

CHAPTER - VII

BOMBAY GROUP 1954 - 1968

BRANCHING OFF

The disbandment of the Progressive Artists' Group indirectly resulted into the formation of the Bombay Group in 1954-55.¹ After the split of the Progressive Group, the remaining members (except those who left for Europe) ^{namely} Ara, Gade, Hussain, Mohan Samant, ^{and} Gai-tonde joined the new group. It was Ara again who took the initiative. Ara went to Hebbar who had recently come back from his tour to Europe and tried to persuade ^a ~~h~~ him to join the group. Because the name 'Progressive' suggested some political entanglement in those days, by Hebbar's suggestion the name was discarded and the new name 'Bombay Group' was adopted.² Hebbar himself became the Secretary of the group upon the suggestion of Ara. Other members to join the group were Chavda, Palsikar, Kulkarni. Unlike the founder members of the Progressive Group, the members of this group apparently did not have any grudge or resentment against the existing administration of the authorities of the Bombay Art Society. More than half of its members have received Gold Medals in the Bombay Art Society's annual exhibitions and the exhibitions of Art Society of India.³ All of these painters started from academic realism and at one stage they even painted in the Indian decorative style. But they wanted to experiment instead of being contended ^t with only flat colours and rhythmic figures. They also found it

necessary to have mutual communication and discussions, periodically, to develop their own style. The Progressive Group had shown that group activity becomes more influential rather than struggle by individual artists. Thus they also found it expedient to have group activity in order to make their impact stronger.⁴ Accordingly after the group was formed, the members met at the periodical meetings to discuss about their paintings as well as to evolve solutions to their own creative problems. Their meetings were held usually at Rampart Row, in the office of what is now the Artists' Centre. The old members of the Progressive Group; like Souza, Raza or Bakre, were permitted to keep membership of the new group and if possible send their exhibits for the group shows. Whenever they came to visit India, the members celebrated the meetings with them. Sometimes special dinner parties were arranged for them. They had probably 7 or 8 exhibitions together. Baburao Sadwelkar and Harkishan Lall probably joined the group later, because their names were not included in the reviews of the first group exhibition held in 1955.⁵

Before discussing the actual work by the Bombay Group it will be relevant to refer to their achievements before joining the 'Group'.

S.B. Palsikar was born in a family at Nagpur in 1917. His father had a very limited income. Palsikar had an inclination for drawing from his childhood. At the age of ^{seven} 7, he won a prize at an agricultural exhibition for a drawing of a peacock. His father encouraged him to learn in that direction. Unfortunately the sudden death of his father when he was only ten years old, took away his

opportunity for art-training and he had to complete his school education. Palsikar got his Matriculation in 1935 and shifted to Bombay in search for a job. His first job was to work as an apprentice to the leading commercial artist of the day. D.D. Dalal was well-known for his pictures on book and magazine-covers, and also for calenders as well as illustrations for Marathi magazines and books. Palsikar absorbed the fine technique and decorative drawings of Dalal. After two years Palsikar left the job and took another one at a litho-press. Later on Palsikar also worked as an assistant to N.S. Bendre in his commission for executing seven murals for a private apartment of an industrialist. All these three jobs definitely helped Palsikar to develop his own artistic capacities which is seen in Palsikar's later paintings of fisherwomen or monsoon landscapes. Working with Bendre was advantageous from an other point of view also as Bendre helped him to join Sir J.J. School of Art. This was the significant change in his life. He not only won esteem as a talented student but he worked there as a professor and finally became the Dean of Sir J.J. School of Art.

Palsikar's earlier experience helped him in his career in the art-school. The training in J.J. School developed in his work the mastery in drawing and rendering. Being a talented student, he got awards and acknowledgement in his school-career only before getting his diploma in 1947. His joint show with Laxman Pai in the year 1948 was admired by the critics.⁶ But the real landmark came when he won the gold medal of the Bombay Art Society for his painting 'Sinners Divine', (Plate 65; fig. 144) in the year 1950.⁷

The then Principal of Sir J.J. School of Art, Charles Gerard, advised Palsikar to study the works of masters of Indian miniatures painting. Palsikar's study of these brought in his paintings an extremely sensitive line and he visualised his themes from the perspective of aerial view-point.

