

Chapter 4

Beyond the Bengal School landscape artists

William Hodges (1744-97)

Landscape artist when he joined explorer James Cook's expeditions across the Pacific Ocean in the 1770s- a voyage that resulted in several landscapes of various Pacific islands, among them, famously, Tahiti.

Increased British political presence in India in the 18th century attracted a host of British painters and engravers in search of work, a situation made keener by a dwindling and nearly abysmal patronage for landscape artists in Britain. Hodges was the first to arrive, and for the next half century British artists continued to travel and paint the picturesque Indian landscape, the most notable of whom were the Daniells. Aided by Governor General Warren Hastings in Madras, Hodges received several private commissions as well as a subsidy from the East India Company. Hastings himself owned a number of works of Hodges, many now part of the Paul Mellon Collection. Hodges traveled widely in India, in particular up and down the river Ganga, and sketched places like Agra, Allahabad, Banaras and Lucknow, providing the first-ever visual depictions of India based on firsthand observation.

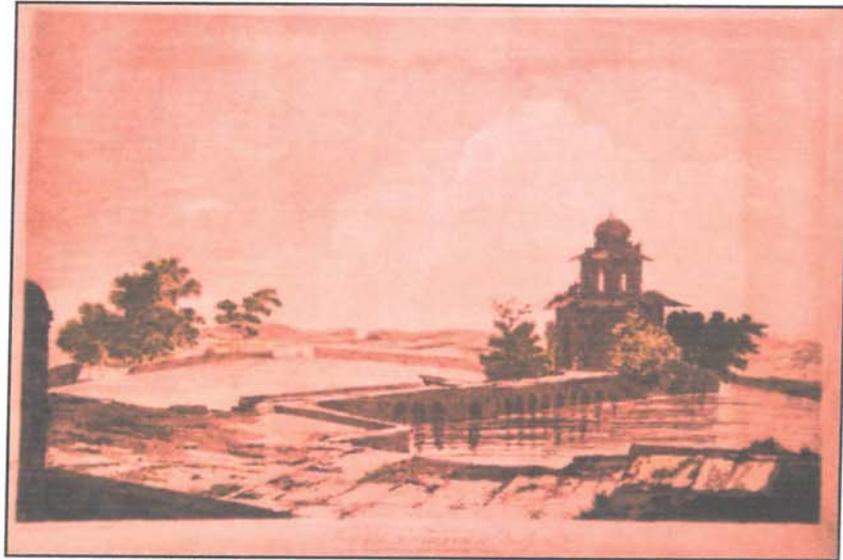


FIGURE 76 A view of the Manooleum at Etmadpoor, Handtinted etching and aquatint, 1787. Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

Upon his return to England, Hodges published a series of forty-eight aquatints under the title *Select Views of India*, the first such work that whetted British appetites for the exotic land, and triggered other such European efforts. Ten years after his return, he published *Travels in India, 1780...1783*, a fascinating account of his travels in India, accompanied by sketches. Feted as a landscape painter of great acclaim upon his return from India, Hodges was inducted into the prestigious Royal Academy, London, in 1789.

Thomas Daniell (1749-1840)

Thomas Daniell was born in Surrey to an inn-keeper. After doing odd jobs of bricklaying and painting at the Royal Academy, London, and exhibited from 1772-84 as many as thirty works there. Soon, gathering a fair reputation for himself as a painter and engraver, he traveled to India with his nephew, Daniell, under the aegis of the East India Company, to try his hand at the then market

for engravings and aquatints in the subcontinent. Excited by the possibility of travel and adventure, and exploring exotic flora, fauna and architecture, the Daniells left for Calcutta.

Over ten years, the Daniells traveled extensively across India, documenting diverse landscapes, architecture and ways of living; from Mughal monuments and snowcapped mountains in the north to the cave temples and hitherto unexplored jungles of the south. Thomas Daniell came to be known for his striking use of academic realism, establishing himself as a landscape painter in India.

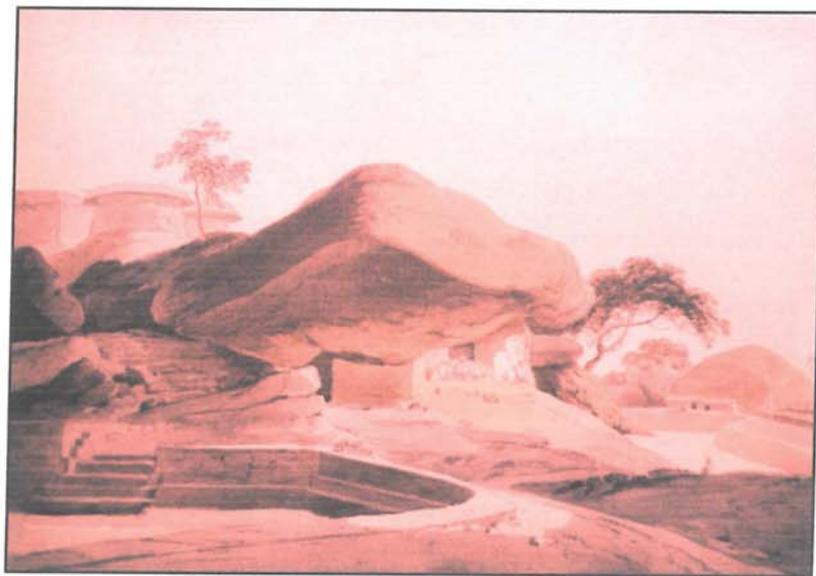


FIGURE 77FIGURE 71 Fort of Krishnagiri, watercolour on paper.
Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

Upon their return, the Daniells made aquatints and oil paintings from the material and drawings they had amassed; resulting in their collection of aquatints issued over six volumes, *Oriental Scenery*. this publication achieved great success, brought by colonial officials in India and the English back home,

for their ‘charming’ portrayal of the exotic East. Post his return to England, Thomas Daniell continued to exhibit at the Royal Academy and painted private commissions. His works, in no small measure, have contributed towards influencing European and colonial imagination of India.

William Parker (1774-1853)

Major William Neville Parker served in the Bengal Army at the turn of the 19th century, before retiring to England in 1807. His time in India was spent in extensive travels across Bengal, Bihar and North India. An amateur artist, Parker’s choice of themes – the Gangetic plains and plateau of Bengal and Bihar surrounded by natural bodies – exemplify certain characteristics of his self-styled landscape art. His works break the restriction of depicting a landscape in conventional style and speak a language of inner vitality. In addition to the natural beauty of the foreign land, he attempted to make an ethnographic documentation of the lives of the ordinary Indians he came across in his works.



FIGURE 78 Rajmahal, Bihar, watercolour on paper, c. 1800.
Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

Around the late 18th century, a painting style evolved that incorporated European art and adaptations of the Indian miniature style. The established style of paintings commissioned by the East India Company, these came to be known as Company Paintings and included an ethnographic documentation of the physical land as well as the lives and customs of the native people. Meant as souvenirs for the public back in Britain, several of these were painted by amateur artists, revealing stiff figures and ornamentation borrowed from the miniature style. Despite being another such amateur Company painter, Parker's paintings reveal a conscious continuity of typical European landscape art, perhaps in imitation of the masters. One of Parker's works, of the interior of the Fort at Agra, is in the collection of the India Office Library, London. The Parker family collection boasted of several important paintings on India, one of which was an important work of Thomas Daniell that William Parker acquired, *The Delhi Gate of the Fort of Agra*, exhibited at the Royal Academy, London, in 1808.

William Carpenter (1818-99)

William Carpenter relatively unknown among the nineteenth-century European artists who came to India, William Carpenter chiefly painted watercolours. With his father, the keeper of the British Museum and his mother, a portrait artist, William took to painting early and studied at the Royal Academy, London.

Carpenter arrived in India in 1850 following his brother Percy, who traveled to Singapore, Ceylon and India. Arriving in Bombay, he left for Poona where

his six-month stay is commemorated by paintings of the Maratha School and the Shaniwar Wada Palace. Carpenter traveled across India for six to seven years, painting scenes of Bombay, Kashmir, Amritsar's Golden Temple, Punjab, Afganistan, Indore and Rajasthan, in particular its Jain Dilwara Temples. Among his better-known paintings is the 1851 portrait of Indore's crown prince from the Holkar family. In 1856, months before the 1857 sepoy rebellion broke out against the British, Carpenter painted a watercolour of Prince Fakhruddin Mirza, eldest son of Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. This work, which he took back with him to England, brought him attention as the prince was killed when the British defeated the rebellion and executed the princes.



FIGURE 79 Parbutty (Parvati) near Poonah, watercolour on paper, 1850.
Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

Upon his return from India, Carpenter survived through doing illustrations for publications. *The Illustrated London News* featured news on India, and published black and white illustrations of Carpenter's India watercolours

from 1857-59. Apart from these, only a few of his works appeared in print and in exhibition. In 1881, the South Kensington Museum held a one-man exhibition of his paintings, featuring 275 works, all of which were brought by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Compared sometimes to George Chinnery, Carpenter received praise for his depiction of minute details as opposed to a scene's broader aspects, drawing the viewer's attention.

John Deschampa (19th Century)

A British army officer in the royal artillery, John Deschamps served in India and Ceylon for nine years. Drawn to the land, he drew and painted vivid landscapes of the places he was posted to. Upon his return to England his works were published in a volume, *Scenery Reminiscences of Ceylon* in 1845. Little is known about this obscure artist who is said to have chiefly painted watercolours. His renditions of the viewed landscape show a skilled employment of the translucent and opaque qualities of watercolours.

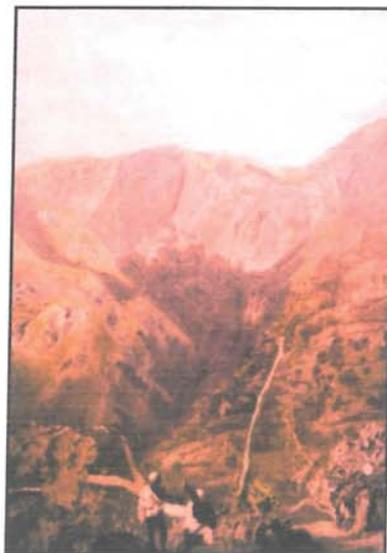


FIGURE 80 View of the Hills in the western ghats, watercolour on paper, c. 1830.
Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

While it isn't known whether he painted *plein-air* or not, his landscapes reveal a strong of perspective, volume and colour, making him a fine observer. His skill as a painter is evident in landscapes that are rendered to present the chosen locale as a panoramic vista, showing hills, deep valleys with overhanging cliffs and the vast sky above, with a nuanced rendering of light and shade.

Olinto Ghilardi (1848-1930)

Born in Italy, Olinto Ghilardi's contribution in shaping the course of the Indian art movement in the late 19th century is significant. He arrived at the Government School of Art, Calcutta, in 1886, teaching European art and arranging residences for prize-winning students of Indian art such as Rohini Kanta Nag and Shashi Hesh, in Calcutta. In positions of authority at the art school for a considerable period, he played a pivotal role in encouraging and giving form to the emerging Bengal School of art.

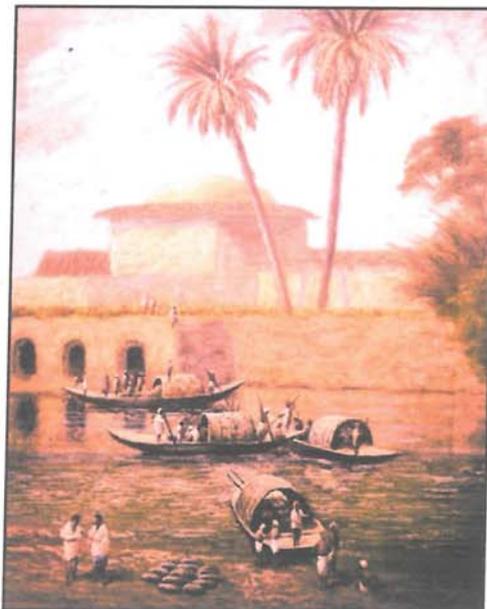


FIGURE 81 Untitled, Gouache, watercolour and pastel on paper, 1890's.
Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

Introducing European art to Calcutta, Ghilardi played a vital role as Abanindranath Tagore's mentor. Under him, Abanindranath learnt the techniques of using pastels, watercolour and gouache, mediums often seen in his works. Ghilardi was instrumental in the setting up of organisations like the Indian Association for the Promotion of Fine Arts, which sent several young students to study art in Italy, instead of England, promoting European styles other than academism. In 1905, he went back to Italy and continued to paint Indian themes and scenes, although no record in Italy alludes to his time in India. By 1911, Ghilardi was an active member of avant-garde group of artists, Gruppo Labronico that comprised of important contemporary Indian artists.

Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906)

Raja Ravi Varma's singular impact on Indian art is unparalleled by any artist. Largely self-taught, he began painting from observing court painters in his native Travancore, notably European portrait painter Theodore Jenson. Yet, he is probably the first Indian artist to have articulated Indian subject matter through naturalism and the use of oil paints, considered until then a European idiom, with brilliant mastery.

Despite the criticism he faced for his Orientalist approach and penchant for commercially-viable subject matter, his technique and impact on popular Indian imagination was tremendous. This was largely due to the printing press he established in the latter phase of his career, producing oleographs of his works. Gods and goddesses as he imagined them, along with mythological characters such as Sita, Shakuntala, Damayanti and Draupadi, entered popular

imagination and influenced Hindu iconography through his prints. Cinema too bore his strong influence, with early mythological films perpetuating his imagery.

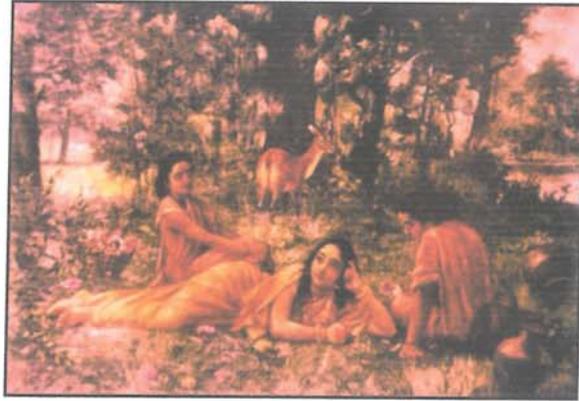


FIGURE 82 Shakuntala Patralekhan, oil on canvas, 1894. Collection: Private

Besides his paintings of deities, Ravi Varma is also known for his oil portraits, mostly of royalty and featuring women, but addressing the society of his times. The richness and tactility of his oils contributed to the sensuous depiction of the subjects. While his mythological paintings are theatrical in that they encapsulate crucial vignettes from the myths itself, his portraits often provide a glance into the clandestine private moments of his subjects. His extreme realism was also said to be inspired by photography and European prints available in the market, though the quality of his own prints came to rival the imported ones. A recipient of several awards, Varma's fame has lived on posthumously.

The aesthetic evaluation of Ravi Varma can be a difficult tusk, for one confronts here a violent oscillation from phenomenal popularity to an almost general condemnation. Vincent Smith was one of the early writers to note this

contradiction. “In his own country, his works in that kind (illustration of the Hindu legends and epics) are regarded as masterpieces adequate expressions of Indian feeling. At the hands of recent critics in Europe, they have met with a different reception.”



FIGURE 83 Udaipur Palace, oil on canvas. Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

Styles have no geographical location, especially in the modern world. The only legitimate query is whether the style has been assimilated. Academic realism, enlivened with a judicious dose of pomp and circumstance, is what is needed for this type of work. But its complete lack is a void which needs to be filled up when our public buildings badly need paintings visualising the significant moments of the struggle which led to the birth of the republic.

L.N.Taskar (1870-1937)

Laxman Narain Taskar’s paintings mirror the ideals of academic realism introduced by the British within their art education system. Indian artists were trained in naturalism, with lessons in the effects of chiaroscuro and the

three dimensionality of the external world. History painting, perspective and the copying of Victorian portraits became a vital ingredient within these art schools.

In 1898, Taskar joined Sir J.J. School of Art, Bombay, as an art teacher. Adopting the style of objective accuracy, formal order and an interest in visual narration, his paintings concentrated on 'slices of everyday life.' They became a tool for reflecting upon contemporary social reality where he soon replaced mythological figures with common people in their local environments. He lucidly placed portrayed moods of festivity, celebration, and scenes of local people engaged in rituals through the use of vibrant colours. The women are often shown in familial or community settings, and rarely as private beings. In defiance of the academic norms of the time, Taskar is one of the few artists who painted subjects such as courtesans staring confidently out of the frame, as opposed to the usually passive portrayals of women by other artists.

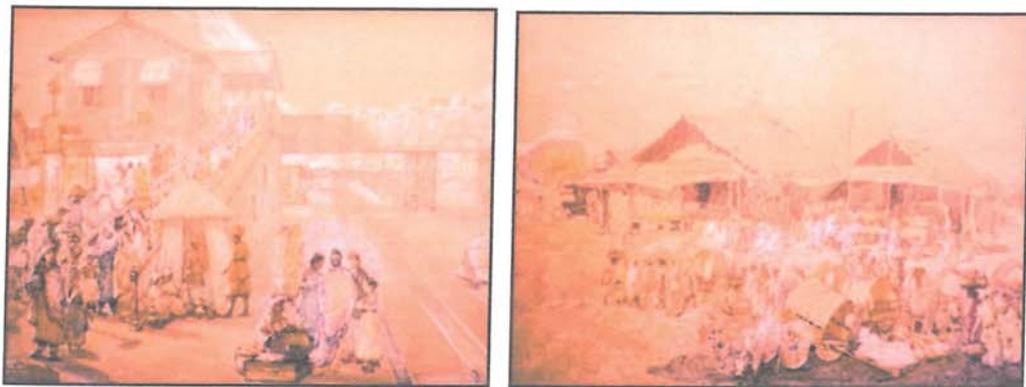


FIGURE 84 Untitled, watercolour on paper. Collections: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

Despite the rigid academic discipline inherent in art schools, Taskar made several departures from his training in the transparent watercolour

technique. Sometimes, his oils adopt the lightness and airiness of his watercolours. The visibility of pencil drawing underneath enhances the formal construction of the work, energising the outdoor atmosphere with a soothing lightness. Taskar's works were part of several collections, the most prominent of which is that Sir Ganga Singhji Bahadur, the Maharaja of Bikaner.

Nicholas Roerich (1874-1947)

Nicholas Roerich born in Russia in the year 1874 but in his youth he came in India and practiced regularly the surrounded atmosphere. Undoubtedly, Nicholas Roerich proved himself one of the best landscape painters. He was fascinated with the Himalayan atmosphere and depicted different types of landscapes on the surface of canvases.



FIGURE 85 Nicholas Roerich's two oil landscape paintings. Collections: Private

M.K.Parandekar (1877-1961)

Born in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, M.K.Parandekar is known for his prolific output as a painter. His initial training was under his father, a Sanskrit scholar and painter, and he followed that up with formal study in art at the

Sir J.J. School of Art, Bombay, in 1900. Abalall Rahiman, the court painter of Kolhapur State, was a strong influence on Parandekar's art and he thus achieved considerable expertise in drawing portraits and figures. Despite that, it was landscapes he focused on painting.

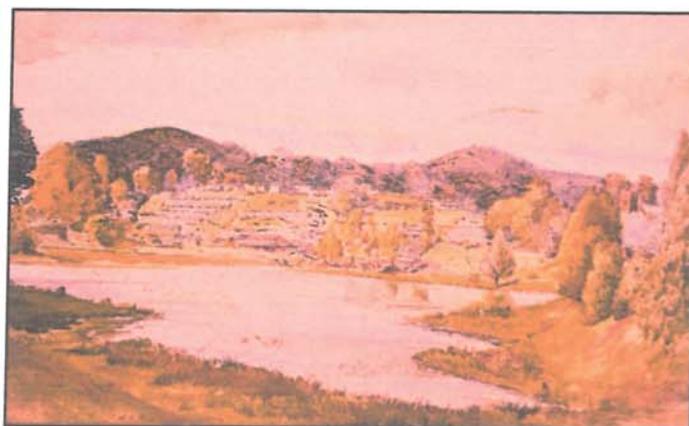


FIGURE 86 Watercolour on paper pasted on cardboard. Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

Parandekar's panoramic views of Indian archaeological sites with their picturesque ambiance recall European masters in their use of perspective and three dimensional effects. His landscapes of the *ghats* of Nasik and the Mahalaxmi Temple, Kolhapur, as well as mountainscapes of Mahabaleswar were greatly admired by critics as well as art lovers in his time. He also acquired the patronage of Lord Willingdon, then Governor of Bombay, as well as the Maharaja of Patiala who commissioned him to paint several projects.

Parandekar played an important role in the foundation of the Art Society of India, and from 1920-30, served as the secretary of the Archaeological Survey of India.

N.R. Sardesai (1885-1954)

Narayan Ramakrishna Sardesai's early education was at the Ratnagiri School of Industry. Here he studied carpentry and drawing in 1906, before joining the Sir J.J. School of Art, Bombay, for formal training in art. After art school, he began work as a drawing teacher in a school in Fort, Bombay.

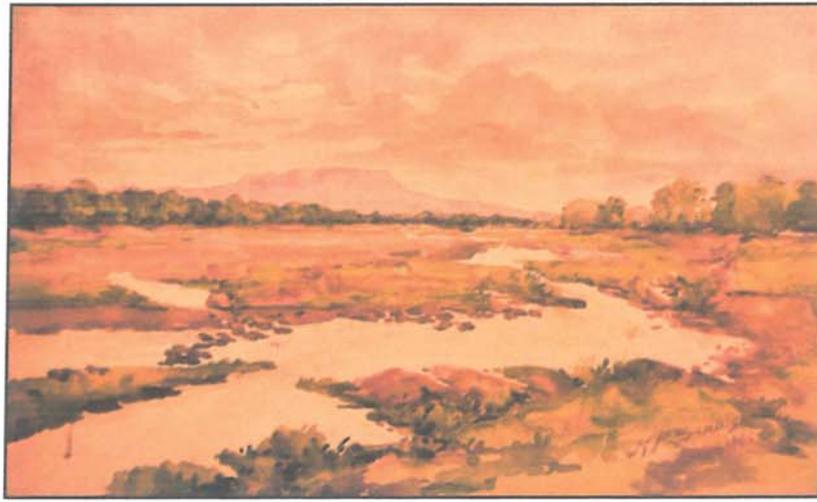


FIGURE 87 Untitled, watercolour on paper pasted on cardboard, 1936.
Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

Sardesai's paintings reveal his fine draftsmanship and his skill in diverse mediums such as oil painting, watercolour, pencil and charcoal. His watercolours show the influence of principal Cecil Burns, who excelled in transparent watercolours and helped popularise the medium. Sardesai won the 1927 and 1929 Bombay Art Society's annual exhibitions for his paintings *The Indian Beauty* and *High Expectations*, respectively, among other prizes. Like other artists of the period, Sardesai's paintings chart and represent the nation's geography through its rivers, temples and monuments. For Indian artists who have practiced art at either a transcendental or mythological level, the imitative

rendering of the physicality of the world around had previously never been the goal. In Sardesai's portrayal of the sitter, there is an unpretentious realism that faultlessly captures the subject's ordinariness as if humbled by his existence.

D.C. Joglekar (1896-1952)

D.C. Joglekar studied at the Sir J.J. School of Art, Bombay, between 1912 and 1917, and as a student received several scholarships from the British government, Lord Mayo and the Rao of Kutch. From 1916-29, he participated in several painting competitions, winning numerous silver and bronze medals. Despite being considered one of the great masters from Bombay School, his paintings were exhibited in India for the first time only in 2004 as part of the *Master Strokes III* exhibition at the Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai.



