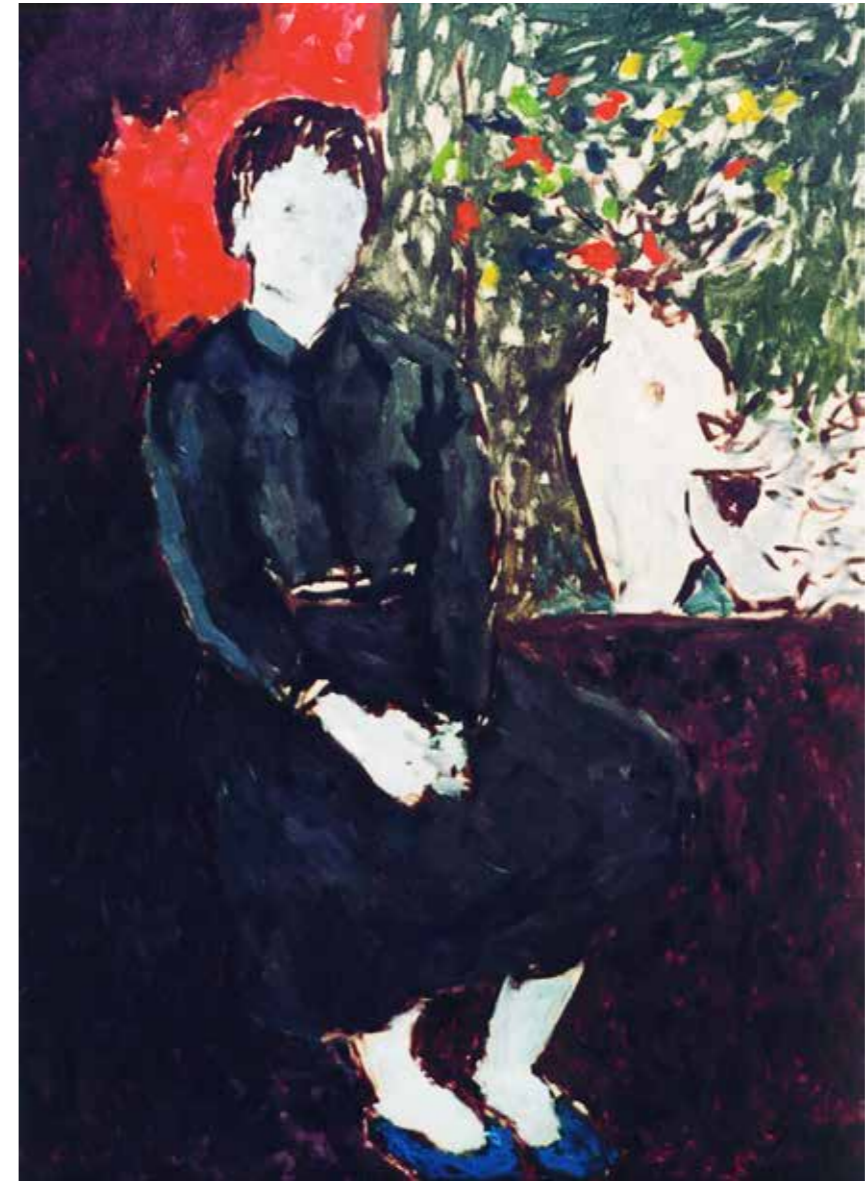




FORM TO FORMLESS

P R A M O D B A B U

Form to Formless
Pramodbabu



My Daughter Amila, 1993, oil on paper, 16 x 22 inches

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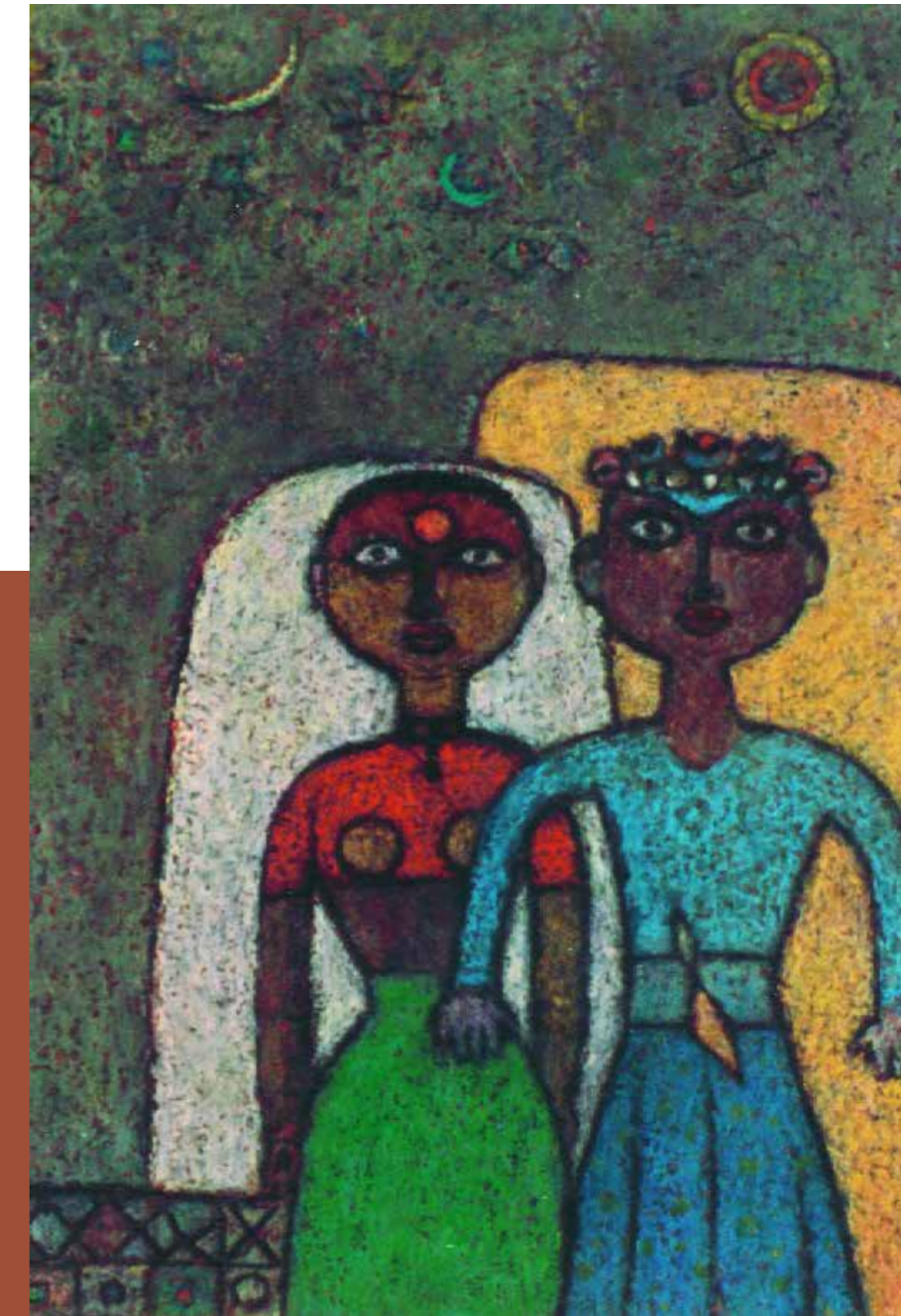
Published by National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai in conjunction with the exhibition titled 'Open Mind: A Retrospective of Pramod S Ramteke' conceptualized by Prabhakar Kamble.

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<p>Title Form to Formless Pramod Babu</p> <p>Author & Editor C. S. Nag</p> <p>Text 1 The evolution of an Artist C. S. Nag</p> <p>2. The Artist on his Art Pramod Babu</p> <p>Design Flowersun Studio now@flowersun.studio</p>	<p>Exhibition Execution Team: Ms. Nazneen Banu Smt. Anita Rupavataram Shri M Shankar Ms. Shruti Das</p> <p>Exhibition Display Support Team: Shri N. N. Dhongadi Shri Virendra Kumar Shri Jarifuddin Khan Shri Uttam Pundlik Gawas Shri Devanand Sadashiv Palav Shri Hemant Dnyandeo Parab Shri Rajaram Sitaram Parte Shri Krishna Pundlik Gawas Shri Pranay Kuwar Ms. Shital Nerikar Shri Akshay Panchal Valuable Support of CPWD Civil & Electrical Team</p>	<p>Printed at: Aim Advertising 8, Pitha Street, D. N. Road, Fort, Mumbai - 400001</p> <p>© 2022 NGMA, Mumbai</p>
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*Bride and Bridegroom, 1987, coloured pastel,
16 x 11 inches*

Director General's Note

We are honoured to host the retrospective of Shri Pramodbabu Ramteke, covering the last 55 years of his illustrious career. He is a prominent abstract artist who had portraiture as the starting point of his oeuvre. He navigated through various art forms, to create figurative works, sculptures, graphics, conceptual propositions and abstractions, which allude to his beliefs. He has been a lifelong adherent of the Ambedkarite movement.

Ramteke began as a draftsman in Indian Navy. Leaving the navy in 1975, he spent a life in pedagogy. He joined Sir J. J. School of Art as a professor and retired as head of the painting department of Chitrakala Mahavidyalay, Nagpur 2002. He is celebrated as a portrait painter par excellence; it is noteworthy that he painted the portrait of late President K. R. Narayanan, which was commissioned by the London School of Economics and Rashtrapati Bhavan in 1999.

He has received several prestigious awards from the Bombay Art Society, Art Society of India, Academy of Fine Art, Hyderabad and South Central Zone Cultural Centre, Nagpur. He has held many solo and group shows in India and abroad. His solo exhibitions include the ones at Jehangir Art Gallery Mumbai and Rama International Gallery, Aurangabad.

I would like to express my gratitude to Shri Vilas Shinde, Chairman of the Advisory Committee and its members, for their guidance and support. I thank the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, for its unstinted backing. I would also like to appreciate the sincere efforts of Ms. Anita Rupavataram, Director, NGMA, Mumbai and the entire NGMA team for the successful execution of this project, especially against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic which has considerably changed our way of living, over the past year and a half. I wish this exhibition all the success.

Adwaita Charan Garanayak

Director General
National Gallery of Modern Art.

Director's Note

We, at the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Mumbai, are delighted to host the retrospective of Pramodbabu Ramteke. The two hundred plus artworks exhibited in this exposition - including one from the permanent collection of NGMA consummately showcase the artist's journey over the last fifty-five years.

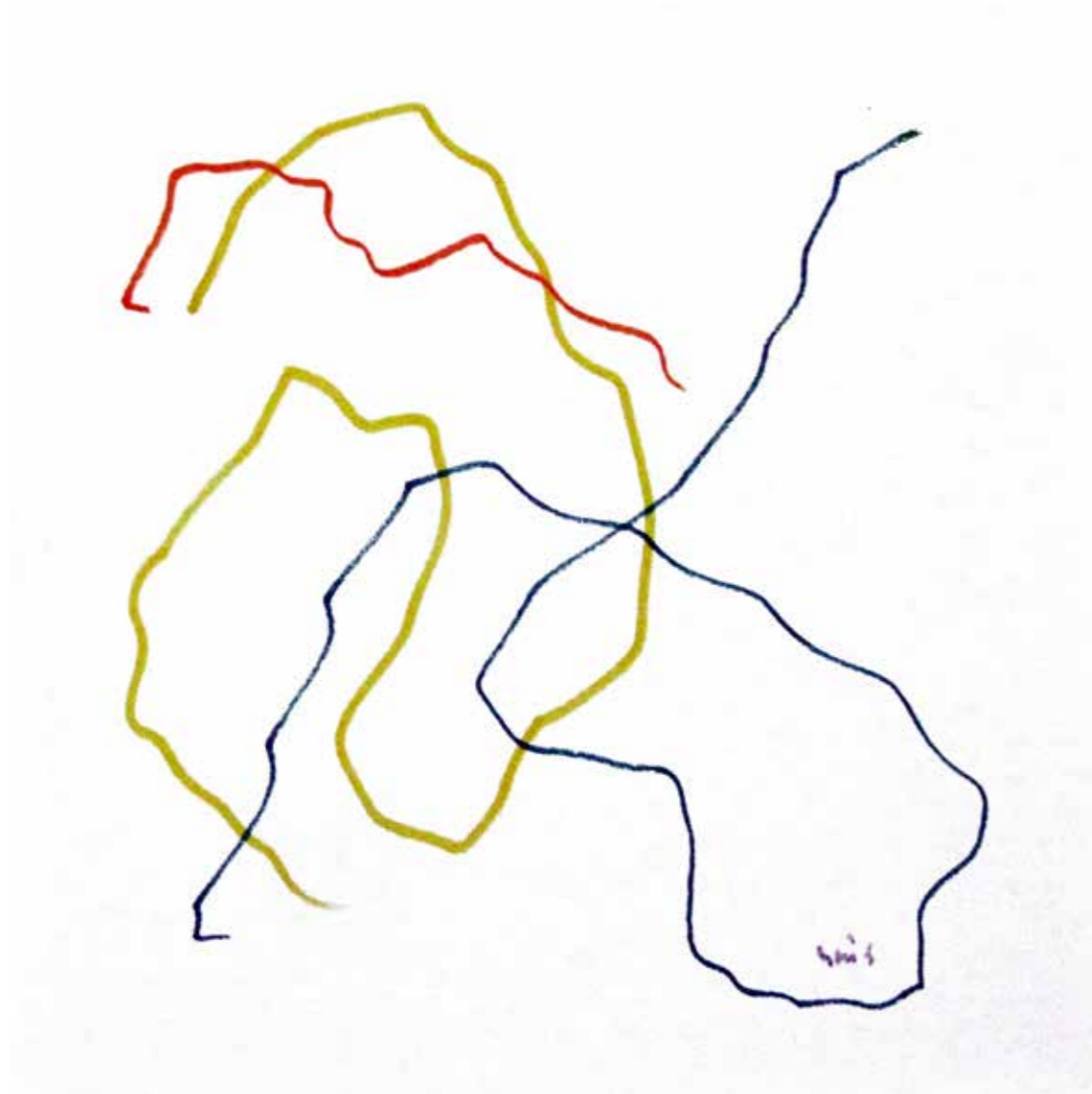
"Every child is an artist, the problem is staying an artist when you grow up", said Pablo Picasso. This retrospective, aptly titled Open Mind, proves beyond doubt that Pramodbabu's journey as an artist, that started off chasing clouds in the sky as a child, continued, albeit changing course from time to time, with his experiences and perspectives only adding more variety to the canvas that he paints on. His disarming simplicity and well-preserved childlike innocence leave an indelible impression on any one who interacts with him.

He has donned many hats - be it that of a draftsman in the Indian Navy or of a Professor of painting at the Government run Chitrakala Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur. It is enthralling to trace his oeuvre — which moves from form to formless, from portraiture to abstract art.

I take this opportunity to thank Shri Adwaita Charan Garanayak, Director General, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi and Shri Vilas Shinde, Chairperson, Advisory Committee of NGMA, Mumbai, for their guidance and support. I would also like to congratulate the artist, Shri Pramodbabu Ramteke for this stupendous show. Last, but not the least, I would like to thank all my colleagues at NGMA, Mumbai, particularly, Shri M. Shankar, Curator, Ms. Shruti Das, Deputy Curator and Assistant Director (Administration and Finance) incharge and all staff members, for their unflinching support, in making this exhibition possible. Putting up this show has taught us how to deal with the new normal, post COVID-19. I wish this exhibition great success.