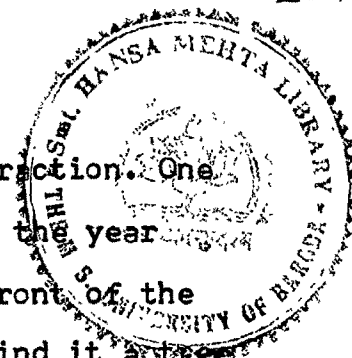
From the very beginning Palsikar was a strong admirer of Hindu Philosophy and he now turned to paint the concepts from it in his paintings. He also evolved his own language of symbols for this purpose, viz. he used the snake symbolizing the indestructible element as it merely changes its own skin in the process of its growth, thus suggesting the endless stream of life. He used man and women^a as the divine couple or Purusha and Prakriti, while a fish as a symbol of the force that swims against the current. With these symbols selected according to his own ideas, he also used a few conventional ones; like the fire as the holy vedic-sacrificial fire, or the footprints as the traces left by the wise who have departed.

In his gold-medal winning picture 'Sinners' Divine' he introduced symbolic forms as well as colour to express the symbolic content of ~~the~~^a Hindu-wedding. He painted in the "Indian decorative style" with a graceful, but firm line, at the same time he avoided^{ed} the sentimentality. The two-dimensional aspect was emphasized by means of ~~flat~~^{la} colours.⁹ But his colour schemes were very different ~~than~~^{from} the mild and sober colour schemes preferred^{er} by other painters who painted in the Indian or the Bengal revivalist style, using pale schemes like that of Ajanta murals. Palsikar's colour schemes were fresh and showed strength.

In 1950 Palsikar painted a series in an entirely different style which showed the influence of folk-art and its pattern-quality. The subject-matter was inspired by the partition of India, and the true unity of mankind. His painting 'One-World' belonged to this series and showed a formal organization of decorative symbols.¹⁰ In his painting 'Maya' of the same year, he ^ediviated from this decorative style.¹¹ He painted 'Maya' as a Goddess of temptation and ^edistruction, introducing expressive use of colour to signify torment of victims. But again in 1951 he came back to the style of 'Sinners Divine'. His painting 'Affinity' shows again the old decorative and flat treatment.

Palsikar was an expert in realistic rendering also. His skillful handling of oil-painting technique, together with the ease and simplicity with which he handled the portraiture, were much admired. He also won awards for his ^oportraiture in the State art-Exhibitions. Even today after giving up the realistic style and after transforming his style from Indian decorative through the present abstractionist style, he paints portraits in realistic style with the same skilled craftsmanship and ease in handling.

In 1953 his 'Composition' revealed the first turn towards abstract style and in which he use^dd cubistic rectilinear geometrical forms. Surprisingly, Palsikar, inspite of several experimental stages, seemed to come back time and gain to his initial decorative approach so much so that after joining the 'Bombay Group', he painted in his old style his series of eight paintings on the subject 'One without second'. But in these, according to Palsikar, he had



tried to show phases of a progressive series of abstraction. One of these was exhibited in the National Exhibition of the year 1957.¹² This showed a newly-wed couple sitting in front of the sacrificial fire behind whom is a flat wall, and behind it a tree with several branches and a strong trunk. The smoke of the fire creates a decorative pattern on both sides of the figures. The whole composition emphasizes the two-dimensional design. The overlapping foot prints near the fire perhaps show the unity of the couple. The line showed the mastery of Palsikar in drawing. The same painting was exhibited and won prize in the first Maharashtra State Art Exhibition 1956. For several years Palsikar did not change his technique of using tempera colours for his Indian decorative style paintings, but in 1952 he suddenly switched over to the oil painting and proved his mastery over both the media.