(A)

(B)

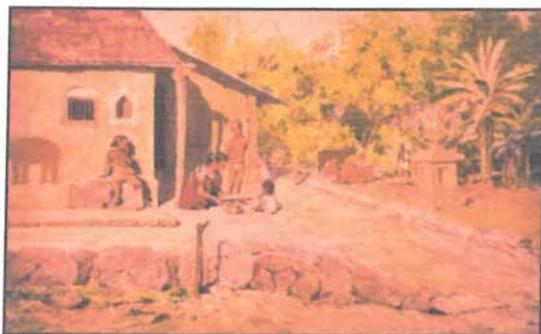
**FIGURE 88(A) Tamneswar, watercolour on paper, undated.
(B) Evening Hills near Rambhumi (Nasik), watercolour on paper, undated.
Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)**

Joglekar's paintings reflect a startling polarity of vision. Working mostly from Bombay, Joglekar also traveled all over the country. In 1929, he was invited to paint panels depicting the history of the Maratha Empire for the Lahore National Congress.

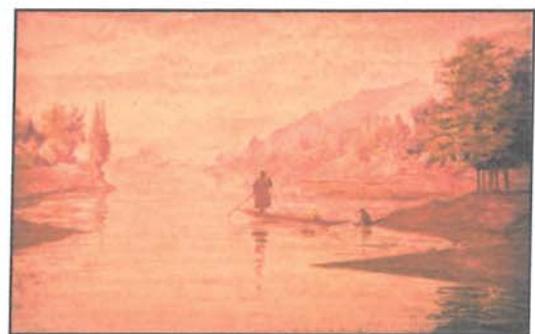
As a water colourist, Joglekar's compositions included panoramic landscapes, architectural facets and views in both urban and rural settings. A remarkable gifted water colourist, he was able to bring in the emotive essence of an Indian aesthetic into his painterly vocabulary, investing his best aquarelles with a meditative, poetic vision. Rooted in the indigenous environment, Joglekar's aesthetic vision a wash with pulse and rhythm.

Archibald Herman Muller (1878-1952)

A graduate of the Government College of Arts and Crafts in Madras, Archibald Herman Muller was born in Cochin, Kerala. After completing his studies, he joined his brother at his photography studio. Muller's shift to Bombay in 1910 proved to be lucky for him as he gradually occupied a niche in the Indian art scene of the early twentieth century. Some of Muller's works, stemming from Hindu mythological themes and rendered in an academic style popularised by Raja Ravi Varma, became critically acclaimed and won awards. His paintings included landscapes, portraits and scenes from the lives of maharajas and other historical subjects.



(A)



(B)

**FIGURE 89(A) Untitled, watercolour on paper, pasted on mount board.
(B) Untitled, watercolour on paper, pasted on cardboard. Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)**

Created in the hallmark pre-modern Indian artistic style, Muller's figures of ordinary people, though set in an indigenous environment, bore elements of the Greco-Roman classical understanding of the body structure and posture. During the First World War, Muller, on account of his part-German descent, was offered a choice between jail and volunteering for the reserve force. He chose the latter and won appreciation for his series of lively sketches and drawings produced during service. From 1922, as a court painter for the Maharaja of Bikaner, Muller evolved his repertoire around scenes of royal hunting and from history. Later, his engagement with the court of the Maharaja of Jodhpur, after 1928, resulted in a series of paintings on subjects of mythology.

Muller traveled extensively through Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat, enjoying the patronage of the royal families, and his work was acquired by Buckingham Palace and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and is part of the collections in museums in Sangli, Maharashtra, and in Bikaner, Jodhpur and Jaipur in Rajasthan.

S.L. Haldankar (1882-1968)

S.L. Haldankar was born in Sawantwadi, then a state in the British-run Bombay Presidency. In 1903, he took his diploma in painting from the Sir J.J. School of Art, Bombay, where he received training under eminent artist-teachers like Cecil L. Burns, Walter Robot ham, Ganpatrao Kedari, A.X.Trindade, S.P.Agaskar and M.V.Dhurandhar.

An early art enthusiast, he opened the Haldankar's Fine Art Institute, Bombay, in 1908, and cofounded Art Society of India in 1918 in collaboration with fellow artists, remaining its president for several years. Haldankar was commissioned to paint portraits of several eminent personalities, among them Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya, Jagannath Sunkersett, Sir John Beaumont, Lady and Sir Leslie Wilson, and the Raja Saheb of Sawantwadi.

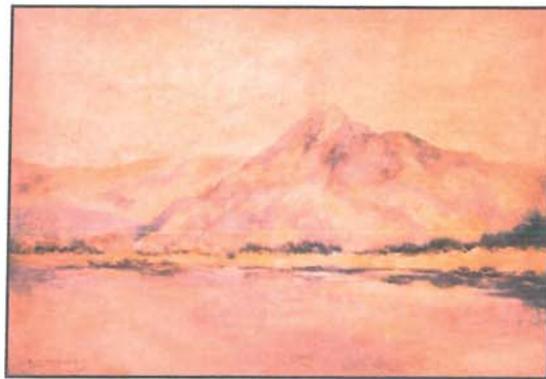


FIGURE 90 Untitled, oil on canvas pasted on masonite board, 1937.
Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

Haldankar associated himself with many art activities and was a keen member of important art committees and societies such as the Maharashtra Chitrakar Mandal and the Hansa Mehta Committee for Re-organisation of Art Education. A versatile painter, he trained in the academic realistic style of painting but taught himself to expertly handle diverse mediums and materials. His delicate handling of transparent watercolour landscapes received spatial recognition, with the Bombay critics coining the term Open Air School for his technique in their art reviews.

Post 1920, the trend in the Bombay region inclined towards landscapes, prior to which it was paintings on historical and mythological subjects that

dominated the annual shows of the art societies. Haldankar's landscapes gave the genre visibility and zest, and his works influenced the watercolour works of a generation of artists to come.

G. S. Haldankar (1912-1981)

With no formal education, G. S. Haldankar studied painting under his father, renowned artist, S. L. Haldankar.

Haldankar's landscapes reveal his free and visible brushstrokes, and his portraits were so life like they were said to be like snapshots. From the young age of seventeen, he won several awards and prizes at prestigious exhibitions in India. His family refers to an Italian encyclopedia that had ranked G. S. Haldankar as one of the three finest watercolourists in the world.



FIGURE 91 Untitled (KARJAT), watercolour on handmade paper, 1959.
Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

A highly sensitive artist, Haldankar was a curious mix of the bohemian and the ascetic, said to be constantly experimenting as a painting progressed, and often leaving several incomplete, unsigned. Like his father, G. S. Haldankar

too painted commissioned portraits of eminent personalities, among them Mahatma Gandhi and General Manekshaw.

Active in teaching art, he taught drawing and painting at his father's Fine Art Institute in Bombay for over sixty years, at the Government College of Art, and various other art institutions and societies, while also offering his services as judge and examiner at art exams and competitions.

In 1929, he won the Bombay Art Society's president's prize and the president's gold medal from the Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta. G. S. Haldankar was the secretary and chairman of Art Society of India at the time of his death.

K Venkatappa (1887-1962)

With Nandalal and others he helped to copy the Ajanta frescoes for Lady Herringham. His love of colour and light in nature was deep and sensitive; for it derived from the wealth of flora and fauna in the various parts of India and crowned with his experience of the majesty of the snow-clad Himalayas. He remained true to his country's traditions and culture - the best of which he loved and vowed to serve. He would not be anybody's servant or be burdened with any exercise of authority. With Gaganendranath Tagore Venkatappa did a reviews of the Himalayas from Darjeeling; but would not strive the Cubist or any other modernist way.

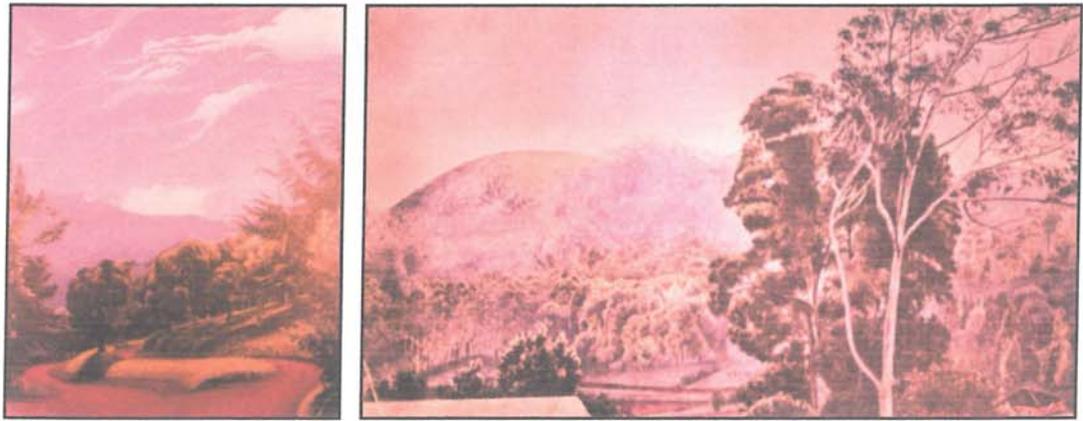


FIGURE 92 Two watercolour landscape by K. Venkatappa. Collections: Private

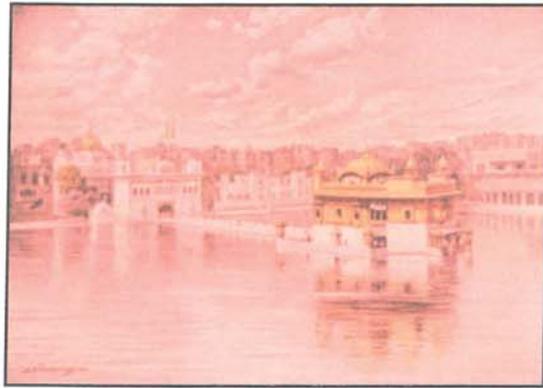
He seems to have tried the oil medium as well; and we have one black and white study in crayon: a figure of Sardar Gopala Raj Urs. There are two views of Mysore from the Chamunch Hills good in their kind: but they cannot compare with his later Ooty and Kodai landscapes. The Bengal Floriken (1910) is the perfect realisation of a bird-figure which is better than any in the Old Persian, Mughal or the Pahari Schools. It won for him the encomium of W. Rothenstein who said Venkatappa 'deserved to be the head of any 'school of art.'

To the landscapes he came more particularly in the later '20s and in the '30s the last picture in that genre he did in 1957. The Ooty and Kodai pictures are a feast of colour, He did not copy nor see with a camera-eye: no; but worked in his studio occasionally checking up the lie of the land or the conjuncture of things to pattern the sights, lights, colours and dimensions and the related volumes his way Level on level of land, mountain scene; tree, foliage, flowers; water, sky and cloud-line; night, morning, Moonrise; the full moon, the Crystal Lake and its reflections, the glens and their vistas of vision.

S.G. Thakur Singh (1894-1976)

Thakur Singh was born in the village of Verka near Amritsar in 1894. He began drawing sketches on the mud walls of his ancestral home at the age of ten. His parents choose engineering as a career for him at the age of sixteen he was sent to the V.D.J. Technical Institute, Lahore. However the desire of practice art led him to Bombay, from where he moved to Calcutta where he established The Punjab Fine Arts Society. Soon, as a fairly well-known artist, he set up the Thakur Singh School of Art, Amritsar.

The themes depicted by Thakur Singh are diverse, ranging from portraits, temples, palaces, forts, *stupas* and landscapes. All his paintings reveal clear, sharply outlined forms and real-seeming textures. His acumen lay in capturing constantly shifting light, before it faded, with rapid brushstrokes. He experimented with numerous colour combinations – from white to blue, yellow to green and violet to red – handling the hues and their transitions with immaculate precision. His treatment of isometric views of architectural wonders showed great dexterity. Singh's famine studies set him apart from other Indian artists, and his painting *After Bath* won him international recognition when he got second prize in the British Empire Exhibition held at London in 1924. Since then he has won many awards. He has held numerous exhibitions in India and abroad, among the most important of the foreign exhibitions were those held in Moscow, Leningrad and Budapest in 1957. He has been a member of the General Council of the Lalit Kala Akademi since 1956.