Anita Rupavataram

Director
National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai



Untitled, 2012, Oil on Canvas, 60 x 60 inches

Acknowledgement



Special thanks to

Shri Adwaita Charan Garanayak, Director General, NGMA, New Delhi
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Shri Vilas Shinde, Ex-Chairperson of the Advisory committee of NGMA, Mumbai

Shri. Ravi Mandlik	Shri. Vijay Bagodi	Shri. Shrikant Jadhav
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Shri. Anil Naik	Shri. Surendra Jagtaap	Shri. Dilip Ranade
Shri. Ashutosh Apte		

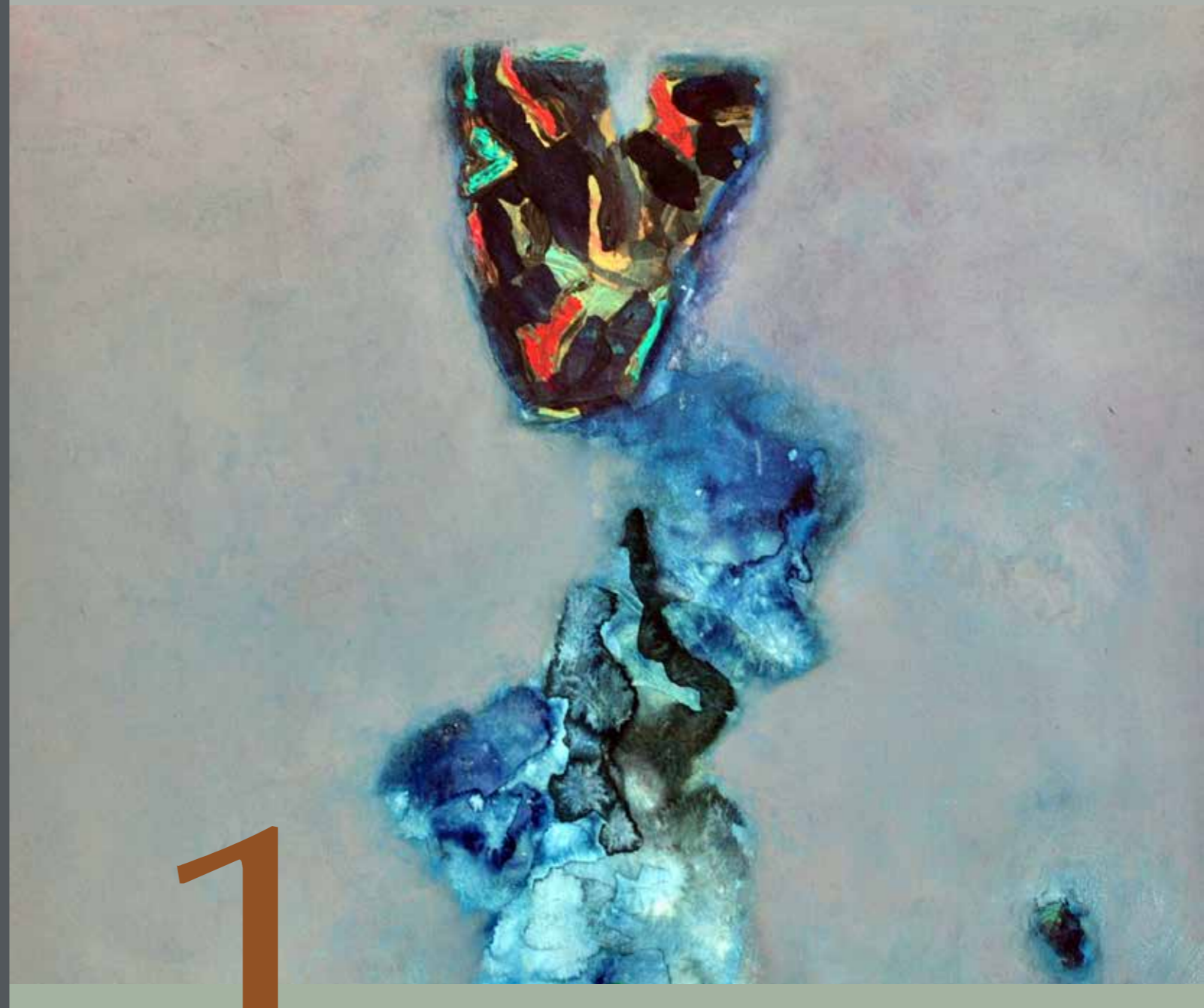
Shri. Anand Mahajani (Ex-Member of the Advisory Committee of NGMA, Mumbai)
Dr. Saryu Doshi, Renowned Art Historian & Art Critic

Savi Sawarkar, Artist	Sudhir Patwardhan, Artist	Prabhakar Kamble, Artist
Atul Dodia, Artist	Mogglan Shrivasthi, Artist	Sumesh Sharma, Artist

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Heena K (Nippon Art Gallery)

C. S. Nag, Author
Prashant Shah, Artist Dhruv Shah, Designer

Flowersun Studio, Mumbai - Design & Conceptualisation
Many Students, Friends and Well Wishers.



Untitled, 1998, Acrylic on Paper, 18 x 21 inches

1

THE EVOLUTION OF AN ARTIST

Nestled in the verdant range of the Satpuras, less than 50 Km away from Nagpur is the archaeological site of Mansar. It was the haunt of the great Buddhist Saint Nagarjuna, also known as the “Second Buddha”, who wrote his important treatise of ‘Madhyamika’ philosophy of ‘Shunyavad’ dealing with emptiness. He is also credited with writing the important treatise on Ayurvedic medicine “Rasavaishesika” while wandering in search of medicinal herbs in the hill near Mansar which bears his name.

Like the Buddha, Nagarjuna was also depicted with a protective hood of snakes over his head as 'Naga' bestowed the status of an 'Arhat' or enlightened person. In fact, even the old city of Nagpur was named after the river Nag which flows through it as it was once called 'Fanindrapura' from 'Fana' in Marathi which means 'hood of a cobra' giving further evidence that it was once the land of the Nagas.

It was in such an environment that **Pramodbabu Ramteke** came into this world on 23 April 1945, the tenth child of his parents Shivnarayan and Umabai Ramteke in the "Untkhana" area of Nagpur. Of the 12 children, six brothers named Ramnarayan, Badrinarayan, Sheshnarayan, Gaurishankar, Giridhar, Pramod and six sisters Prabhavati, Shudhavati, Nalini, Devyani, Mandakini and Nirmala, only seven survived into adulthood.



Pramodbabu at age two with family after the death of his mother.

Pramodbabu with elder sister Nalini and elder brother Girish in 1966.



Named 'Shridhar' by his parents, Pramodbabu lost his mother at the tender age of two. He came under the protective care of his eldest sister Prabhavati, 25 years older, who became his foster mother and renamed him 'Pramod' after consulting the family astrologer. To save a year of his schooling, she pre-dated his date of birth to 23-4-1944 to enrol him a year early.

Devotional music, theatre and spiritual learning flourished in his family and became his invaluable inheritance. His grandfather Atmaram was a renowned 'Kirtankar' (Gospel singer) who had performed at the palace of King Laxmanrao Bhonsale of Nagpur. His mastery of music and the scriptures earned him the status of a saint in the Vidarbha region.



Group photo- Year -1905 - Pramodbabu's Grand father (center, seated), Father and Uncles. Standing from left Uncle - Dr. Santaji Ramteke (Founder President of Smarak Samiti, Diksha Bhumi Nagpur- 1957), Wrestler Ustad Laxminarayan Ramteke, Ramnarayan Ramteke, Pakhwaj player Harinarayan Ramteke, Lt. Manishankar Ramteke (2nd world war Germany -1942) Sitting from left Uncle - Krishnaji Ramteke, Grand Father Saint Atmaramba Ramteke (Renowned Kirtankar in the court of King Laxmanrao Bhonsle, Nagpur), Father (Tatya) Shivanarayan Ramteke (Renowned Ayurvedacharya)

Pramodbabu during his Art Masters Post Diploma in JJ as student in 1974.

Pramodbabu's father Shivnarayan followed in Atmaram's saintly footsteps and was not only a generous and social human but also an expert Ayurvedic physician. As a young boy, Pramodbabu would often accompany his father on his outings to the forest surrounding the Nagarjuna hills area to look for medicinal plants and herbs.

Music and art was also in Pramodbabu's blood as his father Shivnarayan's theatre company had won the first prize for historical plays from the great thespians Prithviraj Kapoor and Sohrab Modi. Shivnarayan's cousin Haribhau had even impressed a young Bhimsen Joshi with his 'Kirtan' in classical style at 'Saint Lele Maharaj's Math in Nagpur. Pramodbabu's family had taken active part in Shahu Maharaj and Babasaheb Ambedkar's social reform movement which revolutionized rural Maharashtra in the 1920's when the Mangaon Conference was held in which Shahu Maharaj declared Ambedkar as the true leader of the oppressed classes. This legacy of espousing humanitarian values of social justice, freedom and equality was passed on to the next generation.

In 1942, Pramodbabu's eldest sister and mentor Prabhavaitai was among the ten women selected to address the All India Depressed Classes Conference attended by 25,000 people and even had the distinction of having her photograph taken with Dr. Ambedkar. In 1956, along with nearly 5 lakh of his followers, Ambedkar converted to Buddhism at a historic function in Deekshabhoomi in Nagpur.

As a young boy, Pramodbabu was groomed in this spirit of compassion for the downtrodden by his elders. Having a shy and sensitive nature, he was full of curiosity and wonder. He would often spend long hours gazing up at the sky watching the clouds assume different forms which he imagined to be trees, hills and various creatures.

At an early age he could be seen scribbling these forms on walls of his house and neighborhood. He would ask his friends to draw any crooked line on his slate and create weird forms and snake like creatures out of them as they watched in fascination. In his school classroom he later earned praise from his teacher by doing a very realistic portrait when he was just 12 in the 7th grade.

The Innocent One, 2016, Serigraph, 20 X 20 inches



Pramodbabu completed his education from 1st to 4th grade at Missionary School and then enrolled in the Sule High School until his 10th grade. In 1963 he went to Milind College in Aurangabad to study science. As a college student, he worked as touching artist in a local photographer Muhammedbhai's studio to cover his pocket money.



Pramodbabu's first abstract artwork in 1969 while at Prasad Films.

His fascination with colour got free play as he learned how to colorize the black and white photographs by the technique of hand tinting directly on film. A new world of colour opened to him when he saw such classic films as "Taj Mahal", "Mere Mehboob" and the Hollywood epic "Cleopatra" in movie theatres.

His love for art became deeper during his stay in Aurangabad after a college outing to visit the picturesque Ajanta caves. When he saw the world famous sculptures of Buddha and the colourful frescoes painted on the walls, his imagination knew no bounds. Unhappy with his science studies and daily routine, Pramodbabu dropped out of college and returned home to Nagpur in 1965 determined to pursue a career in visual arts.

At first he thought of pursuing a career in films as a director but was unable to get admission into the newly formed Film & Television Institute in Pune. Acting on his strong impulses, Pramodbabu enrolled for a three year program in painting studies at the Government College of Art in Nagpur in 1966. His skill as an artist blossomed under the able guidance of Prof Pendharkar who was well versed in both Indian and Western art.



Affection, 2002, Oil on Canvas, 30 x 36 inches

Pendharkar laid great stress on developing the composition skills of his students and Pramodbabu's precocious young talent grew rapidly. He began to develop his own style trying to get more balance and rhythm in his paintings. Along with art techniques, Pendharkar also encouraged his interest in photography and was elated when Pramodbabu won the top prize in the college photography contest three years running.

After passing the course in 1969, he set his sights on the big city of Mumbai to pursue further studies. After arriving in Mumbai, however, Pramodbabu was disheartened when he became late to get admission into the prestigious Sir J.J. School of Art. Determined to find a way out of his predicament, he found a job as an artist in Prasad Productions' film animation studio. He did double duty, painting at night and doing odd jobs in the studio during the day.

His expertise in hand tinting learned in Muhammadbhai's shop came in handy when he had to paint directly on film and colourize the background sets and design the title cards and even work on animation effects. Seeing his work on the screen not only gave him immense satisfaction but also a sense of how to achieve a panoramic scale in his paintings.

The monumental works of the great French sculptor Auguste Rodin like the "Eternal Springtime" which he sketched in pencil on paper had a great impact on him. His artistic efforts continued as he dabbled in abstract art and made his first painting in this style which began to fascinate him.

Pramodbabu found a more secure job as a draftsman-artist in the Indian Navy. One day, a Navy commander saw him engrossed in doing a portrait painting. Impressed by his diligence, the commander encouraged him to pursue further studies in his art. With his help, Pramodbabu joined the American Centre library and a new world of wonder and curiosity opened up for him as he saw art catalogs of several Indian artists like M. F. Husain and K. K. Hebbar.

Pramodbabu receiving first Mah State Art award from K.K. Hebbar in 1982.



He studied the exciting innovations of Impressionist masters like Monet, Cezanne and Van Gogh in particular which rekindled his imagination as it had when he gazed upon the sky as a young boy. The transition of artists like Piet Mondrian, Paul Klee and Joan Miro from post-impressionist to abstract expressionism and of Picasso from his blue and pink phase to cubism left an indelible mark on him.

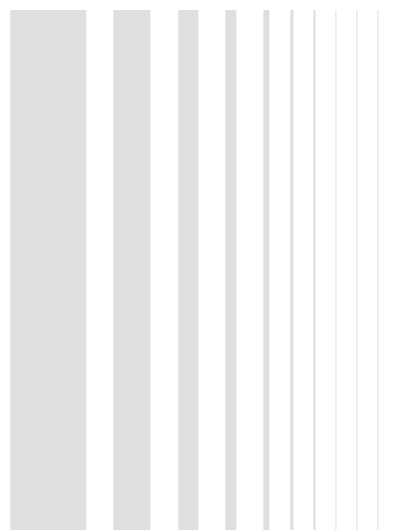
In 1973, he joined the veteran artist M.S.Joshi's "Model Art Institute" in Dadar to do his diploma in G.D.Art. A student of the renowned Deolalikar, founder of the "Indore School of Art" and "Guru" of such greats as Bendre & Husain, Joshi was known for his portraits and landscapes in impressionist style with broad brush strokes. Pramodbabu was fascinated by Cezanne's use of conical, triangular, cylindrical and spherical forms in his nature studies.

Driven by an insatiable curiosity to learn more, Pramodbabu was finally able to get admission to the prestigious Sir J.J.School of Art for his 'Art Masters' program.

Among the instructors at J. J. School of Art the genial Bhagwat was incharge of Foundation class. Bhagwat was meticulous, thoughtful and far sighted in his approach. He was very popular with students who flocked to him for his vocational advice as he was well versed in all arts like textile, ceramics, pottery, metalcraft and even interior decoration.



Unknown animal, 1986, Iron Scrap, 15 x 11 x 15 inches



A lot of students in early morning Foundation class looked sleepy and lazy. When one lecturer Salve pointed this out, Pramodbabu suggested to him that making them run two laps around the campus grounds might freshen them up. The professor agreed and the new routine led to positive results on both sides.

In 1975, the new Dean Sambhaji Kadam took over. His skill as an artist was well known but he also impressed everyone with his knowledge of classical music. He would often hold recitals on his harmonium for the benefit of students. In his class he would explain the finer points of both painting and music and the rhythmic and emotional relationship between them.



Untitled, 1996, Water on Paper, 22 x 22 inches

He brought such eminent musicians as Bhimsen Joshi, Kumar Gandharva, Kishori Amonkar and Shobha Gurtu to perform at the annual show of the college. Kadam was known as a master portraitist and his famous admonition to students was to "use paint as softly as butter!"

Pramodbabu's forays into metalcraft, murals and graphics led him to more rounded forms and a zeal to create more rhythm and depth in his paintings. The college outings helped Pramodbabu to assuage his thirst for adventure and wanderlust.

In his own way Pramodbabu helped his students explore new horizons of modern art. Well versed in the art of Mondrian, Miro and Klee he added Wassily Kandinsky and Jackson Pollock to his list of art exemplars. In the spiritual atmosphere that pervaded the campus with J.Krishnamurti's annual philosophical discourses, Pramodbabu was drawn to the wisdom of Zen Buddhism and Taoism.

*Reclining Head, 2017, Oil on Canvas,
72 x 168 inches*



He grasped the true meaning of Vatsayana's "Six limbs of art" he had imbibed under his teachers at J.J during his 'Art Masters' program. In representing form, proportion, expression, grace in composition, simulation and colour composition in his art, he added rhythm and texture to his palette. Looking at the sky as in his childhood, he saw how lightning etched its jagged line and how the rainbow made everything resplendent with its colour. In the perpetually moving transitory shape of cloud formations, he saw the eternal microcosm of the universe of forms.

Returning to the Government Art College in Nagpur as a teacher, Pramodbabu was inspired by memories of his childhood and the spiritual influence of his family and local folklore. He completed his MFA in painting from Nagpur University in 1984. In Nagarjuna's 'Madhyamika' philosophy of 'Shunyavad', he found the peace and harmony of a purely holistic approach to art. It became clear to him how the primordial dot contains a whole universe of meanings and forms. He saw how a moving dot describes a line and a moving line describes a plane.

He even practiced the Korean martial arts technique of "Taekwando" from a Thai student at the Bandra hostel who became his friend and teacher. As his interest in the spiritual aspect of the technique deepened, he studied under the 6th Dan Master Lee at Don Bosco school as seen in a portrait of him in dojo attire done by one of the professors of Sir J. J. School of Art Prof. Bawlekar. On one occasion, Pramodbabu was forced to intervene in a student altercation. With his tactful but firm handling of the volatile situation, Pramodbabu gained a reputation for his calm approach to conflict resolution.

Having arrived at the crest of modernism in art, Pramodbabu was keen to develop a visual language and style of his own. His five year bond with the Indian Navy had ended in 1975 and he began a prolonged stint as an art teacher for the next seven years until 1982 during which his aesthetic growth ripened into a more mature phase. Hebbar and Shiavax Chavda's line and Almelkar's textures led him to a more dynamic approach.



*Joy with the Shadow of Woe, 1993, Oil on canvas, 48 x 48 inches
Permanent Collection - Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.*

Pramodbabu made two visits to Santi Niketan during which his zeal to capture rhythm and movement in his art drew him to folk and even tribal art forms. Jaimini Roy's use of tribal art forms of Santhals giving it a modern context impressed Pramodbabu. He saw how the tribals living in isolation from orthodoxy from ancient times had used various materials like stone, wood, clay, iron etc to create images of animals, birds, fish, trees, fruits, flowers and human faces and figures.

He realized folk art was the most visible expression of their culture. It included toys for children, domestic utensils, utilitarian tools and decorative arts, masks and totems. He entered the forbidden world of the tribals who had created a new iconography of multitudes of Gods & Goddesses in paintings, murals and sculptures. He was introduced to deities like Marimai, Masoba, Malhari Martand, Khandoba, Naga and many others in the form of horses, elephants, bulls, tigers, deers, snakes, scorpions, fishes etc.

He came to understand how snake worship was very common among tribals and how it was recognized even in Ashoka's edicts. **The snake also stood for all the passions and desires in all cultures.** Among the Hopi Indians in America as among tribals in India, an annual snake dance was performed to celebrate the union of the heavenly male spirit with the earthly female spirit. The snake dance was a prayer to the spirits of the clouds residing in thunder and lightning to bless humanity by showering rain on their crops.

In the same way, he saw how the story of the Naga Buddha statues depicting a seven-hooded snake coiled over the head of the meditating Buddha as King Mucilanda gives him protection from a passing storm symbolized the overcoming of desire and passion to achieve immortality. The depiction of Nagarjuna in snake form was thus the symbolic representation of the myth of how he had received his wisdom from spiritual beings called Nagas from the bottom of the sea.

Nagas were therefore seen in Buddhist folklore as the embodiment of spiritual perfection and the term was reserved for 'Arihants' or enlightened persons of divine and saintly status. Just as the serpent can shed its skin and regenerate, the ancient Buddhists believed such 'Nagas' were reincarnated beings who had experienced 'Nirvana' and were immortal.



