat surface such as paper or canvas. The elements of this language –its shapes, lines, color, tones and textures are used in various ways to produce sensations of volume, space, movement and light on a flat surface. Graphic art is any artwork that is essentially a drawing and includes a simple sketch

to all types of printmaking. Printmaking refers to the technique of making prints, using one of the several media available to the print maker. The three basic print making processes are: (i) Relief, which includes woodcuts and engraving, metal cut and etching and linocut. (ii) Intaglio, which includes dry point, engraving, etching, mezzotint and aquatints. (iii) Lithography, which is a Plano graphic process of printmaking where the print is taken from a flat surface

ARTISTS

In the present study, artists refer to, the painters (Fine artists) of contemporary Indian art world, who are practicing their fine art. These artists are creative painters who have undergone a formal art education in an art college and exhibit their paintings in art galleries on a regular basis. It excludes those fine artists who have turned into commercial artists and are not pursuing fine arts. For the purposes of identifying the universe we chose artists who were residing in Baroda during the period of data collection.

SOCIETY

In this study, society would refer to the artists' family, friends, teachers and peers who in some way may be responsible in influencing and

socializing the artist. It also refers to the art related public i.e. art gallery visitors, art buyers, art connoisseurs, art gallery owners, dealers, art critic and the print and visual media. Finally, it refers to the broader society as well which is also the larger group that influences all the institutions and elements encompassed within it. Thus it encompasses everything, which influences the art and the artist.

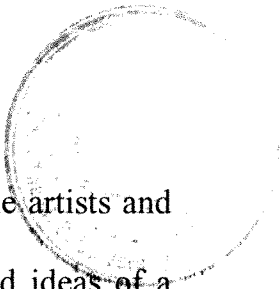
A Glimpse into the past

To understand the historical context of art in India a brief sketch of artists of ancient India is drawn here. India has witnessed a great number of events and foreign invasions, which have influenced its culture but prior to these, history has shown that from early date the natives had profound creative spirit. In fact art was a part of everyday life in ancient India. Though systematic and chronological description of the artist in ancient India is not evident, there are references to the artist in ancient literary texts based on which the eminence of the artist and art in ancient times can be gauged. In ancient India, art was considered as a path for realization of the 'ultimate reality' *moksa*. According to Coomaraswamy 'the conscious aim of Indian art is the portrayal of divinity' (1908:7). Indian art in ancient times was essentially religious. The arts, poetry, drama, painting, sculpture and music were all considered sacrosanct and spiritual. In fact while performing '*yajna*' playing the '*vina*', singing (hymns) and even dancing were considered essential and sacred (Valimbe 1959:15-16). Such references connote sacredness and divinity to certain art forms practiced during specific occasions.

In a few literary sources it has been noted that 'The Artist (*shilpin*) in old India was not distinguished from the craftsman. His occupation was hereditary, and he was bound by convention and formula to an extent which limited the degree to which improvisation would be countenanced' (Winstedt 1967: 107). Thus, emphasizing, the restrictions that the artist may have had to confront during his creative outbursts. Further, at that time society was stratified and class distinctions were firmly grounded in ancient India. Both artists and artisans belonged to middle and lower groupings. According to Misra, Artists in ancient India were clubbed together in a social hierarchy into a general class of artisans called *silpin* engaged in various crafts. Thus art and craft though formed one homogenous category there is a reference to the various art and craft forms and their practitioners in the ancient literary text *Chitrasutra of the Vishnudharmottara* (Misra 1975). There are references made to the professional artist being revered, as the artist was described as a 'yogi' –lost in his art. *Vishnudharmottarapurana* also mentions the qualities and conduct that an artist requires to have such as he should be restrained, should wear immaculate apparel, should salute the holy ones, pronounce auspicious utterances, bow to the deity, sit facing the east and then start giving expression to his creativity. The painter was suppose to be bright, smiling,