(A)



(B)

FIGURE 93(A) Swarnamandir temple, Amritsar, oil on canvas.
(B) Moonrise, oil on canvas. Collections: Private

Thakur Singh's landscape painting shows a great range. In *MOONRISE* the shadow city forms a fine frieze in the background and frames the quiet stretch of moonlight water. *TEMPLE IN THE MIST* is a subtle and exquisite study of the play of light on mist. If the mood is romantic in these pictures and they seem deliberately composed, the composition becomes unobtrusive in pictures like that of the bleak stretch of the Ladakh valley with its monotonous snows and monasteries.

Documentation of life is a humble enough ideal for an artist today. The patient study of locales and men close at hand and the sensitive yet unobtrusive recomposing of the unedited flux of life all round are not achievements which are spectacular enough to catch the eye of the modern art critic. But, for those who love the colourful pageant of Indian life. Thakur Singh needs it especially in transitional phases such as the one Indian art is passing through today when inner tensions are tending to monopolise the attention of artists obsessively and make man forget that the 'reality' out there, is as important as the reality

within, that in fact it is the pabulum that nourishes the latter to sanity and strength.

M.V Dhurandhar (1867-1944)

Possibly the most popular academic Indian artist after Raja Ravi Varma, Kolhapur-born Rao Bahadur M.V.Dhurandhar received his training in art from the Sir J.J.School of Art, Bombay. An early and persistent interest in drawing led his father to enroll the young Dhurandhar to the art school, where he received special encouragement from principal John Griffiths. He tasted early success in the form of a gold medal from Bombay Art Society for his oil work *Have You Come Laksmi?* Just as he completed his five-year art study in 1895. In subsequent years, he continued to be associated with his alma mater, joining as an art teacher after his studies while he took on several commissioned works on mythological and religious themes. At the end of a long and illustrious teaching career, he became the schools first Indian director in 1930.



FIGURE 94 Untitled, oil on paper, 1910. Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

The Abanindranath Tagore-led revivalist movement had taken hold of Bengal in response to British academic dominance in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Bombay artists, on the other hand, were doing commissioned works that were academic in their rendering and techniques but with indigenous subject matter. Dhurandhar remained the foremost and most significant among them, maintaining a fine balance between academic realism and popular commercial art. His well known works included a series on the city of Bombay and its people, scenes from Hindu mythology as well as another on the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam. Dhurandhar's paintings illustrated Otto Rothfelds book *Women of India*, first published in Bombay in 1920 and which went on to attain a certain renown colonial circles.

Ambika Dhurandhar (1912-2009)

The daughter of renowned artist and teacher M.V.Dhurandhar, Ambika Dhurandhar took to painting early, thanks to the progressive atmosphere at home and exposure to the art world. Her father was the first Indian principal of Sir J.J. School of Art, a job previously reserved only for Englishmen, and it is fitting that his progressive, tenacious spirit passed on to Ambika as well, who graduated in drawing from the school in 1931 as its first female graduate.

Ambika trained in Western academic painting, of which Dhurandhar Sr. was considered a master, and not surprisingly, she painted in a style similar to his – choosing themes and subjects of mythology or upper class Indian domesticity. Dhurandhar Sr. was a painter much in demand and Ambika closely observed the art world through assisting him in various commissions and projects. Two of his projects where she shone as an individual artist were painting murals for the New Secretariat Building in Delhi, and the decoration of the Chota Udaypur

palace. Assisting her father during her tenure as the head of Sir J.J.School of Art drew her to art education and administration. After his death, Ambika set up Dhudandhar Kala Mandir, a centre for art education and training.



FIGURE 95 Untitled, oil on canvas, 1933. Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

Like her father, Ambika Dhurandhar practiced in different mediums and genres, gaining perfection in portraiture, still-life and landscape works. Her academic training comes through in the visual perfection and attention to detail in her portraits, and in the records of village life and religious sites. Ambika exhibited at various art institutions and museums around the globe and received a fellowship of the Royal Society of Arts, London, in 1938.

N.S.Bendre (1910-92)

Born in Indore, N.S.Bendre studied art under D.D.Deolalikar at the Chitrakala Mandir and obtained his diploma in painting from School of Art, Indore. In 1940, he moved to Madras to work as the art director for a production company. In 1947, he toured U.S.A under the sponsorship of the Philadelphia-based The Federation of American Artists, learning graphic art under Armin Landeck at

the Art Students League in New York. He returned to join as the first reader and head of department of painting at M.S.University, Baroda, from 1950-59.

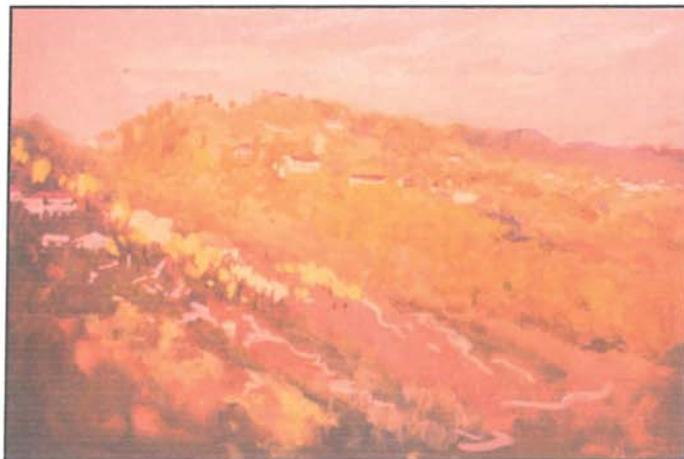


FIGURE 96 Untitled, watercolour on paper. Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

His works are widely known for a distinct cubism that fit neither within the synthetic nor analytic cubism of European modernism, but the influence of Western modernism in his works became apparent about two decades into his career. This started with the impressionistic quality of his pastoral landscapes in the Forties and his reading of cubism in the mid-Fifties. Up until then his works were characterised by a focus on the human form and expressionistic brushstrokes that were keyed in to the mood of the painting.

Bendre is known for his influential role in the formation of the Baroda Group of Artists in 1956 and in the founding of the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi. He was a member of the Government of India's first cultural delegation to China in 1952, and of the one to Japan in 1963. Prof. Ratan Parimoo wrote about Bendre's works- "With the inclusion of the hues and even the inclusion of the black colour which are Expressionist traits, Bendre rather successfully

attempted a sort of telescoping of the late 19th century French impressionist style of the second decade of the 20th century Langhammer brought into India. Similar hues of colour were employed by Bendre to replace the mellow colour scheme of the existing Indore School as if to usher in the celebration of the Indian sunshine.”

Art Historian Sunil Kumar Bhattacharya commented on Bendre’s work – “A diffusive movement represented by a vaporous style developed in the works of Bendre. Nature in its idyllic setting with the luminous Indian sun was the main characteristic of Bendre’s rural landscapes. The village scenes of rural India painted in yellow ochre and the browns of the countryside had become a part of the unchanged internal character of India.

H.A.Gade (1917-2001)

Hailing from Maharashtra, H.A.Gade joined the Progressive Artists Group in 1948. In 1950, he completed his Masters in Art from the Nagpur School of Art. In 1955-56, he became a member of Lalit Kala Akademi’s Artists Delegation and, in 1958, a founder member of the Bombay Artists Group, Bombay. In the corpus of Indian art, Gade stands distinct as a painter of landscapes of unpeopled houses. While he evolved his language in paint, he did not completely avoid nature but did not over rate its role either. He realised the limitations of rendering the visible world through visual exactitude, which appeared to testify merely to the acquired skills of naturalism, a reason he chose abstraction.



FIGURE 97 Untitled, oil on canvas, 1944. Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

Identified as a painter of the vistas of towns with unplanned, rambling structures, Gade's urban-scapes are remarkable for their flat, chromatic intensity. The simple geometry of shapes represents a distant view of a densely built area in the city, with the dark heaving lines holding the structure of elemental shapes together in nocturnal illumination. In his works, the painterly qualities are emphasised more than the physical site. The artist's attempt is to transform the subject into a painting and not vice versa. Gade's abstract works draw on the principles of balance and structure. He gives paint a primacy in the composition through density and texture. One of the most gifted painters of modern Indian art, Gade's oeuvre covered still-lives, nude portraits and landscapes, apart from his celebrated abstract works.

S.H. Raza

Sayed Haider Raza is among the few artists of the Progressive Artists Group who almost exclusively excluded the human figure in order to build up his aesthetics. Instead, he was fascinated with landscapes, with which he began

his career. His enrollment at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris, was to be the turning point in his career. In 1956, he became an overnight sensation across Europe after receiving the Prix de la Critique award.

For Raza nature has remained a primary source of inspiration in his paintings evolving over some fifty five years. His early works (1945-50) in this show suggest an ecstatic communication – with the rivers, the trees, the lakes! With mountains and the sun moving across the skies, the ghats besides the Narmada river with temples shimmering in light. Raza retrieves their inner rhythms and colours, pulsating with life. Human habitation is integrated into this holistic view of the universe. When human figures are introduced, they are never apart, individual, or alienated from the environment.

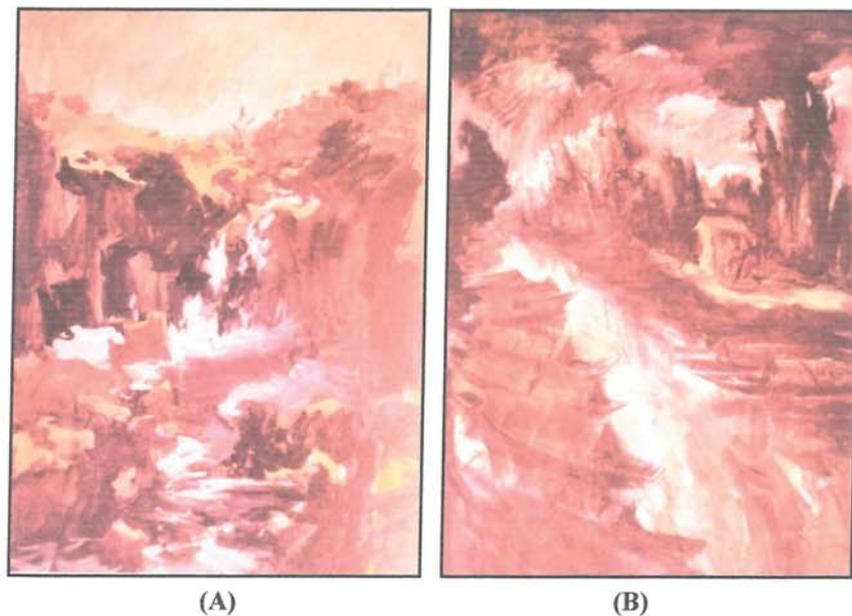


FIGURE 98(A) Waterfall near Mandala-Dhar State, watercolour on paper, 1948.
(B) Kashmir, watercolour on paper, 1948. Collections: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

The value of these early pictures is that they have never been viewed before in such an impressive body of work. Possessed at times of a raw, elemental

energy, they suggest that from almost the beginning of his long career he is exploring, inventing and experimenting with nature. As much as the line is critical in defining the work for artists like Souza and Husain, so with Raza it is colour that liberates him. Through colour he transforms the world into his mindscapes.

While still a student, Raza embarked on his career with studies from nature. His near-contemporaries such as Gaitonde will assert even today, 'Raza painted only landscapes'. This was where he proved himself to be a master set against the prevailing mood of humanism, where the individual was valorised in both art and literature. The fact that he took a different road from the others is owed in no little sense to his *samskara*, of growing up in the dense forests of Madhya Pradesh, close to the earth beholding with wonder the changing face of nature. In an interview with this author he recalled how these encounters had affected him profoundly in his childhood:

Mandala is 'mandala' the sacred river Narmada circuits the town, flowing around it just 300 kilometers from the source of the river Amarkantha. It was beautiful with temples along the river and a fort built by the Gonds. A quiet river which became violent during the monsoons when the floods came. The Narmada was hardly a kilometer away from the Forest Range headquarters.