Palsikar used melted bees-wax with lavender spike oil as a thinner. It added to the sad mood whenever he wanted that effect, but it also maintained the luminosity of the colours. His famous painting 'Oh Mother', (Plate 65; fig.145) showed his great ability in handling oils.¹³ Here he depicted a pregnant woman committing suicide. The broken forms expressed the unpleasantness and the distortion helped to bring ^{out truly} a reality 'tormented image' of a woman. The yellow green ground, the jagged lines, flattening of one figure and matt surface helped to create an effective result. Palsikar symbolically suggested through the female figure, 'a present state of the world'.

When Palsikar joined the group, he had already created his own important place as an artist with bright future and ^{young artists} people like Gaitonde and Samant had come under his influence.

K.K. Hebber was born in South Kanara in village Kittingiri in 1912. In his childhood he played with clay, and tried to form toys out of it. He also tried to draw with charcoal on the wall of his house the copies of the mythological pictures of Ravi Varma. This inclination towards drawing resulted into his entry in the Chamrajendra Vadiar Technical School for the study of painting. He left the school soon as he was not satisfied with the training which made him to draw the same objects several times until he gained the effect like the reflection ^o of the object in the mirror. He came to Bombay to try ^{out} his luck. In the beginning he had to work hard for earning for his living and at the same time spending for his art training in the art institute of Shri Dandavatimath. He also worked as an assistant ^{to} a photographer. In 1933 he got admission in J.J. School of Art in the Diploma class, which proved a turning point in his career. After meritoriously passing his diploma in 1939, he was immediately appointed in the J.J. School as a teacher when Principal Gerrard was the head of the Institute. Those were the days when Ahiwasi's influence of Indian style was ^{upper most in} ~~more~~ on the minds of the students and Gerrard not only encouraged it but also advised the students to express in their own way. Hebbar by this time had developed expertise in the realistic style of the earlier generation. It was Gerrard who brought to his notice that to acquire mastery in copying the object in front of him was not the end in itself, but that now he should try to express his own ideas through

his paintings.¹⁴ He also advised Hebbbar to study the works of the traditional Indian masters. Though Hebbbar's early paintings were the fine portraits in academic style, he also started painting in the 'Indian' style and being an introvert by nature he started seriously experimenting in that direction. Hebbbar himself gratefully mentions Gerrard's advise which had a deep impact on his mind. Hebbbar's paintings in early forties included both the academic style paintings as well as the paintings in India decorative style. His realistic paintings include portraits, 'Kashmiri Bud', 'Leisure Hours', exhibited in 1942 exhibition of Bombay Art Society, his 'Thoughts' (1943) which won the Dhanjibhoy Petit Prize and 'Interval' (1944). These last two were the portraits of the British ladies.¹⁵ His 'Poise' was another portrait of a Parsi lady which got recognition by winning the Silver Medal in 1945.¹⁶ Simultaneously his landscapes included 'Bassein Fort' (1940) and 'Karla Caves' (1941) which won the gold Medal at Exhibition of the Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta. 'Shower at Shrinagar', Gurudwara', Shrinagar' and 'Street Scene' painted in 1942 brought for him the Bronze Medal for water colour section.¹⁷ His landscape painted in 1944 viz. 'Morning Bazaar Nasik' also won Sir Vitthal Chandra^a Varkar's Prize. His Indian style painting 'Thrashing' won the Gaekwad of Baroda award.¹⁸

pictures

After 1945, he painted more_λ in the Indian style. His interestⁱⁿ_λ and learning of the Indian Classical dance brought the quality of rhythm in his paintings. Another factor which left a deep impression on his mind was /Amrita Shergil's paintings. As Dnyaneshwar