carefree but with ennobling thoughts in his mind (Sivaramamurti 1978 a: 2). Another treatise, the '*kamasutra*' mentions paintings as one of the sixty four arts that a gentleman can indulge in while '*shilpratna*' mentions artists of high status being recognized and honored by the kings and nobles. Artists of caliber were invited to courts by kings and they also taught the art to princes and princesses. Though their social position was not very high their art was appreciated and patronized by kings. *Rajasekhara* in his '*kavyamimamsa*' mentions, how kings who were themselves learned and patrons of art would create an encouraging atmosphere for art and literature held assemblies of proficient artists, adjudging and rewarding them. In the assembly he mentions eminent poets, musicians, dancers, sculptors, painters and other masters of their profession. Art in ancient India flourished due to the patronage of the kings and nobles, in fact many of the kings were themselves artists, musicians and architects (Sivaramamurti 1978 b: 14). Thus there are glimpses of certain kinds of art and artists being revered, at the same time a distinct division between the artisan-craftsman and the artist is indeterminate.

Though they had a substantial social status yet the Indian artist did not create according to his individual preference. The ancient Indian tradition



did not appreciate a purely personal art. It was believed that the artists and the artisans were only giving shape, expressing the visions and ideas of a region or epoch. The traditional art of India was primarily a result of the collective efforts of unknown artists and craftsmen. The artistic expression was circumscribed by the religious and socio-cultural norms prevailing in the society at that time.

In India, it (*art*) is the statement of a racial experience, and serves the purposes of life, like daily bread. Indian art has always been produced in response to a demand: that kind of idealism which would glorify the artist who pursues a personal ideal of beauty and strives to express himself, and suffers or perishes for lack of patronage, would appear to Indian thought far more ridiculous or pitiable than heroic (Coomaraswamy 1966).

Such apparent references depict the collective nature of Indian art. The beginnings of individualism in Indian art are visible with the arrival of the Europeans on the Indian social scenario in the seventeenth century.

Schools of Art in India

Indian culture has been influenced by the western cultural trends and vice versa. India's cultural interaction increased with the west with the

advent of various European trading companies in the seventeenth century. The cultural influence of the British East India Company became evident when schools of art were established in India in the subsequent centuries. These schools of art imparted formal routine way of learning art in an organised manner especially using western techniques. The earliest school of art was in Poona, which was established by Scottish painter James Wales in 1790s. James Wales' premature death led to the closure of the school and for the next fifty years there were no art schools in India. 'The idea of establishing schools of art, bore fruit again when in 1850 a school of industries was organized by Dr.G. Buist, editor of Bombay Times, to teach the productions of Indian art-crafts' (Mago 1995 : 21). In 1850, 1854 and 1857 art-craft schools were started in Madras, Calcutta and Bombay respectively. These schools were started on experimental basis and were more of industrial art centers whose aim initially was to be efficient manufacturing units. These schools imparted art education on the line of the British Royal Academy of Art. The art school system in those times did not encourage creativity or innovativeness nor allowed experimentation. The art schools established were technical vocational institutions. Their aim was to produce mechanically the everyday objects with certain level of finish and appeal. In fact it was criticized for the typical model like approach that it

promoted. The Indian art students were merely imitating the styles and themes of the westerners thereby stifling the innovative and creative spirit that the artist is supposedly endowed with.

The rules of British Royal Academy of learning art were not completely amenable to some of the artists in India for they considered these rules as alien to India's cultural tradition and Indian aesthetics. Many of the early Indian artists were also inspired by the indigenous art traditions and their art reflected the fusion of traditional and western approach. 'From the 1920s, exciting experimental approaches were noticeable in the works of Rabindranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Jamini Roy and Amrita Sher-Gil. Jamini Roy, in fact, had anticipated the trend of seeking inspiration from folk-art (Kalighat Pata) as early as 1930s. This resurgence toward the indigenous aspects in art is termed as 'Revivalism' 1895-1910. The term 'Revivalism' meant the rebirth or return to traditional Indian culture. The movement took place in the eastern part of India, in Bengal between 1895-1910 because of several factors, among which the primary causes were the rebellion against Western influence as epitomized by the success of Raja Ravi Verma, known for his mythological paintings ,

and the discovery of the *Ajanta frescos*⁵ (Seth 2006). According to an eminent Art Historian and artist, Ratan Parimoo, a parallel indigenous portrayal of themes was noticeable in western India as well and these were prominently divergent from the typical Eurocentric themes in art.