The Naga, 1997, Iron Scrap, 3 x 13 x 7 inches

In deciphering this ancient and sacred connection between tribal, Puranic and Buddhist doctrine in folk art forms along with music, dance and theatre, he saw they were very developed among many tribal groups like Nagas, Bhils, Gonds, Santhals etc which had later converted to Hindu, Muslim and Christian religion. Their pagan culture was replete with a wanton adoration of beauty whether in nature or in human form.

The German philosopher Carl Gustaf Jung and the Hungarian Philologist Karoly Kerenyi had discovered the same link between African tribal art and European culture as we see in the pagan 'Primitivism' of Gauguin, primal 'Fauvism' of Matisse and Derain and the geometric 'Cubism' of Picasso and Braque.

In this context, Pramodbabu saw how Indian tribal art extended even into elaborate forms of attire, garments, talismans, ornaments and even body painting and make up which persists today in popular festivals of colour smearing like Holi. The tribal fascination with beauty became clear to Pramodbabu in the sublime manner in which it was represented in the nude figures in the Ajanta murals.



Lokmat Newspaper, 1990



Lokmat Newspaper, 1990

He was struck by the innocence and rapture seen in the depiction of the various courtesans and seductive figures and postures in the frescoes. The pathos of the evocative 'Dying Princess' and the serenity of the 'Padmapani Buddha' holding up the Lotus in his austere sermon had moved many Western art scholars and historians to grant them World Heritage status and compare them to the greatest masterworks of the Italian Renaissance artist Sandro Botticelli.

Pramodbabu's art entered a mature phase inspired by his roots. His evocative painting of his son returning from school done in this period speaks volumes about his ability to capture a magical moment of innocence for posterity.



Tatu my Son, 1982, Gouache on Paper, 15 x 19 inches

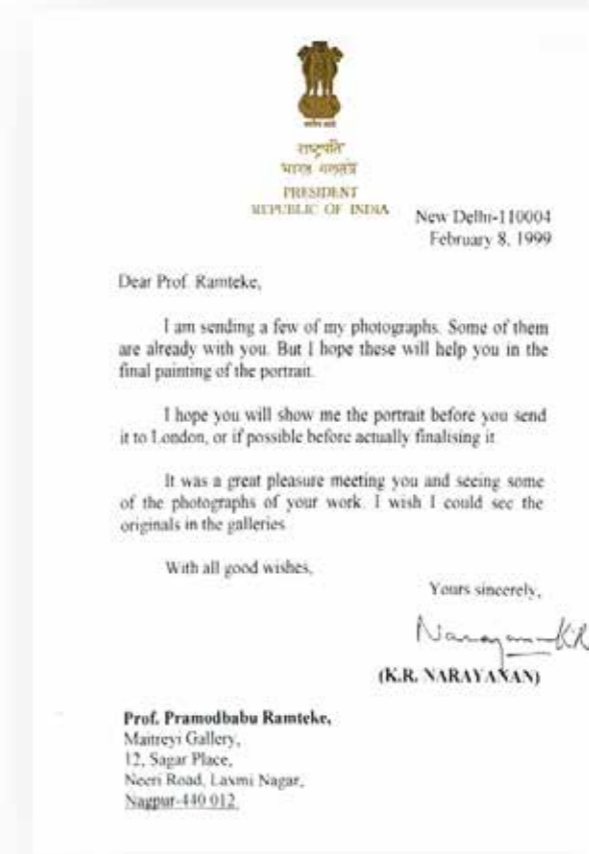
Gifted with the eye and skill to capture every telling detail and expression in his sketches and portraits from a young age, Pramodbabu gained a reputation as a master portraitist by the mid 1980's. His 1.5 x 2.5 ft oil half-portrait of Ambedkar in 1985 was so evocative and life-like that it was chosen by the reputed Vakil & Sons of Mumbai for printmaking of which more than 5,000 were sold all over India and abroad. He later did a bigger 3/4 oil portrait of Ambedkar of 3.5x4 ft size which has gained the status of an official portrait for posterity.

In 1996, Pramodbabu was blessed by the visit of revered Japanese Buddhist monk Arya Nagarjuna Bhante Shoorayi Sasai to his Laxmi Nagar studio in Nagpur.



Ambedkar Portrait, 1985, Oil on Canvas, 45 x 37 inches

The iconic 3x2 ft oil painting that came out of the sitting became a collector's item. A long time resident of Nagpur since the 70's, Sasai has been granted Indian citizenship by the government. When K.R.Narayanan became the president of India in 1997, the prestigious London School of Economics where he was an alumni, decided to honour him with a portrait.



Letter of President K.R. Narayanan

The LSE sent a delegation to India in 1999 to find the best Indian portraitist suited for the commission. After making detailed enquiries in Delhi, the delegation came across Pramodbabu's portrait of Ambedkar. So impressed was the London team by it that they decided on the spot to commission Pramodbabu for Narayanan's portrait. After enquiries at the J.J.School of Art, they were given the contact details of the artist in Nagpur. Unable to contact him, a messenger was sent with a letter, but not finding him there he left it there and returned.

When Pramodbabu finally got the letter and read it, he left for Mumbai immediately to meet with the London delegates. After their approval, he was summoned by the president's secretary to Delhi with his portfolio for discussions. He was asked to do the portrait from selected photographs as the president's schedule was too busy to do any sittings for the portrait. Pramodbabu was in a quandary but gathered the courage to say that he would only do a live portrait as required by such a prestigious commission.

The secretary then asked him to leave his portfolio with him and assured him he would send a detailed proposal to the president. Pramodbabu handed him his portfolio and left crestfallen. Later that evening, to his great relief and elation Pramodbabu received a phone call from Rashtrapati Bhavan giving him the good news that the president had agreed to do a sitting.



Live Portrait Painting of President Narayanan at Rashtrapati Bhavan New Delhi 1999.

Arriving in the president's chamber the next day for the sitting, Pramodbabu began applying his oil colours directly on canvas without using the initial tracings of a pencil. The president's alarm soon turned to joy as his likeness began to appear on the canvas with every stroke of Pramodbabu's expressive palette. He happily posed with the artist and shook his hand warmly to congratulate him on his masterwork which now hangs on the hallowed walls of his renowned alma mater in London.



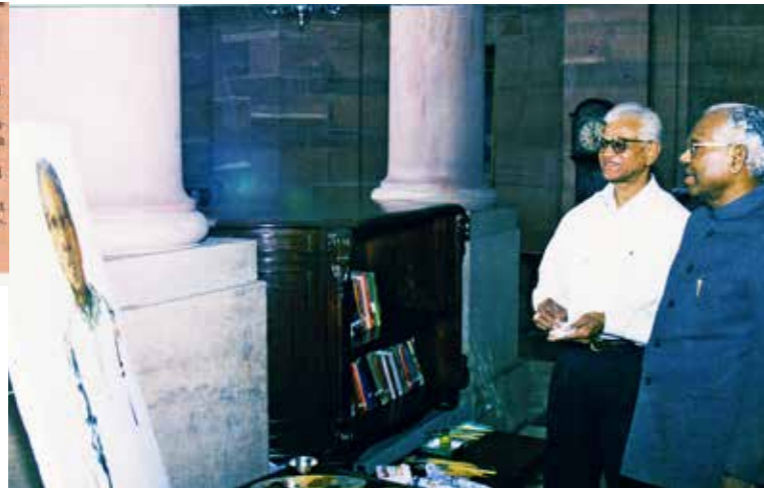
H.E. President Narayanan and Artist Pramodbabu with Final Portrait

The organic link with the curiosity and innocence of his childhood now led him to create and explore a new art form of stone portrait painting. He had developed a liking for collecting various kinds of stones having beautiful colours, shapes and textures since his childhood. The concept of colouring a stone, which has different planes, textures, lines, depth etc. had been in his mind for several decades. He often painted stones with abstract forms. Painting poster colours on stone gave him happiness. He enjoyed giving stones to friends as a gift.



Narayanan on LSE wall of fame
 A portrait of President K.R. Narayanan has been unveiled at prestigious London School of Economics (LSE), "symbolising the old ties between India and the school." Union law, justice and public affairs minister Ram Kishan Premi last night unveiled the portrait of Mr Narayanan who had obtained a degree with first class honours from the institute 52 years ago. In his brief speech attended by a gathering including Lord Swraj Paul, Lord Desai and G.P. Singh, Mr Premi referred to the independence of judiciary and democracy prevailing in India. Mr Giddens in his welcome said it was a singular honour for the school to have a portrait of a statesman who had achieved the highest position in India. The portrait was painted by artist Prof Pramod Babu Ramteke whose works have been exhibited in many Indian and international galleries.

The Economic Times - English Newspaper.



Pramodbabu with President Narayanan.



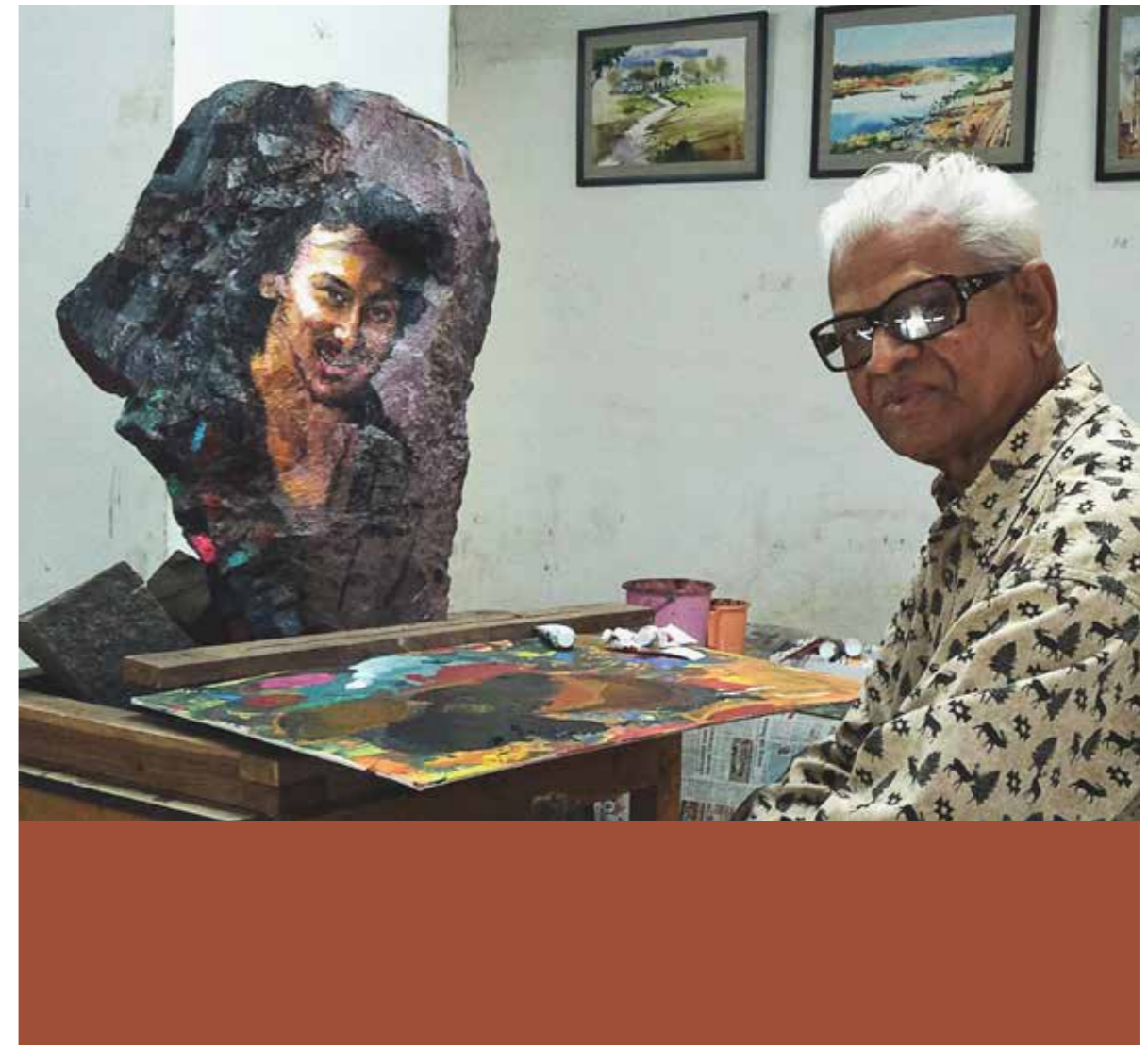
*Pramodbabu with President Narayanan with finished portrait.
 Hitwada - English Newspaper.*



Meeting with President Narayanan

But painting a portrait specially on natural random shaped stones with their original form came to his mind like a flash. One day while going on a walk he found a small black stone of 6x4x2 inch size on the roadside. This stone caught his sight due to its unique shape which resembled his friend's features. He painted his portrait over it with stunning realism. The fascination on his friend's amazed face made him realize he had created a new art form with a lot of potential.

Delving into extensive research, he found a whole genre of stone paintings of graveyard art of the deceased on grave stones on which their names and epitaphs were engraved. Rather than limit himself to this "dead art" as he called it, on a flat 2-D gravestone, Pramodbabu found the rounded, 3-D aspect of his stone art more creative and challenging.



Pramodbabu painting actor Tiger Shroff's portrait on random stone, 2016.

Head, Random Stone, 13 in. X 9 in. X 10 in., 2019



He roamed the remote area of Butibora and Hingna to find rocks of the right look and texture. After a good wash by trial and error he found the right kind of rounded brushes and acrylic colors to paint directly on the cracked rocky surface. The work was tedious but he toiled until he mastered it. To ensure the details and colors of his painting did not mix and merge he had to find the right paint fixer.

He went on to do another expressive work on stone in the likeness of no less than Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore which was highly appreciated by all art connoisseurs. After a year, he organized a show “Rock Portraits” at CISFA Gallery in Laxmi Nagar on June 13, 2015. There were a total of 20 stone paintings on Vidarbha’s most respected personalities and even one on Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachhan who posed with the artist and his artwork to add to his name & fame. The press and electronic media of Nagpur gave wide publicity to ensure the show’s success.

After the exhibition he tried to find out of his curiosity if any similar type of stone portrait painting work had been executed anywhere by any artist. He searched on the Internet worldwide. But he found no such art work of human portraits on random stones anywhere. **In conclusion, he came to realize how every natural object on this earth is useful and beautiful. We only need to develop our vision to see its beauty and use it for creative work.**

Pramodbabu’s early interest in graphics came to fruition in his work using the technique of ‘Platography’ in which aluminium plates are used instead of stone as in lithography. He created unique forms of serpentine, two-headed creatures, birds, fish, flora and fauna using earthy brownish-red colours in thick impasto texture akin to folk art found on clay walls in villages. The primal energy of his abstract forms recall myths and fables of the past in forging a dynamic link between the ancient and the modern.



Vision of Bapuji, 1994, Oil on Canvas

FROM
SHUNYAVAD TO ANITYAVAD



*Emotion and Pain, 2017, Acrylic on Canvas,
36 x 32 inches*

The constant movement and change in cloud formations in the sky had also aroused his curiosity since childhood. To him the sky had a fluidity, a vitality and was always alive. It became his metaphor for consciousness itself. After giving this idea considerable thought for about 20 years, it led him to explore the nihilism and impermanence of the Buddha's concept of "Pratitya Samutpada". The "dependent arising" of the chain of suffering attached to the nature of human existence was the doctrine of causality on the path to liberation enunciated by Buddha during his enlightenment.

The Buddha's discourse to Kaccayana in which he enunciated his "middle way" found expression later in Nagarjuna's "Mulamadhyamikakarika" in 150 AD in which the sage explored the transitory nature and ephemerality of emotions & passions linked to the "swabhava" or human nature and the futility of metaphysical speculations. In understanding that all such phenomena have no inherent existence Pramodbabu arrived at an understanding of "Shunyavada" or emptiness as the metaphor for his artistic preoccupations.

He sought to capture the emptiness of the sky and mind on the boundless field of his canvas. He did not paint clouds as we see them but as abstract forms signifying freedom, transience and change. The blue sky and transient clouds with their ever changing shape, rhythm and grace became a symbol of his own ever-expanding consciousness.

He sought to convey tactile sensations that transform the multi-dimensional plane of his paintings. His pictorial space thus became an exploration not only of abstract forms but of the dynamics of consciousness itself. Implicit in this was the psychic interplay between the observer and observed that forms the basis of all Vedantic and Buddhist philosophy.



Untitled, 2018, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches

As the emptiness of the void is full of infinite possibilities that are unbounded and cannot be contained by the finite, he made the logical journey from Nagarjuna's 'Shunyavada' to the 'Anityavada' goal of the Buddhist doctrine of limitless forms of the Absolute. In this way, Pramodbabu freed himself from the slavery of fixed, pre-meditated forms and took a bold leap into the nebulous universe of pure abstraction. He created tactile, visceral forms which had the dynamism, throbbing vitality and palpable reality of a living organism.

His bold line which had developed from his detailed study of Indian miniatures of Rajput, Mughal, Kangra and Garhwal styles now took flight on the wings of his fertile imagination to explore new horizons in abstract art. He did more

than 300 sketches of abstract representations of the human and natural forms in this new minimalist style. These ranged from small works of one square foot on paper to large works of four to six square feet and even 6x14 feet and 10x15 feet on canvas in acrylic and oil.



Untitled, 1993, Oil on Paper, 24 x 24 inches



Blue Revolution, 2009, Acrylic on Canvas, 66 x 66 inches

His goal in this quest was to distil forms to their very essence and capture their inherent beauty to express them in innovative colour schemes full of harmony and texture. As water is the essence of Tao and flower of Zen, the interplay of the five elements or humors of the 'Panchamahabhutas' of earth, wind, fire, water and ether came together in Pramodbabu's cosmic art. His healing canvas had the power to induce a feeling of great peace and serenity.