FIGURE 99(A) Nasik - Godavari Ghat, watercolour on paper, during Late 40's
(B) Flora Fountain in the Monsoon watercolour, 1944. Collections: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

In 1943 Raza arrived in Bombay from Nagpur School of Art, barely twenty-one years of age, to absorb new directions in the city which was then the metropolis of art. He could afford only to join evening classes at the J.J.School of Art, and he worked at a black maker's studio which offered him a livelihood and where he was given lodgings. The intricate patterns of the city fascinated him, with its teeming millions and grids of houses. He paints the city in all its moods- sometimes with stark jagged shapes and in savage colours of red and black, unusual for a man of his gentle temperament. As he says, he was still living 'in the rhythm' of the forests. 'The city seemed forbidding with its tall buildings, noise, rush and wealth'.

His paintings were exhibited in a dark dingy corner of Cama Hall, but they were noticed by the critic I responded to a new talent. He describes these first encounters with Raza's works on the city:

In the first years of 1942 to 44 it was particularly the image of the city of Bombay that fascinated the young artist. Looking down from the windows

of the process studio into the narrow and teeming streets of an old part of Bombay city, he took in with an all absorbing curiosity the shapes of houses. Occasionally Raza turned his hand to portraits of his friends in Bombay, the city which shaped him. By 1948 Raza is exploring new dimensions in nature: those which internalise the subject. Even his brush strokes have changed from the light, deft and fluid watercolours of the earliest landscapes.

In the Sixties, Raza drifted away from realistic landscapes towards 'gestural expressionism', a form of abstraction that was inspired by the works of American artist Mark Rothko. Ultimately, the themes and forms for Raza's paintings evolved from his childhood memories and impressions – life in the densest forests of Madhya Pradesh, close to the river Narmada and in proximity of nature, the bright colours of the Indian market, and a black dot to meditate on drawn by a school teacher for the six year old Raza. Those visions and forms he carried in his memory were animated on canvas through the use of geometrical lines and intense patches in bursts of colour. The black dot became a starting point that transmitted into a series of Raza's paintings known as *Bindu*- a symbol of divine and artistic creativity, the essence of any form and movement.

Widely collected across Europe and U.S.A, Raza was awarded the Madhya Pradesh governments *Kalidas Samman* in 1981, and the Lalit Kala Akademi's *Ratna Puraskar* in 2004. He has been honoured with both the Padma Shri and the Padma Bhushan by the Indian government. Raza was a resident of France

for six decades before shifting back in December 2010 to live and work in New Delhi.

Akbar Padamsee

London during the Fifties and Sixties, Akbar Padamsee is seen to have developed his images within the genres of portraiture and landscape as refracted through the prism of high modernism. He graduated from the Sir J. J. School of Art in 1951 with a diploma in painting and a series of sculpture classes behind him.

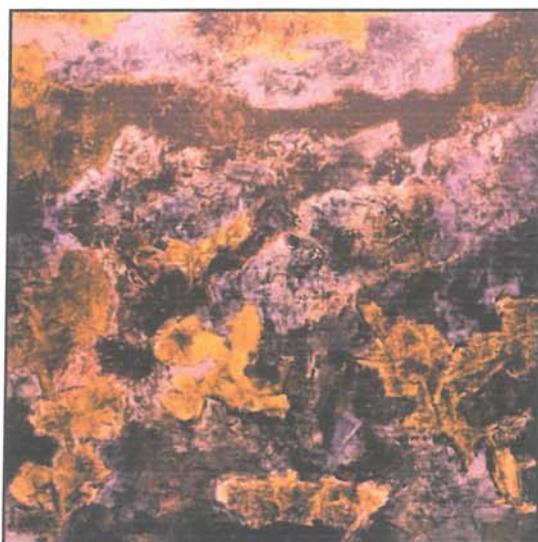


FIGURE 100 Untitled, oil on canvas, 1964. Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

His career witnessed various phases with changing emphases. His early portraits and landscapes demonstrate a quasi-spiritual style of working. The artist, subsequently, abolished their very core whence they came to be termed as 'ins capes' in art-historical vocabulary. This proved to be one of the turning points of Padamsee's career, plunging him into much deeper subconscious layers. In addition to the already existing formal and aesthetic elements in his paintings, a new psychoanalytical dimension was added.

His pioneering spirit has allowed Padamsee to experiment with a wide range of mediums - the whole gamut of the traditional to the most recent additions of computer graphics. Whatever his chosen medium, he has a distinctive command over the use of space, form and colour. Padamsee's oils have been characterised by a deep intensity and luminescence while his drawings exude a serene grace.

RAM GOPAL VIJAIWARGIYA

Born at Baler, a tiny village in Sawai Madhopur district in 1905, Vijaiwargiya had developed a keen interest in the art of painting at a very early age. The man who first initiated him to the world of brush and colours was a wandering Sadhu of Ram Snehi sect. This saintly man was having a rare obsession for painting. He used to draw the figures of rural folk by blue or red pencils which caught the imagination of the young child. It was he who taught him the basic principles of drawing. This was the initial training in painting for Ramgopal who imbibed it with great gusto.

Ramgopal's father, Bhanwar Lal Vijaiwargiya was then serving as a 'Kaamdar' with the Baler Thikana, a Jagir under the erstwhile princely State of Jaipur. Though his father tried his best to educate his only son Ram Gopal by appointing private tutors to coach Hindi, English and Persian languages but was totally dissatisfied with the indifferent attitude of his son in picking up his lessons) At last, Bhanwar Lal had to ask his son what he really wanted to be? And the son confided to his father that if he could get him admission to the Art School he would be the happiest lot.

Having come to know about the son's passion for painting, Bhanwar Lal managed to get his sons admission in the Maharaja School of Arts and Crafts. The School, set up by the late Maharaja Ram Singh in 1866 to encourage training in arts and crafts had by this time earned distinct reputation for the high standards of art objects produced at school especially amongst the European guests of the Maharaja.

Ram Gopal started taking his lessons in paintings at the School under the guidance of his teacher, Shailendra Nath De. Young Ram Gopal who was then barely 18 years of age started to show his prowess in such a promising manner that he was given a direct entry into the final year and finished the five year's course within 8 month's duration.



FIGURE 101 Figurative Composition, watercolour on paper. Collection:Private

By now, Ram Gopal had developed an unsuitable thirst to express his emotional and aesthetic urges in colours. From early morning to late night he was engrossed

in painting. He had hardly been in the school for six months but by this time people had started praising his works, a virtual outcome of the inherent urge and persistence of the pupil and able guidance of his mentor, Mr. De.

Vijaiwargiya did not lag behind when the French stylists revolutionized art. But he was no mere imitator or copyist. He has evolved his own modern style - a simple configuration of bold Lines and superimposed yet distinct images. Pure abstraction is not his theme. Even in modernism he sticks to his penchant for people.

Reacting to the modern art, he says: I consider Art to be basically a visual phenomenon, that is, it only requires the eyes to appreciate it. A knowing eye will always be able to make out the sham from the real. I have nothing against the really capable modernist.

And then there is another consideration. One has to move with the times. Traditional Art does not sell today. That is why you will find that most of India's good 'traditional artists have switched over to Modern Art and with great success.

Basically, human life is his theme. What interests him is man in his varied activities and moods, His canvas retied the panorama of life. Artificially posed models are not for him. His paintings are records of what his keen eyes have observed and his brain assimilated from the life pulsing around him. Landscapes and still life he has rarely touched. In some ways he is like the documentary film-maker who utilises only location shots.

Ranvir Singh Bisht

His canvases glow with hues of inner radiance and attract us with their mellow tonal quality. This is a sort of a marked philosophical brooding in colours. The artist's work reveals an intensity which transforms pictorial evolution into cultural cycle with its latent mythic quality and fascinating visionary spectacles. His images do not petrify; they remain in a state of fluidity which conforms to required strictness necessary to form. His images may not always incorporate the real of this world. The stages of his development can easily be marked out from sinuous and experimental to higher and still higher touching mysterious and unseen with deft handling and dexterous brush work.

The informal expression is both dynamic and fluctuating; the painting glows and fires the mental and aesthetic attitude of the beholder. The work offers an ideology deeply rooted in ancient gnosis. The Gnostic proposes another world, novel images, and a divine luminous reality beyond human imagination and understanding. It comes down to the mundane world of day-to-day affairs, governed by myriad of conflicts that set the tone of human life. This constitutes artistic world of Bisht, a world which manifests the torment of the cosmos, the world beset with human misery and suffering full of conflicting light and shadows of the ascent and descent expressed in varying tones of blues and grays in his latest series of paintings which form the core of his creativity.

Bisht was born in the colourful and scenic surroundings of Garhwal hills in the year 1928 at a place called Lansdowne over-looking the snow clad Himalayas. Nature always inspired the painter in Bisht and evoked his feelings to go beyond

the scene and the known. Nature is at the centre of Bisht's consciousness; he is bound by the colourful and the mysterious. The play of enchanting colours on canvas takes us at ones to the hills of Manali or Kedarnath. One is tempted to believe that Bisht is inspired by grandeur and beauty of these hills. The movements of circulation, expansion and contraction; the pours of colour, its intermingling and inter-action in the long diagonal filaments of hues weaving between separated zones, animated by a life of their own; all these elements are signs of limiting boundaries of our world. Not painting, nor song, nor exultation can interfere with the great and veritable source of the infinite cosmic process. Bisht's works, however, show moments of peace and lyrical states of contemplation, which do not rely on conflict for intensity, rather the works of this artist are produced through submission to the vital forces of nature. For getting his creative springs nursed and nurtured, he joined the College of Arts and Crafts, Lucknow, in the year 1948 where his hard creative labours took him to the apex of his career when he became the Principal of the College where he came as a student.

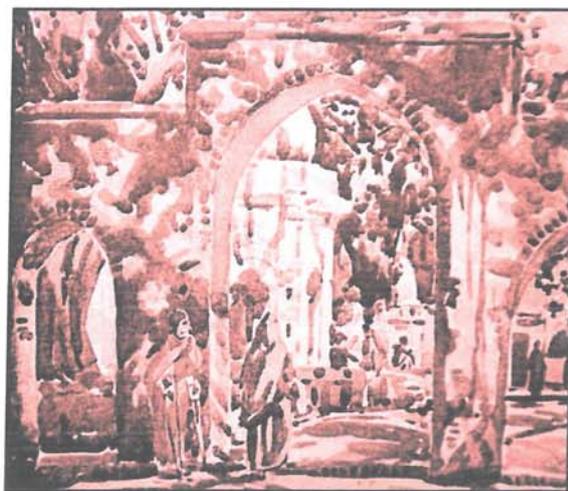


FIGURE 102 Watercolour landscape on paper. Collection: Private

While he was learning to train his imaginative roaming by strict academic discipline of arts he was enchanted by the romance of intellectualism of Lucknow and its famous Coffee House. His early works produced during the formative years, mainly water colours of fifties enthusiastically unfurl a world of gliding grace of golden gaiety of flowers, trees, swirling clouds, hamlets, mountains and monuments. Landscape, Hillscape and Daksha Ghat are such vibrantly versatile water colours that go to make him one of the best watercolourists of the country. The two great masters responsible to polish his craft and content were B. Sen, the unique innovator of miniature landscape in water Colour and L.M. Sen, the unsurpassed exponent of the technique in Oil medium.

His exquisite Watercolours had their discernible effect on Bisht's imagination. It perhaps helped him in his creativity and added to the refinement of his chromatic content and technical skill leading him to his unique success in his watercolour paintings. Potentialities of these two watercolourists helped immensely to the affluence of water colour painting both in patch work and the wash technique for which Lucknow School was famous and made notable history. The wash technique of water colour of the Bengal School was further developed at Lucknow School with the addition of tempera used in finishing's. In the technique of wash painting, The Lesson, The Poetess and Heavy Rains are superb achievements of Bisht.