The star painter of the late nineteenth century, however was Raja Ravi Verma ...'(Mago 1995:24). In 1881 Raja Ravi Verma, the painter was invited to Baroda State by the visionary and reformer Maharaja Sayajirao III of Baroda. Raja Ravi Verma had 'carved a niche for himself in the awakening of the modern and contemporary art movement that was taking shape at the dawn of the twentieth century' (Parimoo 1998: VII). Another important movement was taking shape in the year that India gained independence, as a handful of artists got together in Mumbai to form the Progressive Artists' group. The progressive artists had rejected the revivalist approach of Bengal School and even opposed the academic styles taught at the schools of art set up by British. The renowned Indian artist M.F.Husain was a member of this group, in his words '*I painted billboards and film posters for a living when I first came to Mumbai. I didn't know anyone in the city, but it didn't stop me from painting. In 1947, when I had my first*

⁵ A series of 28 caves excavated near the city of Aurangabad in Maharashtra. During the Gupta era these caves were decorated with wall paintings describing the Buddhist way of life. The pigments used for painting were extracted from mineral rock, powdered and mixed with glue to the plastered wall of the cave.

exhibition, I decided to give up my job and paint full-time. That's when F.N.Souza saw my work and invited me to join the Progressive Artists' Group. My early paintings were Impressionist, under the influence of the group.' (Husain 2005). Thus post independent India, witnessed a parallel movement taking shape in Mumbai and the Progressive Artists' Group were the pioneers of the modern art movement in India.

Art School of Baroda

In 1890 Kalabhavan (the name given to the school of art) was established in Baroda which emphasized on learning the industrial arts.⁶ 'The Kalabhavan in Baroda was also set up with the objective of advancing technology and technical education in conformity to the models of those days' (Sheikh 1990: 50). This Kalabhavan became the Faculty of Fine Arts in 1950 when the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda came into formal existence. The movement of contemporary art in Baroda was initiated with the creation of the Faculty of Fine Arts. The faculty having come into existence in the early years of independence reflected the spirit of independence, which was evident in the faculty's academic and cultural atmosphere.

⁶ The application of aesthetic sensibility to utilitarian objects.

Hansa Mehta who was then the Vice- Chancellor of the M.S.University of Baroda envisioned a liberal and conducive art atmosphere for the Faculty of Fine Arts. She invited many artists such as Markand Bhatt, V.P.Karmarkar, K.K.Hebar, Siavax Chavada, Ravishankar Raval, Somalal Shah and eminent Indologist Herman Goetz to contribute their expertise and provide a liberal art education to the students (Sheikh 1990 : 55)

The Fine Arts Faculty is considered a premier art institute in India and has global recognition. The contribution of the artists from the Baroda school of art to the contemporary India art has been path breaking; artists have been 'adventurous' and 'experimental' in their art. The first generation of teachers came from different parts of the country. They were trained in different traditions and possessed varied ideas about art and art teaching. This Faculty had a blend of elements from traditional and the western academic training, which was imparted to its students. Many artists and teachers from this faculty have successfully been able to bring to the foreground the traditional art practices, and even fused them with those from the west. This school has nurtured the creative spirit and promoted experimentation; hence it is considered as a culturally vibrant place not only in the city but also across the country. An interesting view regarding the

multicultural secular foundations of the faculty of fine arts is put forth by Sheikh,

Education in Gujarat, more particularly at the *Maharaja Sayajirao University (M.S.University)* in Baroda, was mainly in the hands of educationists who came from the Nagar Brahmin stock of administrators. Enlightened and progressive, they had led with the righteous assurance of those who believe they have the generic claim to mould the intelligentsia; their caste authority remained intact despite the pervasive Gandhianism...Its finest qualities got filtered through this ethos into a more progressive significance. As an amusing but not irrelevant aside, one might recount that Markand Bhatt, Bendre, Sankho Chaudhuri and K.G. Subramanyan, the four main protagonists at Baroda, had all married on the basis of their own choices, across caste, community and even religion. A multicultural secularism became quite the norm within the Faculty, and survived almost four decades (Sheikh 1990 : 58-59).

The Fine Arts Faculty came to be known as the 'Baroda school', basically referring to a particular figurative and narrative style in painting. There are divergent opinions on this. Some argue that it is simply an over generalized term imposed upon the faculty which pushes into the background various art trends, languages, styles and experimentations that several artists from Baroda have dealt with and made popular.