As the disturbed forces of Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas come into equilibrium, there is a reconciliation and balancing of the feminine Yin and masculine Yang or Shiv-Sakti kinetic-potential energies. Modern scientific research has found that each colour has a specific temperature and psychosomatic effect. The earliest treatise on alchemy "Rasaratnakara" was also by Nagarjuna in 200 AD whose hill in Ramtek was Pramodbabu's nursery.

Akasa was linked with black, agni with red, vayu with green, prithvi with yellow and ala with white. As with the Feng Shui masters of China, red was seen to have a stimulating effect on the heart and circulation, pink helped relax the muscles, orange helped in digestion, yellow stimulated the brain and nervous system, green helped breath control and blue lowered blood pressure with a calming effect.

All these aspects came to be reflected on Pramodbabu's shimmering canvas. Over the period of a lifetime devoted to art, his journey from the material to the spiritual took him from the symbolism of snake and animal forms to the spiritualism inherent in nature. After deep introspection the phenomenon of the observer and observed helped him to grasp the idea of how the nominal and phenomenal reality merge to reveal the whole and indivisible absolute.

From the 'Advaita' to the 'Anityavad' was a logical progression of his art as it finally arrived at the unified phase of an unbounded, dynamic line of perpetual creation. Just as lightning etches its jagged line in the heavens and the rainbow spreads its aura of radiant color, his vivid and imaginative art took wing to fly him through the doorway of the unbounded sky to arrive at the very gates of the absolute reality.

From form to formless, in seeing with feeling he discovered his being. With freedom and a zest for finding new forms of creative expression, he was ready to explore a space beyond duality. Like an intrepid cosmic messenger his art would resonate with the stillness and silence of the eternal and infinite. His wheel of karma and existence came full circle.



Untitled, Acrylic on Paper, 2021, 15 inches x 18 inches



Melody, 2007, Acrylic on Canvas, 66 x 66 inches

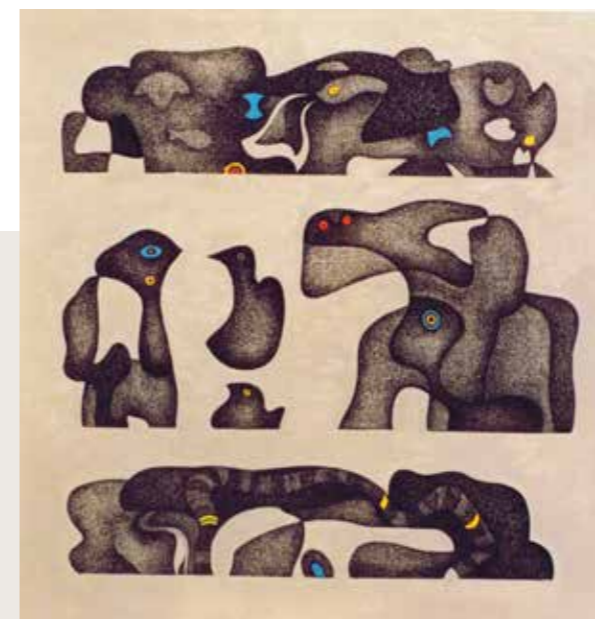
THE ARTIST ON HIS ART

As a three or four year old kid, I used to enjoy drawing crooked, diagonal and curved lines with coal on the walls of the house or on the ground. I didn't like to be disturbed as I wanted freedom to express my thoughts and feelings. I was not aware of any urge to depict reality or creativity, just the force to express my feelings which gave me happiness.

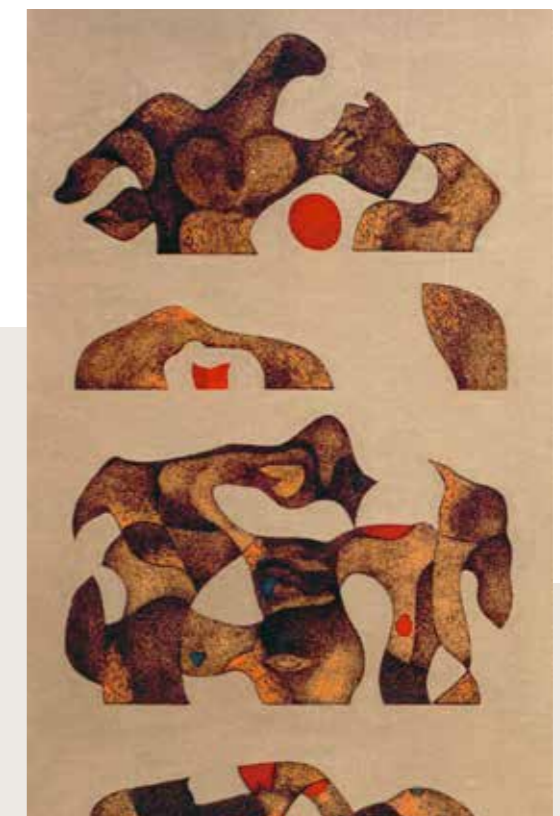
This is the same freedom which artists today try to find in abstract art. What makes it special is that it gives society a new way of seeing and thinking. I loved looking at clouds in the sky and see them change shapes, imagining them to be birds, trees and animals, even assuming human forms.

When I became a little older, I started copying pictures from books and magazines. I loved making friends and relatives sit next to me so I could draw their portraits in pencil. This passion is still there. I studied three years for a Diploma in Art from Govt. Polytechnic Nagpur to start my art carrier in 1969. Then completed my Govt. Diploma in Art (G. D. Art)from Model Art Institute, Dadar and Post Diploma of Master of Art at Sir J.J. School of Art Mumbai in 1974 and 1975. I also completed Master of fine art (MFA) from Nagpur University in 1984.

While studying in college, I read many books by Indian and foreign artists in the library. The Indian miniature method had a special effect on me at that time. I spent a lot of time experimenting different techniques of painting. Perhaps that is why there is so much unity and diversity in my art.



Life, 1989, Oil on Canvas, 36 x 36 inches



Life and Love, 1989, Oil on Canvas, 48 x 36 inches

I started drawing in small size on ordinary plain paper in pencil, ink, water and poster colours and did thousands of them. After my appointment as a lecturer in painting department at Sir J.J. School of Art, Mumbai in the year 1975 I started oil painting on canvas and did a lot of large size paintings of 2 feet to 6 feet and more.

Among foreign painters I was fascinated by the paintings by Van Gogh, Paul Klee, Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Miro, Mondrian and others. I studied the paintings of Indian artists like Husain, Hebbler, Bendre etc. in Indian art galleries. After lot of experiments and practice I developed a passion for creating my own art way.



Untitled, 2003, Ink on Paper, 14 x 25 inches

I searched for my own identity and got inspiration from observing cloud formations which helped to develop my own style of work. I created hundreds of small pictures. There were changes in terms of composition and colour scheme which happened in different periods as my art style developed. Hundreds of pictures took birth in this process.

I am now 77 years old. I have been working in the field of painting for about 55 years. I like to draw paintings with the help of ink, water, oil, pencil, acrylic etc. I love working in different mediums for creation. In 2015 I painted portraits on random stones and displayed in CISFA ART Gallery Nagpur as solo exhibition. It was a quite innovative exhibition of its kind in the world of visual art creation.

In 2021 the National Gallery of Modern Art in Mumbai held two month-long retrospective of my work over six decades at the prestigious C.J.Hall. My works are in permanent collections with NGMA New Delhi, Mumbai and National Academy of Lalit Kala Academy New Delhi and many private collections in India and abroad. Since last ten years, I have been working on computer and have done a lot of digital paintings. Apart from other media, I am still searching for new possibilities in my creative development.

LIFE'S THEATRE

Shakespeare described life as theatre. Everyone expects joy and bliss from it. Considering this how should one play his part? It is imperative to think about this. In life we observe our nature and behavior as being different. As the leaves on a tree appear to be the same but are, in fact, unique and so are we!

When we see a tree in full blossom we only experience joy from it. Just as each leaf expresses its unique identity amidst the diversity of nature, so can we abide in creating an environment of goodwill in our life's theatre!

I experience the same harmony and identity in the seven colours of the rainbow. It has come to symbolize the aesthetic life for me. Our family, society, nation and world will reflect this truth only when we as individuals radiate this fact like the rainbow.



Lifes Theatre, Serigraph, 2010, 10 x 13 inches

This is my belief. Happiness, peace and satisfaction came only through selflessness, just as every individual sacrifices for his family well-being and welfare. In my serigraphs, I have produced the image using pure colours and each colour associated with a unique shape merges with the next to create this harmony.

Yet, each shape is unique and so are the colours. The whites, reds, black, green, purple, yellow and blue are used in such a way as to create this rich tapestry, a mosaic of colours. In that sense they exemplify and symbolize the pure aesthetic life.

Each colour has its own unique character. In the eyes of the artist, all colours are important. In my art works the appearance of the snake motif is my own trademark. In all ancient cultures, the courage and strength of the seven-hooded cobra has been well understood and worshipped.

When 'Mara' sent heavy rains and stormy weather to disturb the penance of Siddhartha, the Naga King Muccalinda raised his hood to protect the Buddha from all obstacles and disturbance during his meditation. Mara is thus a symbol of all bad and evil thoughts which create fear and anguish etc to bind us.



Untitled, 2001, In on Paper, 15 x 15 inches



Transmutation, 1994, Oil on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches
Permanent Collection with - Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal

The thoughtful, creative and harmonious life is always blissful. It is always fulfilling and offers promising hope for others. My rhythmic shapes exemplify this regeneration of life. The balance and harmony created out of these myriad shapes symbolizes universal brotherhood and unity.

To make each art work reflect this aesthetic view with explicit clarity is the test of every artist. A serious consideration of this principle reveals each art work as being a thought process in itself.

It is essential to probe the depths of each art work in order to understand it. In so doing the viewer naturally experiences different ideas arising in himself. That they may be divergent from the artist's perceptions is only to be expected.

In this respect, painting is a visual philosophy which communicates manifold meanings in myriad shapes with different sub-texts which add up to a totality of a unique aesthetic experience.

In this way, art has an invaluable and joyous link to life. This is the aesthetic credo of my art. I have used the serigraph (screen printing) for my personal expression. This art work was chosen for an international print making exhibition held in 2006 at Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal.

Among the discerning art lovers to appreciate the work was my friend Dr Vinod Shah who acquired them for his prestigious collection. I express my thanks of gratitude and appreciation to all my well wishers.

ART IS A MYSTIC DIAMOND

Art is a lustrous diamond that emerges from the divine talent of a man. It illuminates life with its radiant rays. Poetry, music, singing, sculpture, literature, acting are its means through which the respective artist brings forth a radiation of a particular art through his own inwardly hidden talent which is like an unseen sun.

All artists try to create art with utmost laborious practice in order to capture one or more of all the rays of the radiation. To catch and preserve them for public display requires skill. Some artists absorb these divine rays in nature, assimilate them and then reproduce them through their landscape paintings. Others see and observe these rays in poetry, some catch them through points, forms, lines and make sketches, while others discover them in abstract paintings.

In other disciplines of art one may bring forth these rays through words and present them in verbal symbols expressing the innermost feelings to touch the heart through the sense of hearing. This can be done through by singers, poets, dramatists and others while a dancer brings forth the same feelings through body movement and postures. The dancer and viewers become one soul inwardly and enjoy the same emotional bliss. All these are the different forms of art and their presentations which promote truth, beauty and peace.

The sculptor's art searches for this beauty in stone and weaver in threads. But whether he is a painter, singer, dancer, architect, sculptor, he needs a viewer, capable of understanding him. Art lies in the eyes of the beholder as well. A viewer is an artist in how he views this inward beauty in a portrait, landscape or an abstract painting. He stays for a while to enjoy the art piece through all his five sense organs and salutes the painter, even if the painter is a child and he bows to him.

The finely weaved muslin cloth, embroidered sari or a neatly woven woolen shawl forces him to stop, examine and appreciate the labor taken to prepare or create the piece belonging to any type of art. Portrait paintings, landscapes or abstract paintings can be enjoyed with same fervor and favors.



While observing them what is most important or touching is the beauty and spontaneity involved to bring it forth from the imagination, which is the same for the artist and the real knowledgeable art observer. The diamond (ratna) and the connoisseur (ratnaparkhi) must both arrive at the same level. The inner and outer forms of art operate on both levels giving peace of satisfaction to the soul by assuaging the yearning for art.

Of course the penance the artist undergoes for the creation of art and the personal attachment of the viewer depends upon the discipline nurtured by them. In fact whether the painting is realistic or extra ordinarily abstract or whether the music gives more importance to the words or emotion should not be the criterion of enjoyment.

One should enjoy them only for beauty and only then the assimilation of beauty with truth and the peace that comes out of it can be experienced. If one cannot go through this process of observation, he is not a real viewer, listener or a real observer. He lacks something in his personality and is devoid of the ability to discern truthful beauty.

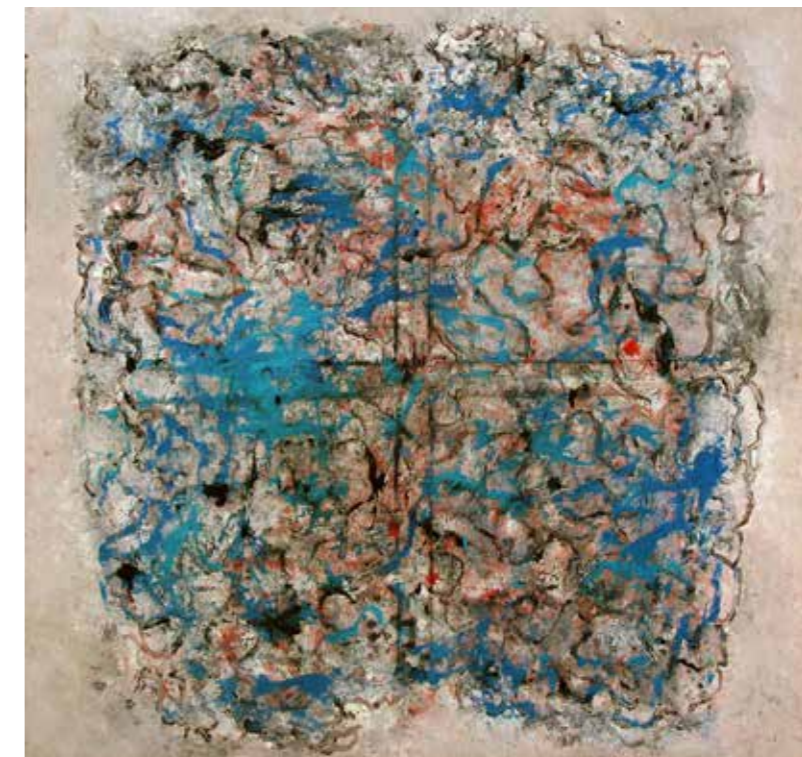


*Devil's Globe under the Nagas, 1978, Oil on Canvas, 48 x 42 inches.
Permanent Collection with Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal, M.P.*

The Padmapani Buddha, Jain, Mughal or Kangra miniatures, etc. and other great contemporary artworks should be understood through the roots of our mental personality. We should strive to develop this faculty of appreciation in us. If it is not there or has remained undeveloped, we must train ourselves for it, so as to enjoy the life in its deepest layers. So that the ray of imagination glows inside us.

One should therefore not observe the arts from the geographical point of view as Indian or European, but get absorbed into their study so that they can open the innermost vistas of our beings to the joy of art appreciation. Thereafter we can enjoy and appreciate even the Japanese, Chinese representations of the Buddha with their real vitality and spirituality because we can then absorb the essence of truth and beauty.

As an artist also we should fully absorb the process of creation allowing nothing else to tempt us. One may get rewarded or not by the judgment of others for you as an artist. Don't pay attention to their praise, nor get dejected by bitter comments. Nothing should divert you. Do what you wish to with full faith and with honesty. Van Gogh used to forget the outer world while painting. Follow him. He was called crazy and criticized but he continued in his efforts in spite of harsh treatment given by society.



Crucifixion, 2008, oil on canvas, 36 x 36 inches

One should therefore always try to search for the hidden divine ray in the art while studying it, think over it and when you receive the glimpse of that ray of light in the sculpture, painting or any other piece of art, reach quietly to its depth, get immersed and absorbed in it for a while. That is the way to enjoy art.

There are many subjects taught in painting colleges. The teacher should teach the students this basic idea of how to enjoy art and let them then create something of their own. Who knows which of the yet unseen innermost ray they can catch hold of. They would then discover their own ways of dots and lines or forms or color and shade.

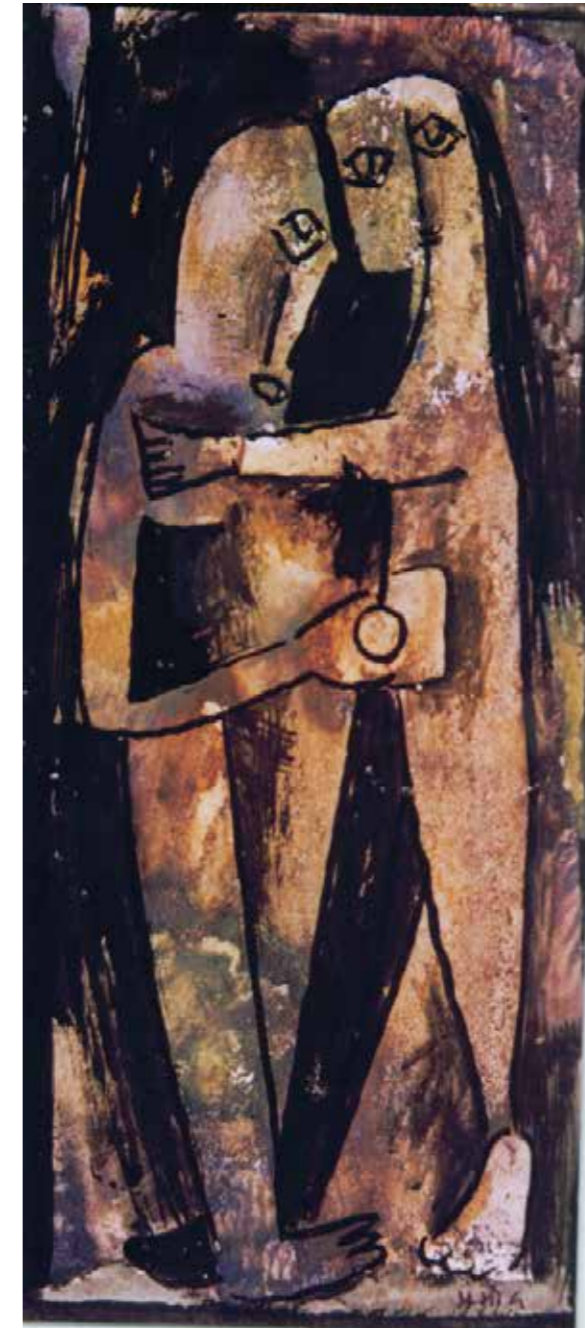
The point is that they should not try to copy anybody else. The teacher should allow them to open themselves to the vast universal light and pick up those rays from them useful to their inner spirit hidden in their personality. There are many painters doing landscapes which are very beautiful. But a smart critic can spot if he is copying someone, though the layman cannot. The duty of an honest teacher is to guide the student in the right perception.