The ideal of experiment and the notion of freedom which he had cultivated resulted in some paintings which were abstracted to the point of non-association

as in *Ruralscape I* and *Ruralscape II*. These paintings have a background of extremely soft tonal variations of grey, green and off-white contrasted by occasional patches of thick colour and dark line, and calligraphic images. Yet another peculiarity of these pictures is the fluidity of their colours which tend to an arabesque achieved by the controlled flow of colours. One of the paintings of this series titled *Cityscape No. 3*, fetched for him, the National Award in the year 1965. He experimented extensively both in water colour and oil colour techniques. Later on he settled down to work mainly in the oil medium. Bisht is essentially a landscape painter but he used the female nude in his paintings in a unique manner.

Bisht puts the female nude in a large arena of a landscape composition. Without the nude the composition is more of a landscape, but the nude is not there to add a suggestion of human presence in the landscopic composition. Bisht throws the nude over the space like a picture postcard thrown on the sandy beach or in mountainous rocks as depicted in his painting titled *Temptation*.

The nude suitably lodged in the grid of the canvas in the aerial landscape, works like a fulcrum to the compositional balance and the chiaroscuro in his paintings. He creates a cosmogony of his own in the varying dimensions of his canvas where the nudes appear sometimes like the flames of burning nature and sometimes hang and sways like the blooming buds of cosmos full of organic energy.

The impact of colours in his works is most vibrant and overwhelming. His palette is occasionally fauvistic in character put to a skillful use of colour radiation,

which not only enhances the psychological dimensions of the painting but also integrates the figurative element of the composition. The colour scheme in, some of his paintings presents a murky and subdued environment which incidentally is responsible to bring about the finest examples of the painter's emotional triumphs in the field of creative expression.

The latest phase of the creativity of Bisht shows his awareness of visual and creative possibilities of the so-called unknown. The real is never far from the dream, and the dream can connect us with the unseen, we now know. The artist has grown in awareness of new dimensions of reality and the unity of truth and beauty in life.

Kanwal Krishna (1910-1993)

Born in Kamilia in pre-Partition Punjab, Kanwal Krishna lived the life, he said, 'of a wandering gypsy'. In the Fifties, several artists began to explore landscape painting as a separate genre in order to establish a modernist language. In India, this genre came through the traveling artists among whom Kanwal Krishna's work stood out. Krishna sought his inspiration from personal and direct encounters with the forces of nature as he traveled to forbidden Tibet, Kashmir, Europe and other places.

In 1945, Krishna and his artist-wife Devyani were invited by the governor of N.W.F.P., Sir George Cunningham, to travel across Afghanistan, the Khyber Pass, the Swat valley and surrounding areas to paint its landscape and life. In Tibet, he was one of the earliest observers, and the first Indian painter who was allowed special permission to attend the coronation of the Dalai Lama,

an event he painted and filmed. His drawings from that encounter were some of the earliest visual reference for the British government, as they were for Indians, of life and the landscapes of this protected Shangrila.



FIGURE 103 North East Frontier Province, watercolour on paper, 1945.
Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

Krishna's paintings reflect his mastery over perspective and depth through strange angles and curvature observed in the outdoor environment. The textures and tones achieved by his sensitive brushwork and a restrained palette are laudable. The inanimate entities in his work do not behave as a dead mass but are imbued with signs of life.

A master printmaker, he would influence a generation of printmakers in India with his technique and style. Krishna was associated with several art groups such as the Delhi Shilpi Chakra and the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.

Devyani Krishna (1910-2000)

An intrepid traveller, Devyani Krishna's journey into art began at a very early age in the city of Indore. Under the patronage of Yashwant Rao Holkar, Indore

in the Thirties was a hub of modernist experiments in the ‘international style’. At a time when, among many others, Eckart Muthesius, the German architect, and the Romanian sculptor, Constantin Brancusi, were actively involved in reshaping the aesthetics of Indore, Devyani Krishna began to develop a keen interest in the visual arts. In 1936, to pursue her interest in painting, she joined the J. J. School of Art in Bombay.



FIGURE 104 North Sikkim, watercolour on handmade paper, 1944.
Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

She retreated to the Himalayas with fellow artist and partner, Kanwal Krishna, from 1949-52, a period when she painted Tibetan masks, ritual dance and other aspects of Buddhist art. Painted at a time when the Tibetans were facing a crucial disruption of their lives and a loss of autonomy a protest staged within the genre of a mythological narrative was a way of bringing into the open domain a critical political stand. Her enquiry into the absence of form, where the image would flow as tactile sensations emanating from a bodily engagement with the environment, informed her work throughout her life. Devyani Krishna’s works speak of a strong sense of design with colour

harmony and a broad compositional aspect. The series of etchings like *Bam Bam Bhole* and *What and Where* are rehearsals of pure spirit in its essential form. The patterns and the swirling lines have a glow that seems to come from somewhere within.

V. B. Pathare (1911-2005)

V. B. Pathare studied painting under S. L. Haldankar at Bombay and Prof. Martin Lauterburg at Bern. After studying portraiture under the renowned artist Sir Charles Dugdale in London, Pathare painted portraits of several national leaders overtime, from Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Phule, to Indira Gandhi and Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda. Painting in the European tradition of realism, Pathare was an adept watercolourist, painting landscapes and market scenes with the same ease as portraits.



FIGURE 105(A) Untitled, Thal, Fishing Harbour, near Alibagh, Maharashtra, watercolour on paper 1939.

**(B) Florence from Michelangelo Point, watercolour on paper, 1951.
Collections: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)**

An active member of the art fraternity in Bombay, Pathare was a member of the Bombay Art Society chairman of the Artists Centre, Bombay and also

on the managing committee of Jehangir Art Gallery Bombay'. A much feted artist, V. B. Pathare won numerous painting competition awards in his long career, among them from the Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta, All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society, New Delhi, and Bombay Art Society, Bombay, Simla Fine Art Society and Mysore Fine Art Exhibition. In 1989, he was invited to nominate a candidate for the Ramon Magsaysay Award by the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, Manila.

K.C.S.Paniker (1911-1977)

Born in Coimbatore, K. C. S. Panicker received his early education in Kerala. A child-prodigy, he began painting watercolour landscapes at the age of eleven, inspired by British watercolourist John Sell Cotman. As a young artist, Panicker exhibited at the all-India exhibitions of the Madras Fine Art Society as early as 1928-30. Panicker left his studies at Madras Christian College for a while to take up a job at the Indian Telegraph Department. Post a five-year phase of uncertainty he joined the Madras School of Art (later known as Government College of Arts and Crafts) in 1936, to pursue a course under D. P. Roy Chowdhury.

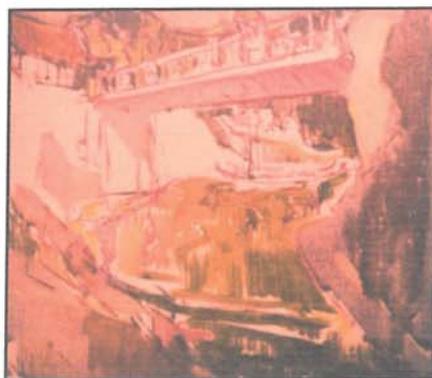


FIGURE 106 The Red Bridge, oil on oil paper, 1952. Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

The first serious acknowledgment of his talent came in 1938, when he won the Calcutta Academy Prize for the best watercolour of the year. His first solo exhibition in 1941, in Madras, was followed by numerous other successful ones in India “here he won prizes and medals. His first international exposure came in 1954 when he held exhibitions in London and Paris. In the same year Panicker was nominated as an eminent artist-member of the Lalit Kala Akademi. In 1952, the artist succeeded D. P. Roy Chowdhury as principal of the Government College of Arts and Crafts, Madras.

A pioneer, Panicker founded the Progressive Painters’ Association in 1944 and the Cholamandal Artists’ Village at the outskirts of Madras in 1966. His exposure to European abstraction was a major influence on his art, indicating the shift in his landscapes, from maintaining the impressionistic use of colours. In later years, his art moved in new directions, inspired by astrology symbols, calligraphy and traditional esoteric art to project a state of metaphysical abstraction, manifesting in series like Words and Symbols.

GOVARDHAN LAL JOSHI ‘BABA’

Baba was born on March 15, 1914 at Kankroli in Udaipur region of Rajasthan, a town famous for its beautiful lake, openness of vast landscape and an important centre of Vallabha Sampradaya. As a teenager he used to go to Kalaguru Ustad Ghasiramji Jangid a famous and reputed artist of Nathdwara’s traditional family of artists, to learn drawing. Ghasiramji had a wonderful power of sketching. His talent was recognized by Pyrelal Jangid who recommended his appointment to Vidya Bhavan at the age of

eighteen. From there he went to Santiniketan for regular study. It was the time when Indian painting was suffering neglect due to degenerate Printing academic taste of the time, and Art was not considered a respectable profession which had any future prospects.

Before going to Santiniketan for formal studies he had seen and studied the long tradition of painting at Nathdwara, a home of this tradition for centuries and still as important as ever. Nathdwara artists were working in diverse mediums, styles and techniques like realistic portraits in oil, and other mythological subjects, *pichwais*, miniature paintings along with many indigenous crafts.

His paintings are a mixture of landscape and figurative compositions. Glowing browns, ochre's and grays well represent the earth of Rajasthan. Strong sunlight and deep shadows have been used to erect three dimensionality maintaining overall two-dimensional effect. Less craftsmanship and more vigour and power are the essential qualities of his works. Purity of expression and form with definiteness shows how much he has worked. He must have remained very near or friendly to all figures represented in his paintings because each part has a touch of immense affinity as if the artist is exposing his own self as some other individual through colourful forms. Scenes of a particular society and people are subjects of his paintings. Bheel life, though very much alive in modern society, maintaining all possible relations, keep a definite distance

maintaining their inner core. Even loneliness of figures surrounded by a complete village folk with all flora and fauna and vast desert of huts and houses, reality of Mewar area well depicted in his compositions create pleasing effect. Poignant overtones of his limited palette sometimes look very simple but represent chosen expressions and evoke particular Rasa. Interestingly Baba's prolonged familiar themes always come forward with freshness, establishing his own parameters of painting with spontaneity, swiftness and freedom of his own. He models his creative forms with the sharpness of vision and colour them with life possessing airy effect and warmth of humaneness and smell of the locale.



FIGURE 107(A) Jhanvar Kotda, watercolour on paper, 1949.
(B) Jhanvar Kotda, watercolour on paper, 1949. Collections:Private.

As for subjects, we find some historical subjects, more landscapes and still more Bheel life, represented very powerfully due to his regular study of such subjects. He goes to this life, participates in their rituals and ceremonies fully involved. We do not find any sign of hatred, violence, depression, cruelty or sorrow etc. in any of his works. What we find is heroic males and lovely sensuous maidens with full open eyes and inviting look. When such figures are

shown working in fields or at home, the posture does not show any burden on their physical and mental state but are represented as if they are enjoying life having no complaints with the civilization. Their gracious way of walking, standing or working figures make us feel jealous of their physique and form providing certain visual pleasure. This could be possible simply because he has left behind all memories of his study period and influences of Nathdwara or Rajput tradition and paints only what he sees and feels intimately. Purity and clarity of forms, stylistic face and figure, pure colours, strong, clear, fine and bold lines and above all, detailed study of whatever is painted reminds us of great Indian masters like Nihalchand of Kishangarh, Manaku, Chetu Molaram of Pahari tradition and Sahibdin, Chokha, Bhakta of his own Mewar, each one master of his own style and technique. Distant landscaped views with wildness and constraint, sobriety of colours with fresh glow, fused and sharp forms as required and economy of lines is all his own.

Above all he had traveled and worked with Kanwal Krishna while he was touring Udaipur region before 1940s. Both roaming about Udaipur, did lot of sketches and Baba feels that this opportunity provided him with tremendous experiences. After going to Banasthali Vidya pith, he got inclined towards more simplification. But these opportunities, incidents or casual company of fellow artists is a part of life which comes to all working artists. This does not mean anything to relate with influence of that particular person or time. If at all there is any, it is in the subconscious of Baba which might have come to him naturally.