Nadkarni puts it rightly in his review in 1980, "....Sher Gil, who was a phenomenon, no major Indian painter of the thirties could avoid confronting".¹⁹ Hebbbar also had a short interlude with the^e post-impressionistic aspects. In this period Hebbbar's paintings 'Cattle-market' (1942) and 'Approval' in which affinity to Amrita Sher Gil's 'Bride' is discernible, (Plate 58; fig. 132 and 133) shows how Hebbbar was struggling to d^eviate from the influence of the existing Bombay phenomenon of using rhythmic line of Ajanta and modelling of figures in impasto which was the result of the 'realistic' training of the J.J. School. After his Kerala tour, the influence of Amrita was seen more strongly in his paintings, when he painted Keralite people with dark complexion and slender bodies. From these, 'Purnam Festival' (Plate 57; fig. 130), 'Sunny South' and 'Maidenhood', (Plate 57; fig. 129) were significant and got recognition too. The last one brought him the Gold Medal of Bombay Art Society. His paintings were admired by the critics but at the same time, they also remarked about the Sher Gil influence. "To Maidenhood" was Amrita in watercolour 'without her depth'.²⁰ Similar comments were passed on the painting 'Sunny South', yet these paintings assigned him the place as a promising artist. In 1948 an album of his works with introduction by G. Venkatachalam was published. He also received an award of Rs. 2500/- by the Central Government after the Independence. Hebbbar used this opportunity to visit Europe in 1949-50. He visited prominent centres in Europe and studied the works of contemporary European masters like that of Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Rouault, as well as the paintings of the post-impressionists

like Van Gogh and Gauguin^u. He also studied at the Academy Julian in Paris and completed^a twenty-week-painting course under the guidance of Prof. Cavaille (who was an impressionist painter). Naturally this whole tour not only brought him the understanding of the secrets of post-impressionistic technique but also broadened his outlook regarding the modern art movements. At this time the art scene of Paris was changing fast, and subsequent to cubism, futurism and surrealism, new trends were coming forward. Hebbar returned with the amalgam^a of the influences which had left him quite confused. It took some consistent work to synthesizeⁿ these influences in his paintings. He tried to create a harmonious^y fusion of form and content enabling him to build a structure in his painting. Along with this the sensitiveⁿ textural surface was also rendered. His landscapes in Mahabaleshwar show these aspects.

Around the same time, the 'Progressive Group of Artists' had got disbanded as some of its major members like Souza, Raza and Bakre went abroad. Ara persuaded Hebbar to join the group as a secretary. Hebbar accepted it on the condition of changing the title of the group.²¹ The name 'Bombay Group' was selected for it.

Another important artist who joined the group was Shaivax Chavda. Chavda was born in 1911 at Navsari in Gujarat in an upper middle class family. He completed his school education in 1930. Chavda joined the J.J.School of Art soon after and completed his diploma in 1936. He got recognition for his paintings in the exhibitions of Bombay Art Society, at a very young age. In 1934 even before he completed his diploma in art, he won the Bronze

Medal of Bombay Art Society for his portrait.²² Among all other painters of the Bombay Group, Chavda is the one who has developed almost on similar lines like Hebbbar almost upto 1950. Since then both ^{evolved in} ~~developed on~~ ^{directions} different lines. Chavda's early works in academic style reveal his technical skill and expert handling of oils, (Plate 62; fig.139).

In the same year of the completion of his Diploma, Chavda got a scholarship of the Ratan Tata Trust, to go to England for higher studies. He studied at the Slade School and completed a course of three years in two years only. He was the first Indian painter to do so. He studied drawing and painting under professor Randolph Schwabe. He even studied for a short period at 'Academic de la Grande Chaumiere' in Paris. Finally he received training for the art of mural decoration and stage-painting under the well-known Russian artist Mr. Valadimir Polumin, who was the first to introduce the art of 'Modern Stage Painting' to England. Chavda also took a ^{pe} ~~se~~cial course in 'Window Display' and 'Restoration and Cleaning of the old pictures' there. During his stay in Europe, Chavda was the pupil of Mr. Eves R.A., one of the finest portrait painters in Europe. He impressed the best critics and had the honour to paint portraits of distinguished personalities in the decorative style.