The same thing is also seen in portrait painting. Drawing for a commission and drawing with the application of rightful emotions is different. How can a portrait bring out the personality of the subject is a real challenge. The teacher ought to guide the student in this direction. He first has to show his own style and system of coloring so the student can understand and after graduation develop his own style which is a lifelong process for each and every artist.

We should all try for betterment and perfection. This process is weakening day by day. When I visit art exhibitions, I find too much copy work and cheap imitation which makes me extremely restless. We should respect and honor the successful artist, but his greatness should not kill the hidden artist in us. Try to utilize the hidden energy in you, protect it and lift it day by day.

Think over it, follow its real demand and you will emerge with your own inborn hidden artistic style. Be a friend of your own talent. In 2004 I had arranged for the presentation of my paintings exhibition in Jehangir art gallery. There was another artist, whose paintings resembled Raza's. How can we raise our standard? I felt sorry for that young artist. There are thousands of aspects which an artist can develop and use for his expression. Only honesty can help develop one's own being. Meditating on it can be an excellent way to help manifest it.

There are many artists who refuse the other aspects of life for art's sake. Their creations show unique ideas and inventions. The artist of any genre of art should strive for his own style and perceive it until he reaches the highest possible pinnacle. There are very few artists who can escape the trap of imitation and can't come out of this 'Chakravyuha'. Only the true artist can capture the rays from their souls which are reflected in their art works which **keep the real art alive.**



Couple, 1972, Water on paper, 5X3 inches.

ART EXPRESSION & APPRECIATION

Artistic experience and art appreciation both are human values. Art appreciation is in fact a human liking and longing for beauty in things which is a love for beauty, natural or human made. The shapes, sizes colours & textures of all things attract us. That is why we can appreciate paintings, music, poems or sculptures.

This is the faith of a human soul in the beauty, the eternal faith in the truth of beauty which is cultivated in his faith in life. It supports the development of virtues and evolves man from his beastly origins and advances him towards a supreme blissful state.



Nibbana, 2021, Oil on Canvas, 48 x 60 inches

The first sight of beauty is, of course, external. We look at a painting, its colours, shapes and other aspects which attract us. After observing it, its inner or external factors appeal to us without our knowledge of them. This unconscious process of attraction or appeal of the painting to the viewer, comprises the painter's experience, point of view, emotion and thoughts while painting which enter the mind of a viewer to please him and give solace.

The love for art is a basic characteristic of human beings. This is a love for beautiful things which leads us to the innermost layers of the self. That is why a man loves the arts. We can say that only because of this tendency by which man has developed an urge for art. To have love for beauty is a source of bliss, which makes man enjoy the natural or manmade things of beauty.

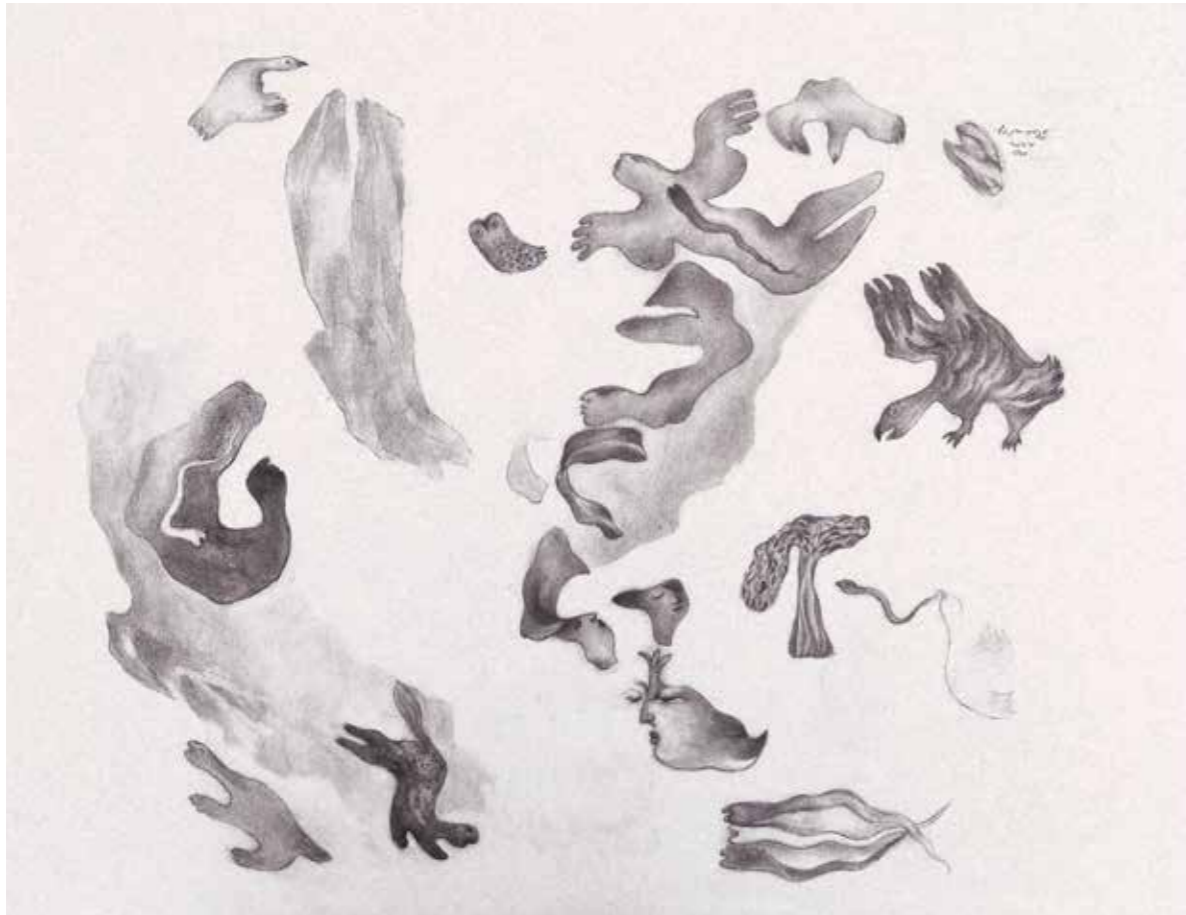
The status of a society can be judged by this urge. A society in which there is a tendency towards art enjoyment strengthens the tendency of the artist and encourages him towards the creation of art. The artist and the art loving admirer provide motivation to each other. When this urge for art in society becomes highly cultured the art becomes more and more beautiful. So the desire for art develops in the mind of an artist which makes him discover and invent more beautiful forms in the field of art.

Nowadays this impetus for the higher form of art emerging from the deepest experience of nature seems to be vanishing. No efforts are being made to choose a highly enlightened and talented artist for drawing or sculpture. On the other hand any artist of lower calibre ends up producing art, which lacks creativity. Hence no epics are being written and no good art works are being done in painting and sculpture. The highest status of the art in ancient India was due to a higher taste in art of the people and society, which encouraged the artists to create masterpieces.

This process of appreciation is what we have in the form of an original gift which is inborn. As children we look toward the natural surrounding and are astonished. Gradually we get accustomed to nature and its different aspects through our sense organs. This knowledge of primitive man also made him fearful of so many natural phenomena. His native protective instinct tried to save him from horrifying natural calamities and wild beasts.

So his first creation was protection in the form of weapons. At the same time he also found some helpful factors in nature which he depicted later in the form of archetypal sculptures representing demons and Gods for protection.

Gradually with his inborn tendency of understanding nature he developed different art forms and the techniques of art.



Freedom, 2001, Pencil on Paper, 20 x 15 inches

Today we are entering a new era in which the social values and artistic knowledge and ethics are changing fast. No one, therefore, can predict the future form of art. The artists are marching fast by crossing new horizons in the field of all the arts. Even the appreciation factor remains unchanged although the place of books and libraries has been taken by the internet and T. V. which has provided a private theatre in everyone's home.

What the art galleries, fairs and exhibitions of painting and sculpture used to present in the past which promoted the artistic taste in the people is now being done through television with utmost detail about the art piece. **But the satisfaction and bliss an artist gets by sublimating his inner urges remains his unique experience. That is the essence of creation.**

When in schools and colleges the arts are taught to students, they develop an artistic appreciation only. Their innate artistic calibre can only be given a right direction. Art education can only help the student for his all rounded development. Only those having an artistic calibre can become a real artist. A few are born artists and others cultivate art from a productive instinct. The major role of art education, therefore, remains in developing art appreciation, a critical ability and creativity by developing the imaginative power of the students.

Whatever may be the effect of the fine arts, they have a positive role to play on the human mind, so imparting art education to them is necessary. In the process of living burdened with so many limitations, reservations and restrictions, man has to suppress his urges, emotions and likings. If they don't get an outlet, there is a possibility of feeling despair and hopelessness. One becomes disappointed which leads to negative thinking and ultimately there is a feeling of frustration.

In this age of competition there are frustrations of different types, which can be overcome only through an appreciation of the arts. This is life affirming and fulfilling. That is why there is a need for an art education. Therefore there should be a bridge between the creator and appreciator in society which can balance each other's needs. A harmonious dialogue between the artist and art admirer is the need of the hour. The role of art criticism cannot be separated from art appreciation.

View of 'Retrospective' Exhibition of Pramodbabu at NGMA Mumbai 2021



Life and art are eternally linked by secret ties since antiquity and the same situation is going to exist in future as well. Though we have entered a highly technical world, art appreciation is the sign of culture all over the world. Not that each and every person is a creator of art, yet his sensitivity is aroused while observing art which gives him an understanding of the subtle forces in the process of life and refreshes his mind towards positive thinking. The arts provide a major foundation to human life.

Even a common man can sometimes create great art because he has the capacity for a minute observation and representation of it. Sometimes the human mind suffers from deep heart breaking emotions which in turn give rise to great art. There are many examples of this. The great epic Ramayana emerged through a sudden outburst of deep emotions in the heart of Rishi Valmiki after observing the cruel killing of a male bird by a hunter at the moment of copulation. He was moved by the condition of the female bird.

It shows how each and every person contains the seed of imagination. They can gain stimulation to create some type of art even from the most mundane incident. An incident, occasion, or event of nature, as such, has no importance other than the impetus it gives to the creative imagination of the viewer which becomes the guiding force for creation.

Time has made great changes in the progress of art. Modern art is an example of it. In fact the roots of modern art are found in old traditional arts, but for the presentation. Any expectations from art can harm it and cause hindrance to the appreciation and enjoyment of art. Some films provide an imaginative impetus but may not provide wisdom and information.

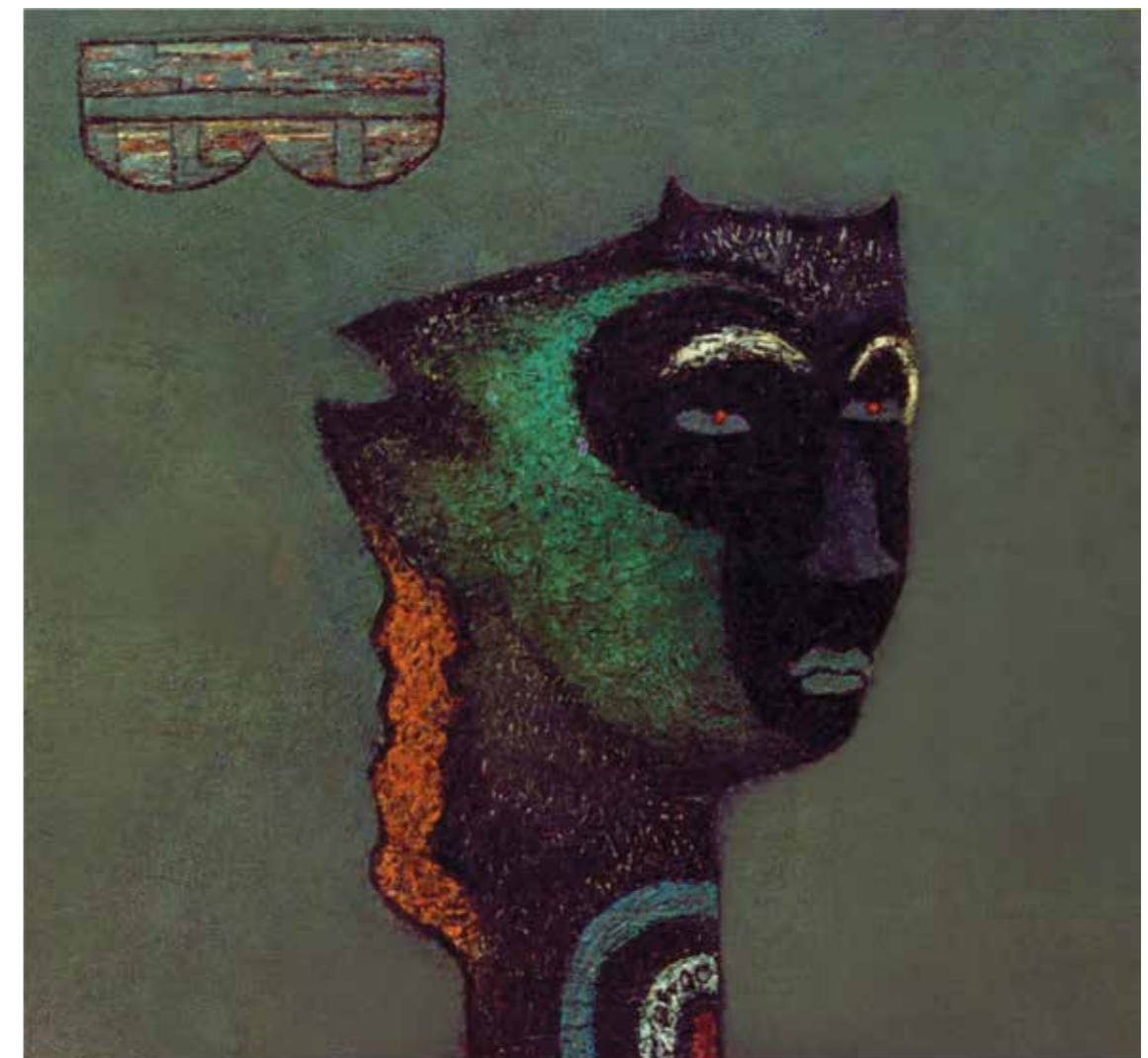
Therefore we should never observe movies with a prejudiced mind or bias. This principle also applies to drawing and painting. Besides this, it is also true that all observers of painting will never have one and the same impression of it. Its appeal is different for different minds.

The differing experience is the real art experience. In order to enjoy the art, the viewer has to put aside his judgmental ego. Whenever we observe nature, we observe it and become sad or happy, enthusiastic, excited or morose, depending on the temperament of our mind at that particular moment. The moon solaces many of us but for one who has lost his lover it can be a source of deep grief for that moment.

The point is that we should not expect anything from art and should let our heart be free to receive whatever it gives. This is the right and proper attitude one must keep always in mind while going to an exhibition of drawings and paintings.

In order to enjoy art a society should also be art loving. The sensitivity of society towards art should always be kept alive, so that all can enjoy the emotional meaning and appeal through art and enjoy its beauty. In some pieces of art there are many different aspects of art that a common layman as well as expert critics of art and artists will be equally attracted and enchanted by it.

Such paintings and sculptures are kept in the National Galleries in all countries of the world. The National Gallery of Modern Art and the National Lalit Kala Akademi in New Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai are examples of it. The art of the modern era or of ancient times have both a joyous appeal. Hence no gradation should be made in different arts.



*Gleams in My Eyes the Crimson Flames of Liberty, 1979, Oil on Paper, 18 x 25 inches.
Permanent Collection with N.G.M.A., Mumbai.*

All artists have a potential to attract viewers or audiences through their art and keep them involved in art. The colour, shapes, texture and some such aspects of the art have an effect on the mind of a viewer. Some painters use concrete forms while others use abstract forms to express themselves through art, both of which will attract the viewer depending on the viewer's personality.

It is, therefore, not certain what would appeal to whom and why, because no one can predict the moods of the heart. In abstract paintings we cannot gather any solid meaning, yet its appeal is never meaningless, and sometimes it also becomes difficult to get the meaning from concrete shapes as well.

In such cases one should not rely on the title alone but concentrate on the abstract beauty of the painting. **One should try and become absorbed in it and get engrossed in its inner force to get the real emotional essence of it. Because when the artist is in the process of creating art, his whole being is attentive to create something beautiful.** Naturally he is not aware of his physical being and often forgets the physical pain and is absorbed in his inner self. He enjoys the bliss of Samadhi in that ecstasy. His faith in art provides him the strength.