Whenever he goes for outing, he does lots of sketches rapidly. These studies are referred whenever some large composition is visualized. Sometimes a whole panorama of village scene with varied activities entangled with each other are woven together. Whatever experiments are seen in his works are the results of spontaneous process and problems faced during the execution of painting. Calligraphic swiftness acquired by constant work has provided him professional competence and mastery. Lyrical lines, dance like figures do show absolute oriental touch tightly woven together absorbing sentimental waves of his innocent heart.

Simple as his soul, are his paintings far away from depicting disastrous changes of society. One can still see Bheel tribe in her aboriginal state roaming about the country side. No change in their life style, tradition and way of working. Perhaps this situation suited Baba best because he too did not join the rat race for hurriedly establishing himself in the contemporary art scene and so remained free from competition mania. Baba maintained a safe distance from the visual pollution around him.

K.S. Kulkarni (1916-94)

Forced to paint signboards at the age of eleven when his father died, Krishna Shamrao Kulkarni battled numerous early struggles to achieve a pre-eminent place in modern Indian art. Born in a small village in Belgaum in 1916, Kulkarni worked towards a highly individuated pictorial language through an engagement with modernist techniques and mediums. Post a diploma in fine art (mural) from Sir J. J. School of Art in 1940, he came to Delhi in 1943 to

work in textile design. Along with other artists who had moved from Lahore to Delhi during Partition, Kulkarni became a member of the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society and, later, the founder- president of the Delhi Shilpi Chakra. From 1972-78, he served as chairman, Lalit Kala Akademi, Lucknow, and from 1973-78 as vice-chairman, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.



FIGURE 108 Untitled, (Rome) watercolour and gouache on mount board, 1950s.
Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

In the treatment of human figures, Kulkarni combined the decorative grace of classical Indian painting inspired by Ajanta, with the vitality of modernism. Kulkarni played with the pure sensuousness of colour and form to heighten the plastic potentiality of form. His is essentially the world of the Indian peasant, swaying with rapture to the hypnotic melody of the shepherd's flute, riding with the rhythms of the bullock cart. He is not a chronicler of events, and neither does he idealise pastoral life as an escape from the humdrum existence of the modern city. In fact, he would paint cityscapes using bold, strong outlines and strokes as a stack of blocks leaning against each other. In his works, the everyday received prime importance, drawn with empathy but not sentimentality.

Hemanta Misra (1917-2019)

As a self-taught painter, Hemanta Misra initially drew on themes from his native Assam that traversed a wide range of pictorial styles, from pointillist renderings to the expressionistic, before arriving at a consistent and personal pictorial vocabulary. In the late Fifties, he shifted gradually towards an intuitive surreal imagery'. For Hemanta Misra, surrealist vocabulary became 'a more dramatic or declamatory idiom'.

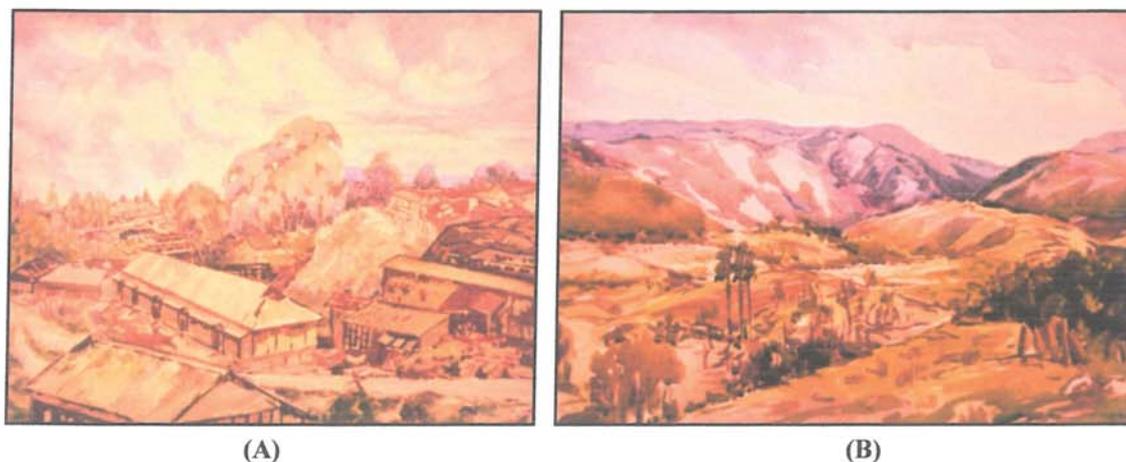


FIGURE 109(A) Untitled, (Mawphlaong, Shillong) water colour on paper, 1950.
(B) Hanging Clouds near Bara Bazar, Shillong, watercolour on handmade paper, 1950.
Collections: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

In 1947, he was the art advisor to the *First Assam Hills and Plains People's Exhibition*, and worked as a staff artist in the military. A member of the Academy of Fine Arts and All India Annual Exhibition, Calcutta, he was the last artist to join the Calcutta Group in 1953. In 1950, he illustrated a book of children's rhymes in Assamese, and in 1974, illustrated the Assamese book *Bharatiya Chitrakala*. In 1984, Misra illustrated *Roopar Antare Roop*, a collection of Bengali poems, and the Bengali book *Dikhow' Luit OSagar* in 1990.

Ram Kumar (1924)

Born in Simla, Ram Kumar completed his masters in economics from St. Stephen's College; Delhi University. He began his art education at evening classes at the Sarada Ukil School of Art, New Delhi, where he learnt the Western style of painting under the tutelage of Sailoz Mookherjea. Around 1948, he joined the Shilpi Chakra group of artists in Delhi, in 1950; he left for Paris with fellow artists S. H. Raza and Akbar Padamsee, where he became part of the communist circle of intelligentsia, regularly attending meetings and demonstrations. On his return to India, he became friends with art critic Richard Bartholomew and began regularly exhibiting with the Delhi Shilpi Chakra, becoming by the mid-Fifties one of India's emerging young painters. He received Lalit Kala Akademi's National Award in 1956 and 1958, and was awarded the Padma Shri by the Indian government in 1971. In addition to being a visual artist of repute, Ram Kumar is also a prolific Hindi writer.



FIGURE 110 Abstract landscape, oil on canvas, 1961. Collection: Private

Like several first generation post- colonial Indian artists, such as F. N.Souza, S.H. Raza and Paritosh Sen, Ram Kumar combined a desire for global success with the need to belong emphatically to his homeland. His landscapes are devoid of the usual constituents of reality. The land, trees, sky and water are not portrayed in their natural forms, and are strongly suggestive of abstract landscapes. At the same time, the intensity of colour in his delightful greens and browns, mustard yellows and inviting blues of the sky and water, do not allow an escape from reality either.

Baburao Sadwelkar (1928-2000)

Baburao Sadwelkar grew up in Kolhapur reading books on the great world painters such as John Sargent, J. M. Whistler and Augustus John. Later, in Bombay at the Sir J, J, School of Art, his notions of art underwent considerable change, now valuing the European impressionists -Manet, Monet and Degas. In 1956, Sadwelkar was invited to join the Bombay Group and participated in all the shows of this group till 1962.



FIGURE 111(A) Opposite Metro Cinema, watercolour on paper, 1951
(B) Road between Yacht Club and Dhnraj Mahal (Bombay), 1951.
Collections: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

The influential Europeans in Bombay - Rudolf von Leyden, Walter Langhammer and E. Schlesinger - thought highly of Sadwelkar's nuanced skill in portraits. Making portraits, Sadwelkar said, was 'a spiritual and alluring act', and his portraits, in their attempt to draw out the innate character of his sitters, attempted to reflect their inner being. Not wanting his passion to rule his profession, Sadwelkar moved away from portraits and towards landscapes, interested in impressionism and the high ideas of modern art.

Impressionistic in treatment, his later works reveal free brushwork, which creates a patchwork of colour sensations defining the subject. The brighter patches balances the darker tones in a striking manner and the browns help establish visual continuity. Compositionally the viewer is led from light to dark, from under the head of the painter to his eye that looks straight out, perhaps to the future. An important member of the art fraternity in Bombay, Sadwelkar was elected to the Board of Trustees, Prince of Wales Museum, and Bombay in 1990-91.

R. N. Pasricha (1926-95)

Born in Amritsar, R. N. Pasricha graduated in science and was forced to work as a typist to earn a livelihood. But it was painting that drew him, and he enrolled for night classes in art. Close association with artist Abani Sen helped him acquire a better understanding of painting techniques.

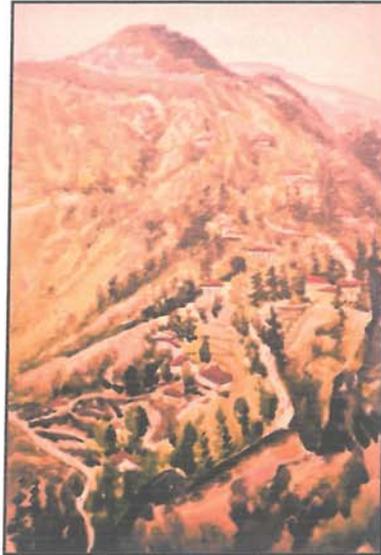


FIGURE 112 A view from Gun Hill Top Tibba (Kulri), watercolour on paper, 1950. Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

Pasricha's early works mostly consist of sketches done in sensitive black lines that communicate a scene, a story or sometimes just a moment. Primarily a landscapist, his preferred medium was watercolour. He painted several landscapes in and around Delhi, but it was the Himalayan ranges that became his theme and muse for over fifty years, inspired by the works of Nicholas Roerich.

Working from memory, he recreated his landscapes with different kinds of brushstrokes and arrangements of lines and dots. He balanced his water colours using various warm and cool tones to delineate individual objects. While his early works and sketches are distinctly academic in approach, the gradual flow of abstraction into his works is discernible. Besides water colour, he painted with gouache and the impulse towards abstraction comes through in his cubistically painted houses in several landscape works.

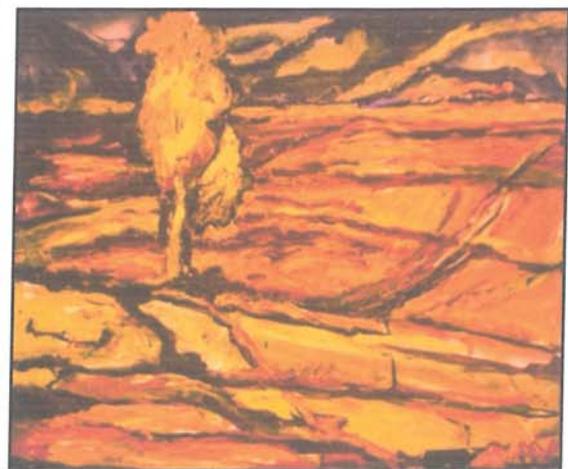
Pasricha received mention in the Limca Book of Records, 1997 and 1995, for being the only artist to have climbed as high as Kamet and Mana peaks and painted them *plein-air* on the spot. The records also noted his painting of sixty-five Himalayan peaks.

G. R. Santosh (1929- 97)

Born Gulam Rasool Dar in a lower middle class Shia Muslim family in Srinagar Kashmir, the self-taught artist took on his wifes Hindu name 'Santosh' as his own, in a move opposing patriarch)' and religion. His father's death propelled a young Santosh into early work as a signboard painter, papier-mache artist and weaver. He learnt to paint watercolour landscapes from Dina Nath Raina in Kashmir before studying under the eminent painter N. S. Bendre at M. S. University in Baroda. During his sojourn in Baroda, he produced a large body of work, both figurative as well as landscapes, mainly in the cubist style.



(A)



(B)

FIGURE 113(A) Backwaters, Dal Lake, Kashmir, Gouache on paper, 1952.
(B) Landscape, Kashmir, Gouache on paper, 1952. Collections: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

In Kashmir, Santosh found inspiration in the Hindu and Buddhist tantric cults that had coexisted with the region's Sufi mysticism for centuries. On a visit to the Amaranth cave in Kashmir in 1964, Santosh had a deeply moving spiritual experience that made him turn towards *tantra*. Driven by a deep muted esoteric world-view based on the primordial *purusha-prakriti* concept of cosmic creation he created forms that fused the sexual and the transcendental. He started painting in what came to be known later as the neo-tantric form or school, An acclaimed writer and poet in Kashmiri, Santosh built his pictorial and poetic world around this transcendental philosophy. Writing in Kashmiri and Urdu, Santosh attained acclaim as a novelist and poet, and wrote extensively on the tantric philosophy in English.