The world famous art in the caves of Ajanta and Ellora and the creation of other famous temples took many years of labour for its creation. But the artists were cheerful and were never tired. The famous painting of Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci took four long years and the famous Taj Mahal took twenty years. The roof of the Sistine Chapel, the statue of David, the miniature paintings in Rajasthan, Kangra, Mughal, Jain etc. took many years of tedious work, yet all the creative artists remained tireless. We owe respectful thanks to them even today and bow before them.

In one's childhood there is a tendency and love towards art but gradually this tendency decreases. In earlier times in order to maintain their sensitivity towards arts, students were sent to Gurukul, where they could learn the arts. Nowadays, the teaching of arts is done in schools of art and art colleges, where the students work for a short period only. The teacher as well looks at his wrist watch and finishes his lecture when the bell rings.

In the education of fine arts one has to work himself besides reading and getting information from books. The consistent action in the process of creation is, in fact, most important which is aided by minute observation which helps develop ideas about the creative process. There were many people in the past who knew many associated arts such as singing, playing musical instruments, martial arts, dancing, painting, sculpture, modeling of metals etc. There are many such examples in history.

The university of Taxila and Nalanda in our country was the product of the zeal for art and knowledge. Today there are very few people of this category. The writer of the Constitution of India, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was an extraordinary and brilliant person. He was a good violin player and had an inclination towards painting and martial arts, too. Rabindranath Tagore was a one man university of poetry, music, dance, drama, painting, and other arts. The great scientist Homi Bhabha was a creative painter. The famous painter of Kolhapur named Baburao Painter was a painter, sculptor, photographer and was the director of films.

In each and every man this faculty and inclination towards art is present, but remains undiscovered and is not allowed to get developed. The gradual emergence of technology has further enhanced the process. Art of photography has driven portrait painting out of fashion. The introduction of the computer has added to the photography technique and can provide different techniques to the painting process to enhance creativity of the modern type.

There is a possibility of many experiments in this field and we are looking forward to a new horizon in the field of drawing and painting through this mixed media. There is a new wave in the form of installation in which many forms of fine art are utilized for the creation of a cultivated atmosphere. Artists are thus inventing many new media in this field and they are supported by the viewers also. This encouragement makes the efforts of artists more and more productive.

Besides the new experimentation in the field of drawing and painting, the music and sculpture fields are also proceeding towards abstract tendencies which were thought to be impossible hitherto. Most of the painters in foreign countries have stopped using human figures, birds and animals in their paintings. Only a few painters and sculptors in India, are still stuck to these real forms today. The paintings based on realistic forms can be easily understood and interpreted and the thinking of the creator also can be guessed with his mental tendency, but if there are dots or shower of colours on canvas, how can one interpret it or understand the idea and the insight behind it?

When the foreigners come to India, they visit the temples and listen to the devotional songs sung there with cymbal and mrudangam, though they don't understand the meaning of the song, they fling themselves into that atmosphere of joy. In this respect they prove to be the real lovers of art. If they visit the village, they observe the drawings on the walls of the villagers and try

to enjoy them in the same spirit as they visit and observe the paintings in the art galleries which are painted by the well known artists.

This is the real spirit of enjoying the art. I believe, they think that art exists to give you experience of joy or grief and solace from bindings. That is what they expect from art. In the field of drawing and painting, the use of modern technology like the computer is being used for new experimentation. In the art field like music, painting and sculpture, presentation of art is becoming more and more complex and abstract.

The action painter Jackson Pollock through his art amazed the people to go on looking at the painting. They couldn't help admiring it. Some such experimentation is going on in music with the assimilation of different musical instruments. It presents unique audible tunes that have an intoxicating effect that can give an experience of ecstasy like Samadhi.

A Greek musician called Yanni has been able to entertain thousands of people through his melodious tunes. Paintings, sculpture and music have in this way presented the ecstatic art forms beyond the subject matter. They are appreciated by art critics as well as art lovers and even laymen are enjoying their art.

It is therefore clear that dry criticism about abstract art is worthless. You just try to assimilate and absorb the art and try to enjoy it with its full force as it is a subject of pleasure. *You need not understand the art subject but need to become part and parcel of it, so as to enjoy it. Then only you can make a heart to heart conversation with the art and through it with its creator. Don't try to tease your brain to interpret it, only then will you get the real feeling of joy of your tired heart.*

The people abroad enjoy art in this way compared to Indians. They sometimes or often visit temples, and monuments to enjoy them without any preconception or prejudice. This should become the attitude of all art lovers. How can any child in the world describe the experience of the caressing touch of his mother? He can enjoy it, that's all. No explanation is needed to be provided.

The strength, joy, warmth and energy are assimilated in that blissful touch. Many poets, painters and dancers have tried to express this blessed experience through their art yet they could not fully depict it through words or acting as the real experience is beyond the human efforts. In the same way any heartwarming art piece can never be perfectly described in words. It is to be enjoyed and felt by the absorbing heart of the viewer or listener.

The sitar strokes of Pt. Ravi Shankar and the notes of Pt. Hariprasad Chourasiya's flute take you to a realm of ecstasy that cannot be described. No one should try to describe, it is a matter of enjoyment without words that is art. Whenever you come across a real piece of art your experience of ecstasy is the real product of it. Entering in the core of your heart it drives you towards the ocean of consciousness and makes you float on it fully, making you forgetful about all the worries of this materialistic world. It is a mystic experience and one should be happy in enjoying it.

If art provides such joy, we should not ask the creator the meaning of his art. The artist needs peace, complete peace in his process of creation. Once when Pablo Picasso was sketching, people assembled around him to watch him painting, some of whom asked him the meaning of his painting. People wanted to go nearer and nearer to him, so there was jostling and hustling in the mob.

Picasso took a pistol from his pocket and fired it in the air, so that immediately people around him fled away. The police present there provided him protection. He then quietly painted his painting. In a way the police showed real appreciation about painting.



Ascetic, 1971, Water on Paper, 6 x 6 inches

UNDERSTAND ART & PROTECT IT

No one enters the field of art easily, it needs some background. There are a few people in the world, who have wholeheartedly dedicated themselves to art. It is very hard to devote oneself day and night for the sake of art, so a very few artists in the public are dedicated in the real sense and it is but natural that the best art is created from such a few souls. Their creations are the living source of joy and enlightenment for the viewers.

We have Bodhisatva Padmapani in the wall painting of Ajanta and Pieta the sculpture of Michaelangelo. I have mentioned only these two but there are many such art pieces in the world. Moreover it is not only in the field of painting or sculpture that there are artists, but they have been in different fields of art such as literature, poetry, dramatics, music, dance and many others in their respective fields who have developed the cultural status of the world.

The painter, poet, dancer or actor are all art personifications in a sense that they live and manifest art through their untiring efforts. The poet creator becomes the writer of classic poetry depicting himself and the acting of the actor personifies the character in the drama. The whole space of that respective art enters the heart of the artist to shape the art piece with the unfathomable depth of the sea of creative consciousness, churning his mind. Such a glorious process can create the light of immortal art and joy.

The whole world is infected by the subject of art, each and every part of this world is full of beauty and everyone living is part of the beauty which needs to be presented through art. The righteous minded are the sources of art who contribute their virtuous pains taking efforts for the creation of art. The others too have fascination for art but lack the artistic vision.

Living in the company of the artist is joyful, so one should develop aesthetic interest to enjoy the beauty of the world with them. Such people with aesthetic interest also develop an insight for the truth and beauty in the piece of art and help to encourage the artists. It is with these people that the art and artists survive in the odd periods. So the art admirers become the supporters and their part and parcel for the artistic atmosphere of this world, without whom art cannot progress.

The saints in the world recognize the pain and suffering of others and hence can love each and every creature, good or bad, rich or poor, kind hearted

and wicked equally. They have expanded their insight and follow the rules of nature which is equal to all. This is why Lord Buddha could nurse the filthy leper suffering with wounds on the whole body. Buddha washed his wounds, applied medicine and covered his body with only the short cloth of his belongings.

This fathomless compassion and the light of pure mercy has been depicted by the sculptors of Sarnath, Mathura and Ajanta, on the face of Buddha which we can observe and honour Buddha as the compassionate one. The emotional sense about universal compassion is aroused thereby in the viewers of today about the soul who lived centuries before. By observing the sculptures, one develops the taste for sculptures, because the artists, viewers and the merciful Buddha became one. This is the essence and power of the art, whether it may be a poem, a drama, a painting of whatever type, or whatever medium it has adopted.



Untitled, 2009, Acrylic on Paper, 18 x 19 inches

In the complete development of the human race the arts have contributed the major boost and bloom. The artists, as well as the sensitive viewers have equal contributions in this glorious heritage. **If this artistic and aesthetic taste had not existed, there would remain nothing in the life of man.** He would be merely a beast. It is therefore most essential for the society to cultivate the artistic interest and keep encouraging the artists.

In earlier times, there were rich merchants, peers and kings who showed such interest and love for the arts. During the rule of such kings arts of all sorts flourished. These kings afforded royal patronage to the artists in order to propagate and emphasize their own thinking and values amongst their subjects. Truly, they helped develop an artistic interest in the common man of their times and also the people of later generations, too.

It is through the history of arts that one can get the full information, about the styles in the arts and thereby become a critic of art. The Egyptian, Roman, Greek kings, the Emperors in India like Ashoka, Kanishka, Harshawardhan and the Mughal emperors like Akbar, Shah Jahan etc. have left behind magnificent sculptures and spectacular architecture which still amaze us. The monarchs and kings may be dead but the art they motivated has survived through the centuries and become national monuments and given world heritage status to us.

But in this strange world, there are art lovers and creators as well as cruel destroyers of art. These brutal people have destroyed artistic monuments in the world and defaced beautiful statues. These perverted people have mutilated the beautiful 'Bahmian Buddha' image in Afghanistan. They were, of course, condemned by the art loving people in the world, but some prosperous countries neglected the gruesome act, calling it an individual wrath or political revenge. No serious action was taken against it.

Protection of art does not mean just to protect the human made art, but recognizing the need to protect the natural beauty in the world. Many beautiful hills and mountains are being broken and smashed for stones and the river banks are made barren for material to build houses. The rivers and lakes have been turned into ugly sights where now wild beasts have taken shelter.

We behave in this reckless manner as if we have nothing to do with the natural beauty of beloved Mother Earth. Deep and vast forests have been cut for wood to furnish the city buildings, so that the natural flora and fauna and wildlife is on the verge of extinction. What are we doing? Is it not the ugliness of our

minds? For the so called prosperous material life we are divesting the pristine original beauty of this natural universe.

Something is therefore needed to be done to protect and cultivate the environment. On a particular day every year all countries in the world should take an oath and should have a campaign for the protection of all art, whether natural or manmade. It is a well known fact that at Amsterdam the old home of the world famous painter Vincent Van Gogh is protected in its original state. The country has attributed to this great artist a great honour and respect by making the spot a national heritage. It is the sign of the artistic culture of the people and the government.

In London, Paris and also in Italy, the beautiful paintings of world renowned artists have been protected in the art galleries. **It is the duty of each and every country that its government and people should preserve the art works of their country so as to cultivate natural and national culture.** It is not just the past heritage of art works that need to be protected and preserved but the upcoming, promising modern artists should also be encouraged.

The talented contemporary artists should also be provided individual attention and encouragement by providing them access to art galleries through national funds in India. In each and every state, the social workers and art lovers should work for it. There should be a list of such artists and their works. There should be research based on the style and subject of the arts, about the new trends emerging in all types of arts, its effects on and appeal to the common man, so as to develop the aesthetic taste of the new generation.

The role of teachers and even examiners is very important in this regard. Both need to rely on their practice and experience of art to encourage the fine art awareness among students. This is a big responsibility on the part of teachers and their evaluation of art. If they do not fulfil it properly, it will raise questions about their sincerity and fair mindedness. That situation will be fatal to the progress of art education and development.



“ Pramodbabu has experimented with various media, compositions, forms and was attracted to ‘Abstract Minimalism’. So his art has evolved through various stages and through various expressions. He is a person with a truly open mind, so I am not surprised that is the title of his exhibition. ”

-Saryu Doshi
Gallerist & Art Historian.



Pramodbabu with renowned artist Ravi Mandlik



Master painter Padma Bhushan Syed Haidar Raza inaugurating the three-day art exhibition organised by Shlok at Jawaharlal Darda Art Gallery in Nagpur on Friday. Also seen are Matoshri Venadevi Darda, chairman of Jawaharlal Darda Kala Akademi Vijay Darda, noted artist Manas Roy, industrialist and art lover Kuldeep Gupta, Hindi poet-critic and chairman of Lalit Kala Akademi Ashok Vajpeyi, noted painter Pramod Ramteke and executive director Lokmat Newspapers Devendra Darda.



Pramodbabu with Dilip Kumar for Bombay Arts Society Award



Artist in his gallery at Nagpur.



Pramodbabu with Amitabh Bacchan and Nagraj Manjule



(From left to right) Honourable Dr. Ganesh Tartare, Sir J. J. School of Art Mumbai, Honourable Vikas Chandra Rastogi, Chief Secretary, Education Ministry, Government of Maharashtra, Artist Pramodbabu and Honourable Rajeev Mishra, Director of Art, Maharashtra State, Mumbai



Previously held exhibition at NGMA, Mumbai.

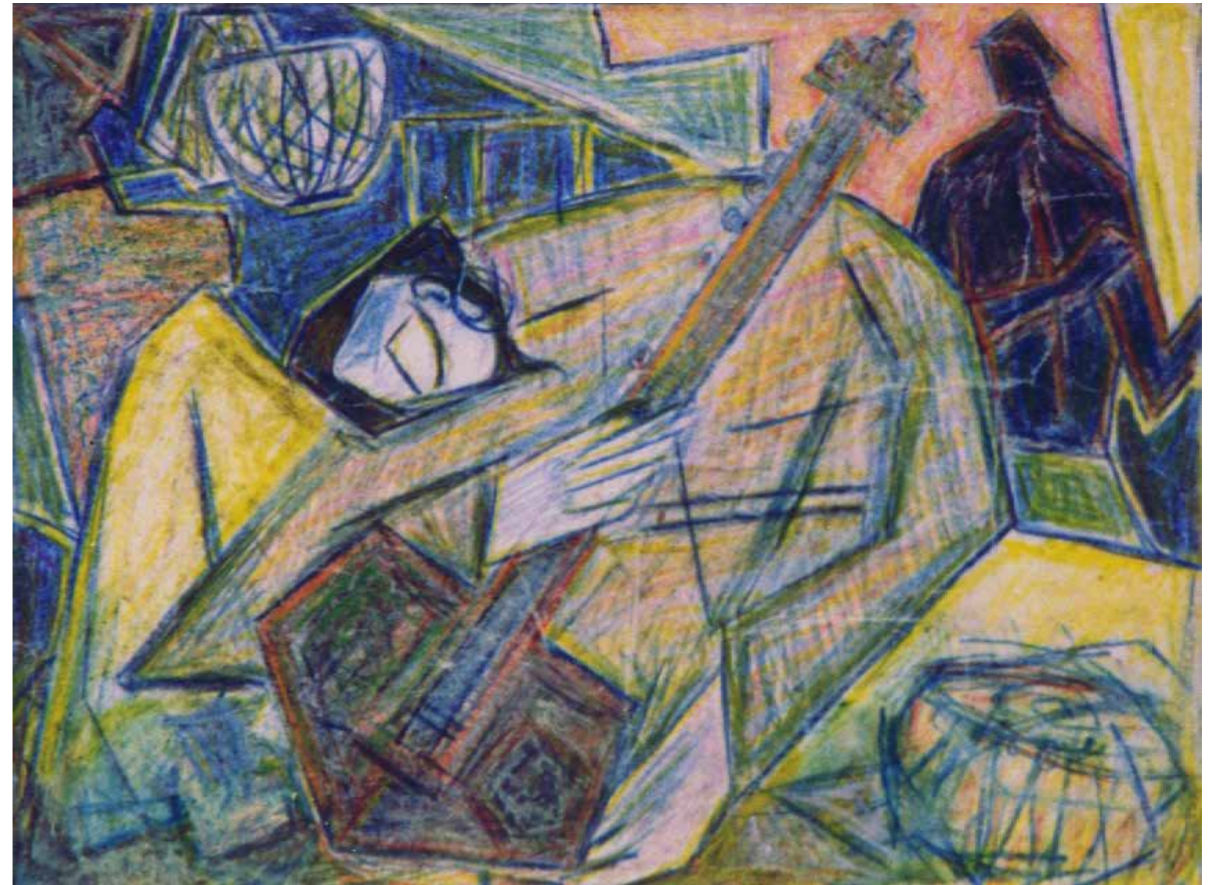
T H E A R T W O R K S



After Banithani, 2017, Oil on Canvas, 36 x 65 inches



Through the Mirror, 1972, Water on Paper, 6 x 5 inches



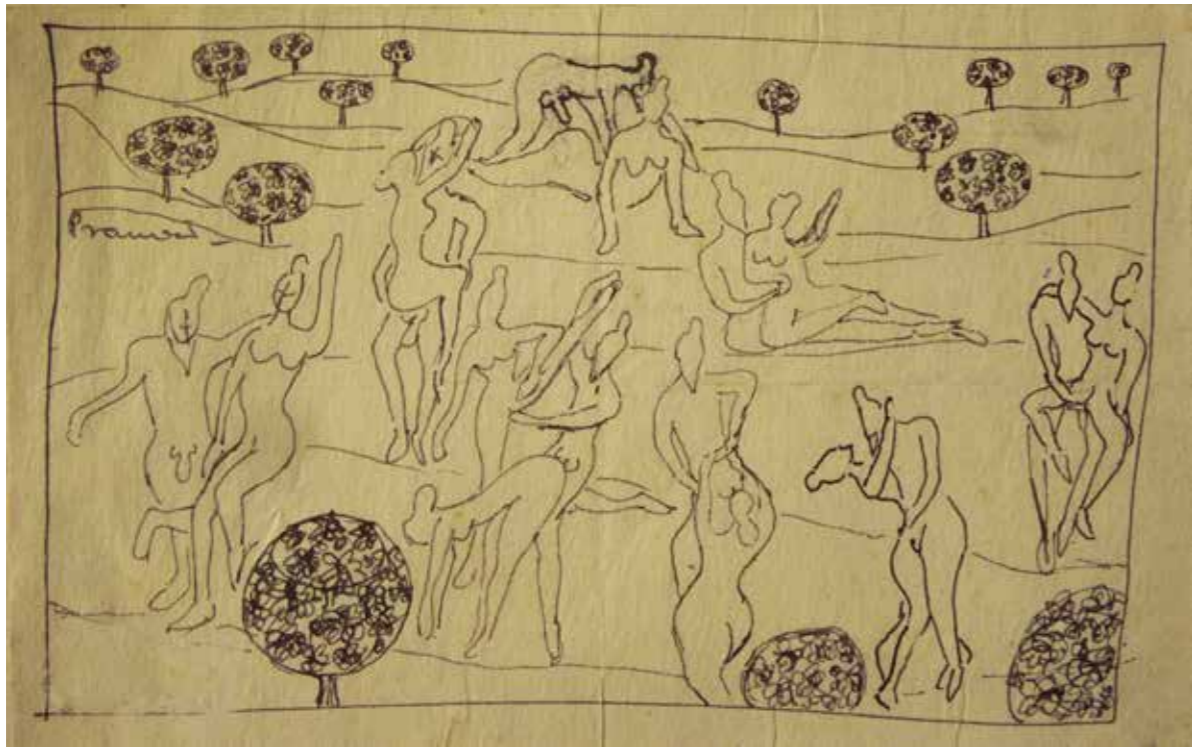
Music, Coloured Pencils, 8 x 10, 1972



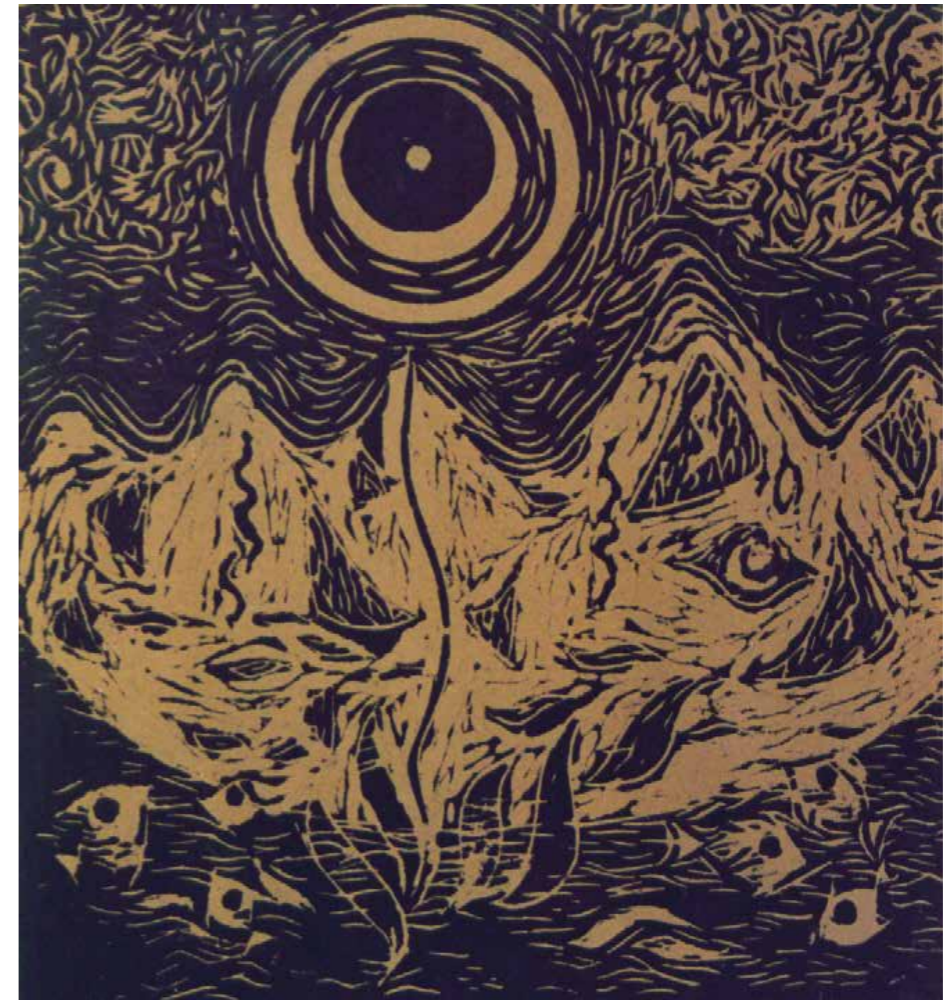
Hare Rama Hare Krishna, 1973, Gouache on paper, 4 inches X 5.5 inches



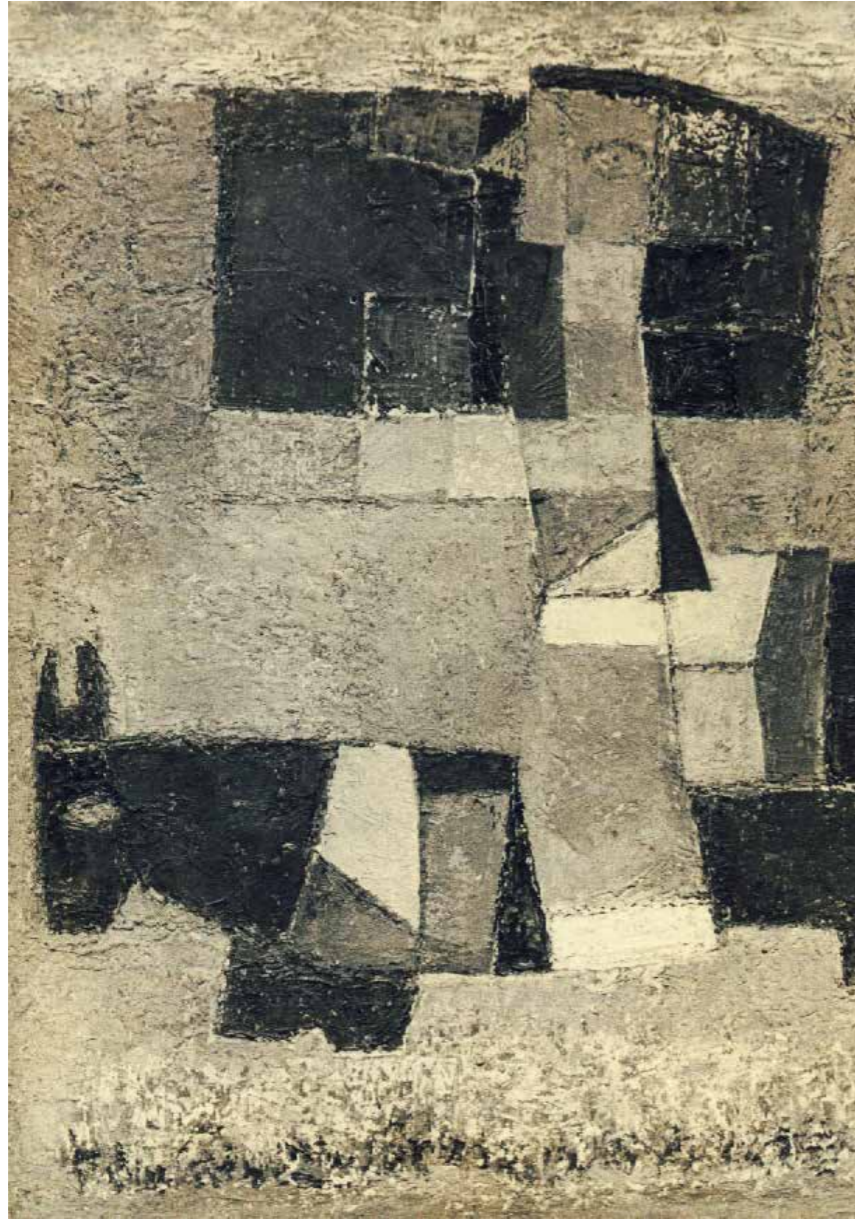
Witch, 1973, Gouache on Paper, 10 X 10



After Khajuraho, 1973, Ink on Paper, 4 inches x 6 inches.



Climax, 1974, Print - Linoleum, 14 x 14 inches



Goddess and her Vehicle, 1976, Oil on Canvas, 36 inches x 24 inches.



*Some Creatures, 1980, Ink on Paper, 24 x 25 inches.
Permanent Collection with N.G.M.A. New Delhi.*



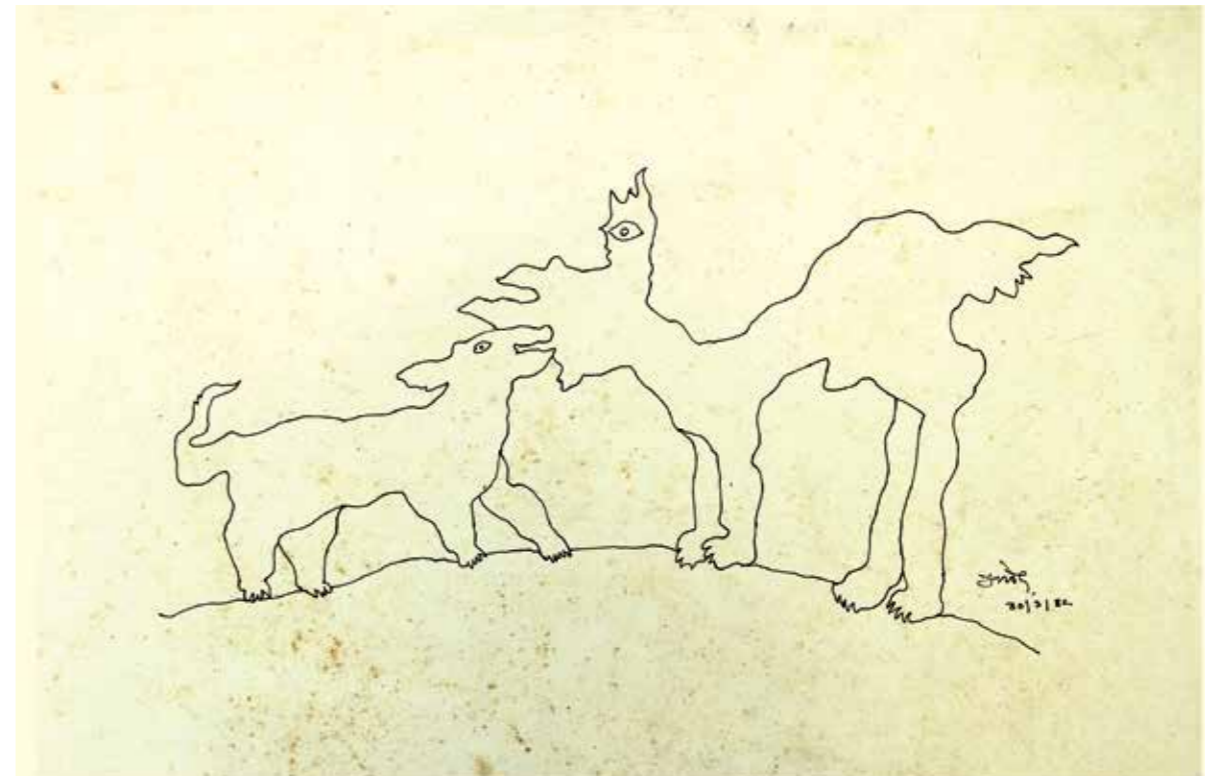
Head, 1982, Oil on Paper, 15 inches x 15 inches.



Sculpture (Head, 1982, Goblet, Shell, Goggle, 15 x 10 inches



Musician, 1983, Oil on Canvas, 36 inches x 15 inches.



Mother and Child, 1984, Ink on Paper, 15 inches x 20 inches.



Amrapali, 1986, Oil on Paper, 19 inches x 21 inches



Bird Vendor, 1987, Oil on Paper, 15 x 20 inches



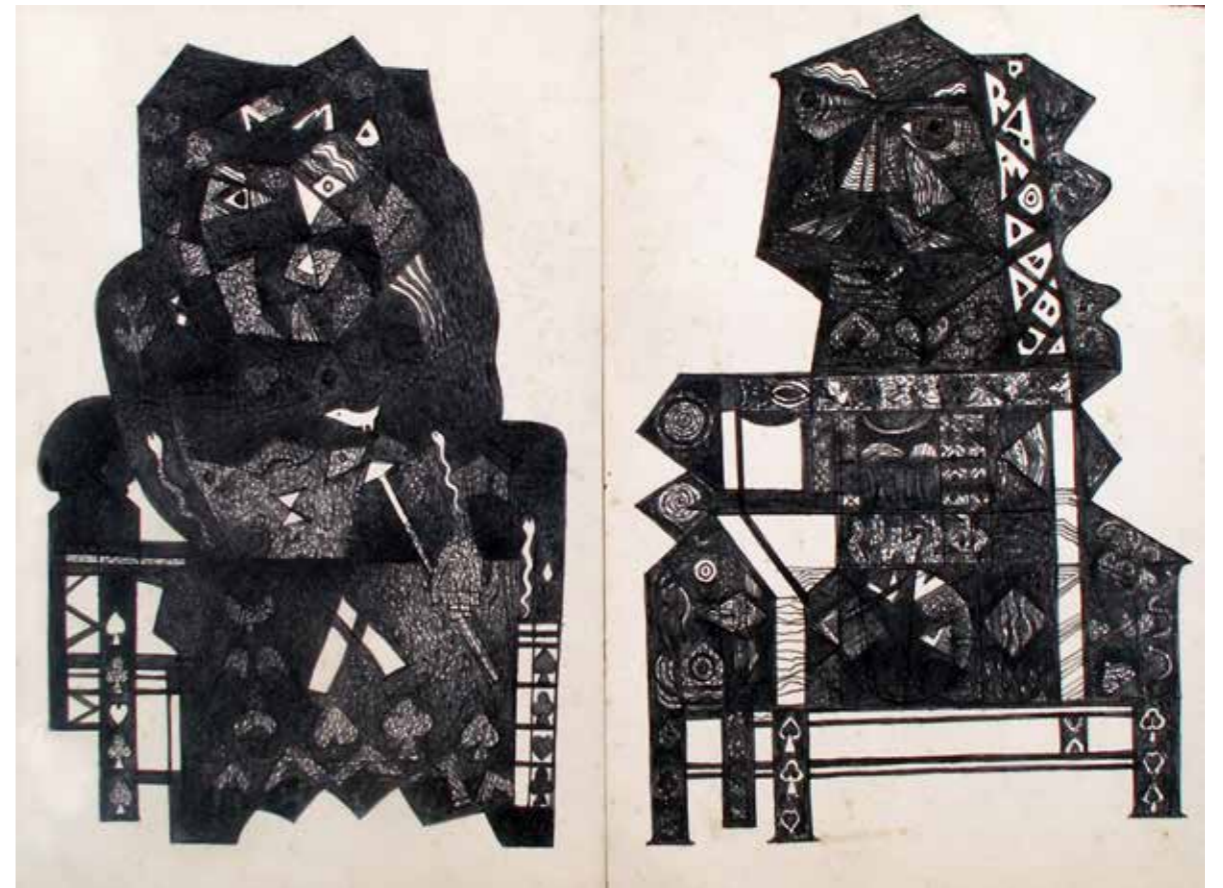
Alarm, 1987, Oil on Paper, 19 inches x 21 inches



Peace and Harmony, 1987, Oil on Paper, size - 19 inches X 21 inches



Two Friends, 1989, Oil on Canvas, 48 inches x 48 inches.



The Queen, 1992, Ink on Paper, 10 inches X 12 inches
The King, 1992, Ink on Paper, 10 inches X 12 inches



Untitled, 1992, Oil on Paper, 22 x 20 inches



Untitled, 1994, Oil, 3 feet x 3 feet.



Vortex, , 1995, Acrylic on Canvas, 15 inches X 15 inches



Energy, 1995, Oil on Canvas, 23 x 9 inches



Narayan Bandhu, 1996, Oil on Canvas, 24 inches X 24 inches.



Pot Design, 1996, Gouache on Paper, 20 inches x 15 inches.