Recognition for Santosh came from Lalit Kala Akademi, the state governments of Madhya Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, the Sahitya Kala Parishad, AIFACS, and the Government of India, the latter in the form of the Padma Shri.

Jehangir Sabavala (1922-2011)

Born in Bombay Jehangir Sabavala studied at the best known Art Colleges of the world. After receiving his first Fine Arts Diploma from the Sir J.J.School of Art, Mumbai, in 1944, Sabavala went to Europe and studied at the Hearthley School of Art, London, from 1945 to 1947 and in Paris at the Academic Andre Lhote from 1948to 1951, the Academic de la Grande Chaumiere in 1957.

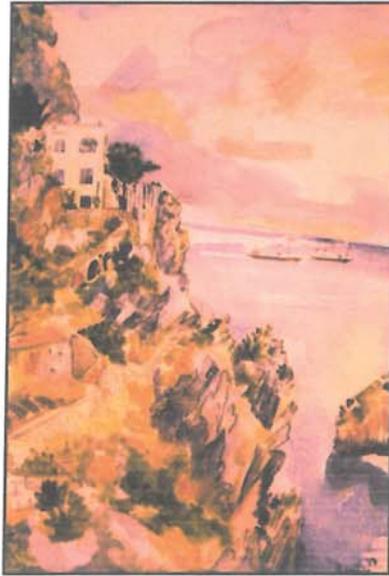


FIGURE 114 Watercolour landscape, 1952. Collection: Private

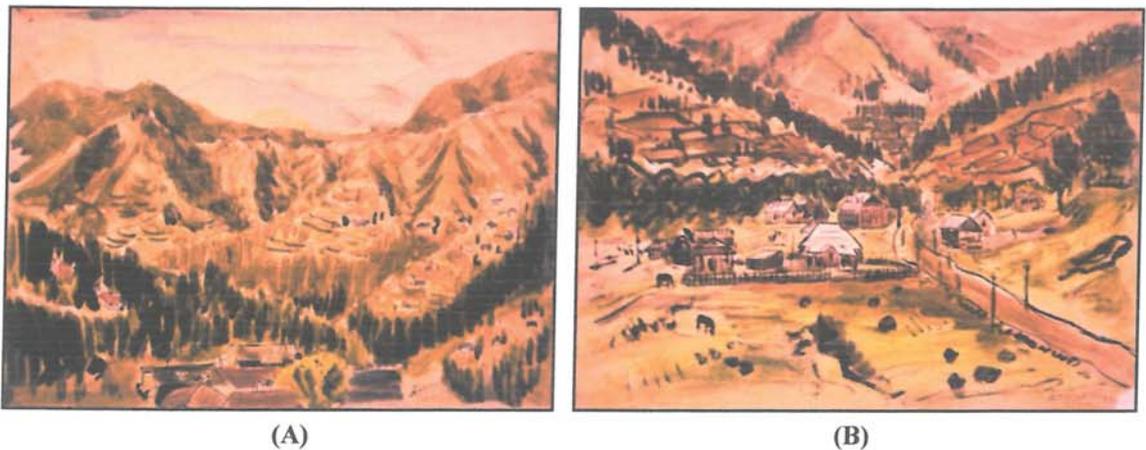
Sabavala works most often in either watercolours or oils creating landscapes, seascapes and figures deftly with his brush. Describing his palette as quiet, this modern Indian artist says that veiled light and middle -tones appeal to him much more than pure colours and loud imagery. An artist practicing in the modernist style with a deeply ingrained classical influence, Jehangir Sabavala creates almost geometric wedges out of paint, which he puts together to form vast, tranquil scenes. These 'receding planes' give each canvas an illusory sense of depth, illustrating Sabavala's mastery over light, colour and texture.

In the artist's early works, the human form emerged as only a minuscule element on the canvas, shrouded in silence and encapsulating the notion of solitude perfectly. However, his figures, over the many years that Sabavala painted, have begun to reveal more and more of themselves, even though they are still distanced from the viewer.

Three monographs have been published on this artist already, by eminent art publishers including the house of Tata- McGraw- Hill and the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi. 'Colours of Absence', a film on his life, won the National Award in 1994. Sabavala was awarded the 'Padma Shri' by the Government of India in 1977 and the Lalit Kala Ratna by the President of India in 2005.

Bishamber Khanna (1930-2000)

Bishamber Khanna was born in Peshawar and studied at Forman Christian College, Lahore, now in Pakistan, and did a diploma in fine arts from Delhi Polytechnic in 1954. An active member of the Delhi Shilpi Chakra, Khanna began his career as an art teacher in Modern School, Delhi, in 1952-53.



**FIGURE 115(A) Untitled, watercolour on paper, 1950.
(B) Untitled (PAHALGAM) watercolour on paper, 1951. Collections: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)**

Though he worked in several mediums, Khanna was the only artist in India to practice and master the technique of enamelling, a technique used mainly to embellish jewellery. He worked primarily with the sifting and stencil method of enamelling, but also worked with mixed techniques of raising, collaging of metal shapes, brazing and welding, with sometimes the wet inlay technique

and lustres that gave him special effects. Through painstaking practice, Khanna explored the 'infinite aesthetic scope of enamel as medium', resulting in works that Pran Nath Mago described as 'abstract compositions... enjoyable for their form, design and ... effect of calm and serenity'.

A significant member of the graphic art fraternity, Khanna organised some important art exhibitions - *Graphic Art*

In India since 1850 for the Lalit Kala Akademi in 1986, and two exhibitions in 1998 for the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, *The Early years of the Delhi Shilpi Chakra*, and *Symbolism and Geometry in Indian Art*.

Paramjit Singh (1935)

Paramjit Singh's formal training in art was at the College of Art, New Delhi in the 1950s. A close association with nature in his native Amritsar, and reading art books in the Khalsa College library (of which his grandfather was the senior vice principal), brought him closer to both nature and art, leading to his emergence as a landscape painter. Superbly rendered hues and masterly brushstrokes lend to his works luminosity. Singh's landscapes range between the purely realistic and the abstract, seen as part of three phases. The first is his art school period, when he began painting landscapes with an active interest in portraiture and figuration. In the second phase, he painted still-lives and landscapes, and the third consists mainly of landscapes, that depict experimentation with techniques. Paramjit Singh's mature works are a combination of figuration and abstraction where orchestration of colours and light finds forms in rugged hills, boulders, shrubs, fields, trees and sky.

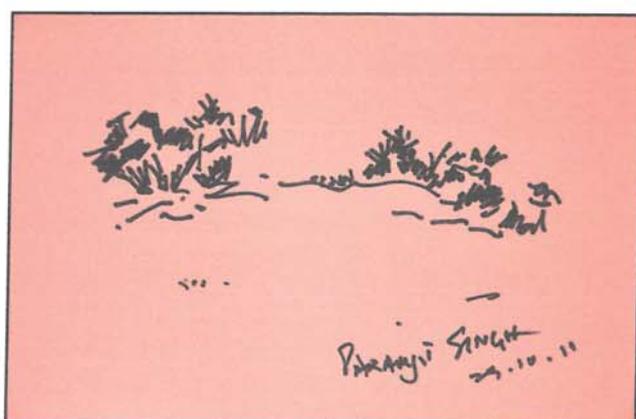


FIGURE 116 Ink Drawing landscape, c. 2011. Collection: Anindya Kanti Biswas

Paramjit Singh received the Lalit Kala Akademi's National Award in 1970. His works have been widely exhibited in exhibitions in India and abroad. He lives and works in New Delhi.

Jyoti Bhatt (1934)

Born in 1934 in Bhavnagar, Gujarat, Jyoti Bhatt studied painting and printmaking at M. S. University in Baroda. Inspired by his mentor, artist K. G. Subramanyan, Bhatt explored the academic divides between art and craft. His interest in fresco and mural painting techniques took him to Rajasthan. In the early Sixties, Bhatt received a scholarship to continue his studies at the Accademia de Belle Arti in Naples, Italy, as well as at the Pratt Institute in New York, where he was exposed to abstract expressionism. A keen experimenter, Bhatt's early works reflect the cubist style, later shifting to pop-art imagery, to finally arrive at a style inspired by traditional folk designs. Though Bhatt worked in a variety of mediums, including watercolours and oils, it is his printmaking that ultimately garnered him the most attention.

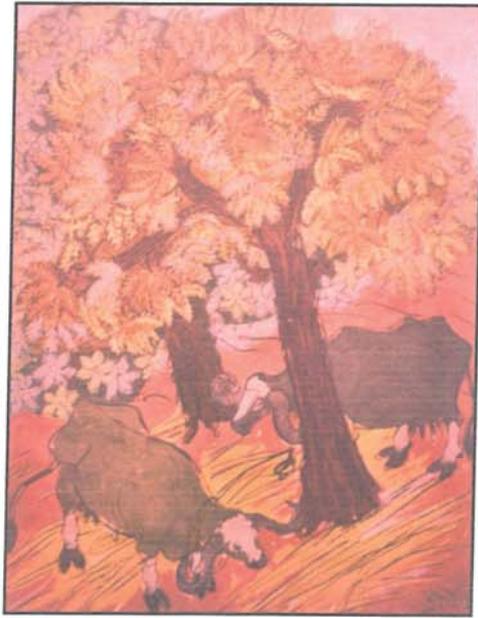


FIGURE 117 Under the Trees, watercolour on paper, 1951-52. Collection: Delhi Art Gallery (DAG)

In the late Sixties, Bhatt began his photo documentation of traditional Indian craft and design. Though the first work was an assignment for a seminar on Gujarati folk art, it soon became one of the artist's passions to document traditional craft and design work. Bhatt considers his documentary photographs to be an art form, and his direct, simply composed photographs have become valued on their own merit. A founder member of the Baroda Group of Artists, he also joined the artistic initiative, Group 1890. A recipient of national and international awards, Bhatt continues to experiment, innovating styles and techniques. He lives and works in Baroda.

B.N. Arya (1936)

B. N. Arya was born in Peshawar in that is now Pakistan's North West Frontier Province, to a prosperous merchant family. After Partition, his family migrated to Lucknow in India. Showing no inclination towards the family business,

Arya developed an interest in art, initially through photography, and studied art formally through a diploma in painting and sculpture from the Lucknow' College of Arts and Crafts.

A keen observer of Indian culture and customs, Arya is chiefly a watercolourist, having perfected its technique to become one of the few exponents of the wash technique and imagery of the Neo-Bengal School. His imagination has sought inspiration in myths and legends, and expressions of festivities and celebrations that were the frequent subjects of the wash technique in Bengal. As a result, his wash paintings are vibrant and pulsate with life, their poetic effect heightened by the use of blurred lines and glowing colours. The tones, when superimposed on one another, promote a phantasmagoria of shades, ennobling and uplifting in their appeal. It is this experimentation with the classical 'ash style that is Arya's remarkable contribution to the world of art.



FIGURE 118 Landscape in watercolour, 1965. Collection: Private

Though B.N. Arya has perfected the incredible technique of wash painting but he had made profusely watercolour landscape paintings. The impact of colour

in his works is vibrant and pulsating with life. Wash painting has been defined as a poem in line and colour. Hence poetic effects are heightened by the use of this hazy line and colour. The tones of colour when superimposed on one another, promote phantasmagoria of colourful shades, ennobling and uplifting its appeal. But he gradually turned out to be a thinker, an expressionist and an inventor of visual expressionism in colour. Many a times a painter translate the human emotions, because the colour of the wash technique produces extremely conspicuous effects.

A recipient of several awards including those Imm Lucknow as well as the regional Lalit Kala Akademis, Arya has served as head of the department of fine arts at his alma mater, and lives and works in Lucknow.