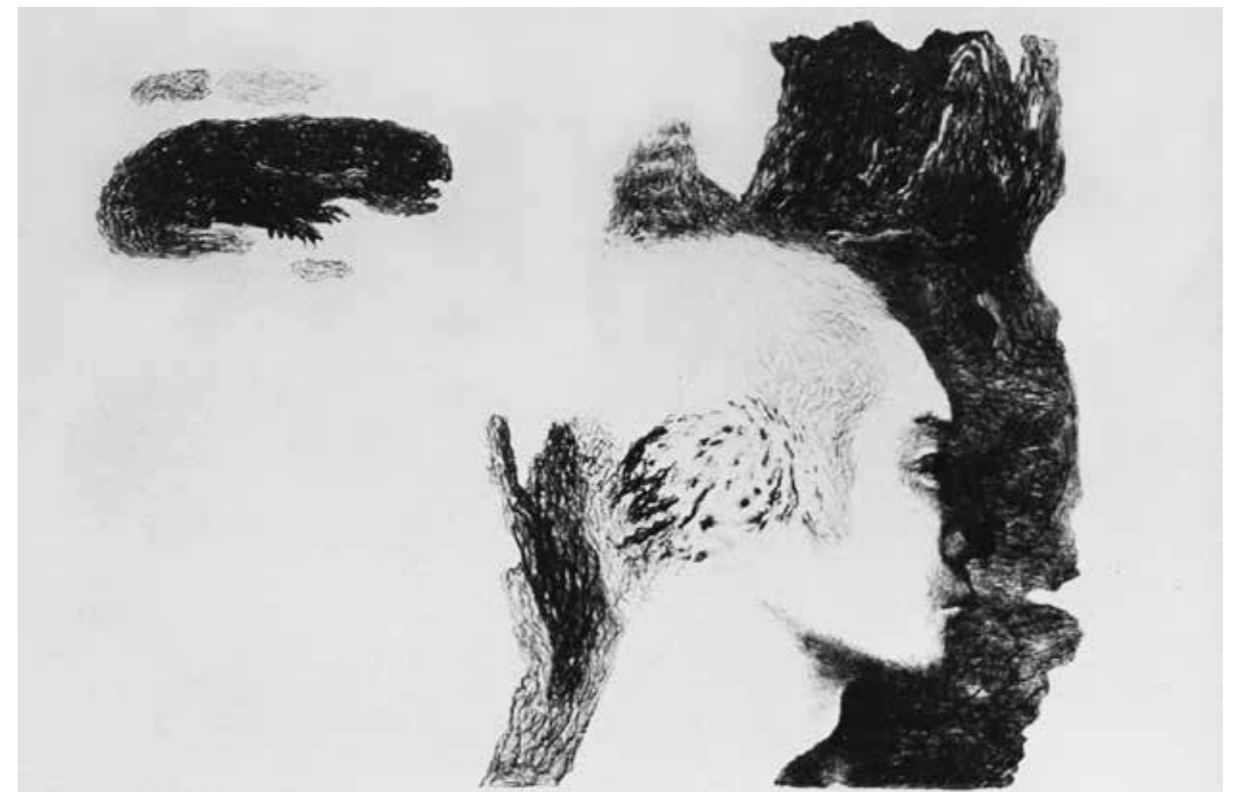
Bhante Sasai, 1996, Oil on Canvas, 36 inches X 24 inches.



Elongated Neck, 1997, Terracotta, 8 inches x 2.5 inches x 2 inches.



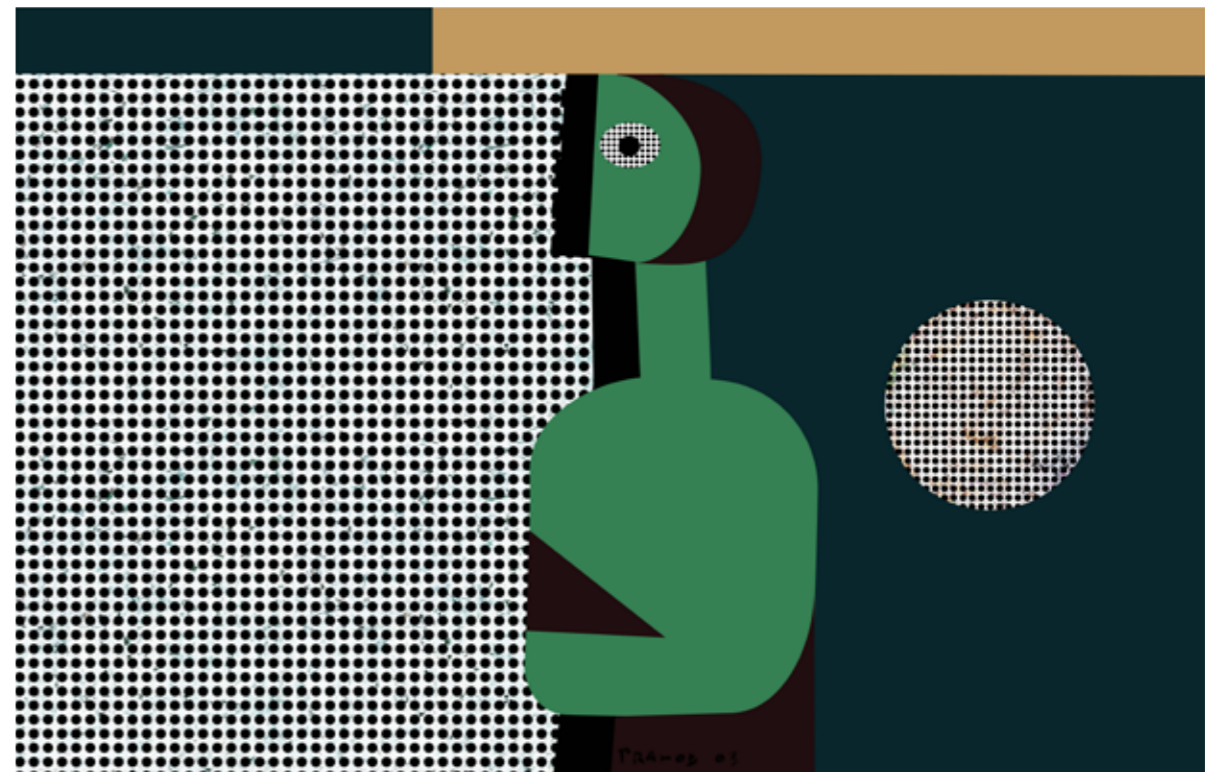
Untitled, 1997, Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 25 inches



Lithograph, 1997, 15 inches x 18 inches.



Untitled, 1998, Coloured Ink on Paper, 12 x 17 inches



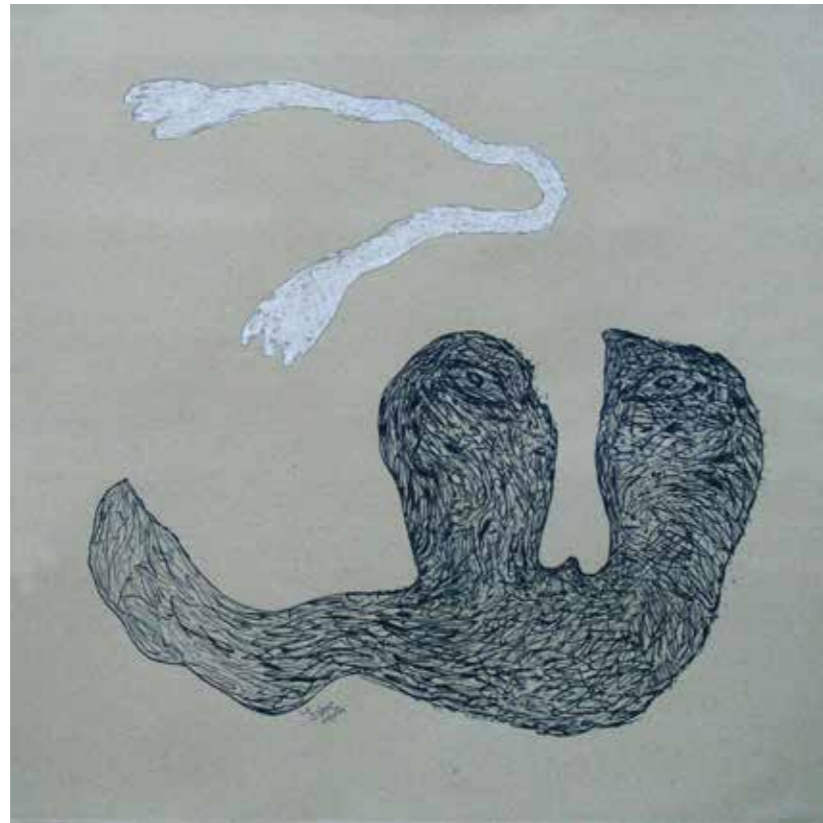
Loneliness, 1999, Digital Graphics, 12 inches x 16 inches.



The Unexplored Tendencies, 2000, Oil & Acrylic on Canvas, 48 in X 54 in.



The Folk Revoluion, 2002, Oil on Canvas, 33 in X 45 in



Homage to Dali, 2003, Ink and White Pastel on Paper, 16 X 17 Inches



Fasting Buddha, 2003, Oil on Paper, 14 x 19 inches



Buddha, 2003, Oil on Paper, 15 X 12 inches



Mother's Touch, 2004, Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches



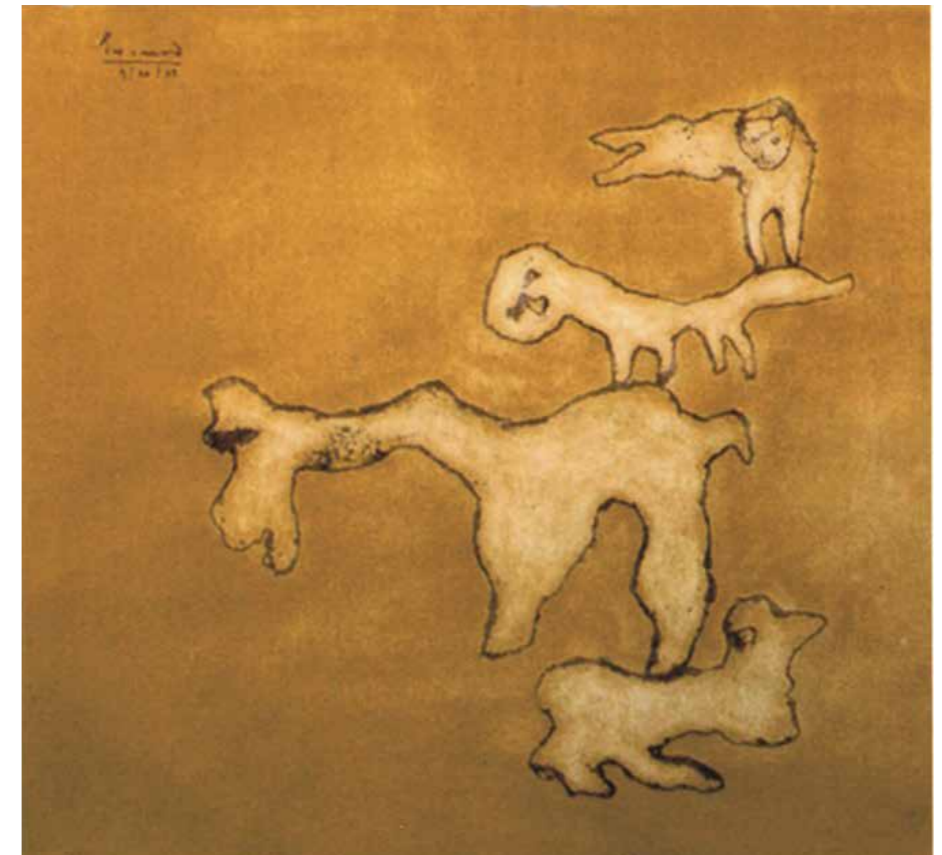
Mother, 2006, Oil on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches



Untitled, 2006, Ink on Paper, 15 inches x 14 inches.



Crimson Lady, 2006, Oil on Canvas, 66 x 66 inches



High & Low Life (Unequal Life), 2009, Water on Paper, 29.4 inches x 35 inches



Untitled, 2009, Ink on Paper, 18 x 14 inches



Untitled, 2010, Ink and Water Colour on Paper, 12 X 10 inches



Untitled, 2011, Pencil on Paper , 10 x 12 inches



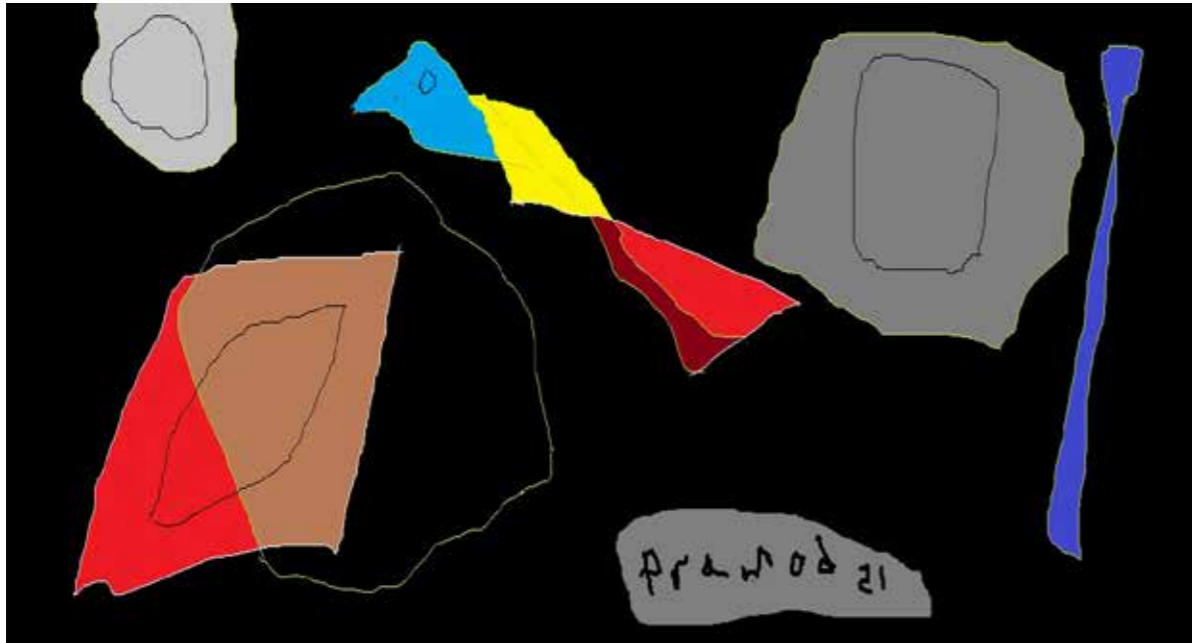
Untitled, 2011, Oil on Canvas, 60 inches X 40 inches.



Untitled, 2011, Acrylic on Paper, 20 inches x 25 inches.



Form in Yellow, 2011, Medium, Print on Paper, Size - 16 inches x 15 inches.



Serigraph, 2021.



Untitled, 2012, Water & Pencil on Paper, 20 inches x 20 inches.



Drawing, 2012, Ink on Paper, 15 inches X 18inches



Untitled, 2014, Oil on Canvas, 60 x 48 inches



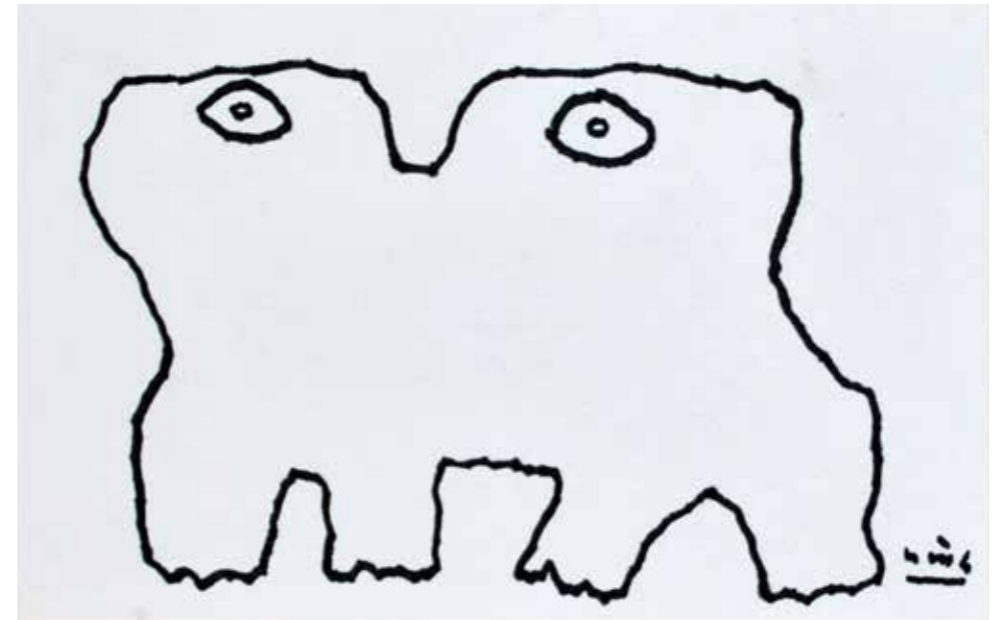
Golden Valley, 2014, Acrylic on canvas, 42 X 66 inches



2014



2014



The Innocent, 2015, Ink on Mount Board, 4 x 6 inches



Untitled, 2017, Photograph, 23 x 19 inches



Untitled, 2017, Acrylic on Canvas, 36 x 30 inches



Goyen chi Mati, 2017, Acrylic on Canvas, 30 inches x 36 inches



Untitled, 2019, Oil on Canvas, 36 inches x 42 inches.



Untitled, 2020, Oil on Canvas, 54 inches x 24 inches



Untitled, 2021, Acrylic on Canvas, 22 x 30 inches



Untitled, Acrylic on Paper, 2021, 15 inches x 18 inches



Author-Filmmaker C.S.Nag

About the Author

C.S.Nag is an Author-Filmmaker with a proven background in the arts and media having worked for over 30 years in the print, television and film industries in India, Gulf and US. He is a graduate of the prestigious Walter Cronkite School of Arizona State University with a B.S in Film & TV, a B.Sc in Physics from Mumbai University and a post-graduate Diploma in Journalism from Bhavan's College. He has worked in newspapers like "Mid-Day", "Indian Express", "Oman Observer" & "Oakland Tribune"; in the PBS TV Ch 8 (KAET News) in US and is known for his book and movie projects with such luminaries as sitar maestro Ravi Shankar, cartoonist R.K.Laxman and movie legend Dev Anand. He has won global acclaim for his inspiring books "Spark in the Dark" on sight impaired artist Tuka, "Time After Time" on Science & Spirituality & "The Rod of God" an epic novel based on the restoration of the heritage Umaid Bhavan Murals on Ramayana painted by Polish artist Stefan Norblin, published in Germany. As a curator and writer of art catalogs his work is known for a creative and innovative approach. He is currently busy with his web series "Indian Renaissance", "Golden Age of Cinema", "Wake Up, India!" and several movie projects.

T H A N K Y O U