Thus Chavda returned to India in the year 1939 with the full accomplishment of a commercial success as well as the impact of modern western trends on his mind. He completed several commercial assignments as well as portrait commissions. He also toured widely in India including the Kulu Valley (1943), Gujarat villages (1946),

Bihar and South (1947). He did several rapid pen and ink sketches of Kulu mountains and hills, Bihari tribal life as well as rhythmic sketches of Musicians and dancers from South India. In 1951, he toured in Assam, where he travelled for nearly 2000 miles and even in the area which was known, as 'no-man's' land. He observed the tribal life of Assam and made sketches of the fascinating wood-carvings of the Nagas. He also soon went to Indone^esia and painted the subjects on the life of the people of Bali, (Plate 62; fig. 138). His sketches from all these trips are the best examples of the tremendous energy and his great technical ability. His early paintings showed a certain linearity and strength and subdued rich colourschemes. His dynamic sketches of the dances became particularly popular.

In 1945, he also worked as the art director for the film, 'Amrapali', for which he used fabulous costume-designs. (Savita-devi and Pradipkumar had the leading roles in this film.)

After returning from Europe, Chavda had several one-man-shows. In 1945 his first one-man-show was opened at the Princes Room of the Taj Mahal Hotel, which included 50 paintings and 50 drawings. This was inaugurated by Karl Khandal^awala. It showed ^avariety of subjects based on landscapes as well as figurative subjects like 'Calico Printers' 'Mridanga Players' and 'Strugg^{le}l'. His attempt towards simplification of colours and forms was conspicuous. He also used symbolism. His interest in music and dance, both folk and classical, was reflect^ed in the rhythmic drawings revealing the sweeping grace of dance. This line almost vibrant with the inner rhythm was retained even in his recent abstract phase.

In this exhibition, paintings 'Behold', showing a group of women admiring a new born baby, and the 'Carts', having a pleasing composition of a group of three empty bullock-carts, were specially noticed by the critics. Strangely enough, the powerful figure struggling in chains, effectively depicted in the painting 'Struggle', which dealt with the problem of slavery that had involved the whole world, was criticised severely. In the exhibition of 1946, at Silverfish, he displayed scenes from Kulu valley as well as sketches and pastels in bold and sweeping line. In February 1947 the All-India Fine Arts and Crafts Society of New Delhi arranged an exhibition of 'Modern Indian Art' which comprised the works of Chavda, Hebbar, Raza and Bendre. Chavda's paintings, 'Adam and Eve' and 'Their Daily Work' were appreciated.

One month earlier in the same year Chavda had a one-man-show in Bombay. Dilip Kothari wrote about it in *Jame-Jamshed*; "In his landscapes, he exhibits a fine sensitivity to various forms of natural beauty, especially the beauty of ^Sky-kissing mountain-trees, and multi-coloured mountains. His drawings and sketches, some of which are as good as full-fledged pictures, reveal a playfulness, freedom and dynamic quality which are very delightful to the observer".²³ But more admired were his lively paintings of animals during next year's show in (1948), which were based on the studies in Victoria Garden, Bombay. In the year 1951, his series of drawings from Assam, the life of the tribal people and their wood-carvings were published. Chavda used in these paintings the distortion and the folk-style of the Nagas which was a change in

his usual style. In 1952 during his tour to Indone^esia, he had a show in ^{Dj}Jakarta which created a sensation there. Dr. Sukarno, the then Prime Minister of Indonesia specially invited Chavda and appreciated his paintings. Chavda had also travelled in Java and Bali and after coming back painted the life of the people of these countries in many of his paintings. While engaging in all these, he also worked as a decorative designer and completed several commercial assignments for calenders, book jackets, portrait commissions, designs for ^ab^ais-reliefs, for decorating commercial buildings, murals for interiors etc.

Chavda's paintings also showed certain linearity, and strength. But rich colours was the main attraction of his paintings. ^{An}Italian painter Ambrosso wrote, "In many of his works subjects seem a mere excuse to use colour and only from colour he appears to create emotion to curb the lyricism of colour which becomes dynamism in itself because of its abstraction, there is the black line which accompanies, develops, moves and finds what is the harmony of the picture".²⁴

Chavda experimented in several mediums like oils, water-colours, tempera, pastels, pencil, ink and worked on canv^aas, silk, plywood, paper and sometimes even on masonite. He used ^awide range of colours. The critic, Wayne M. Harwell, rightly remarked that Chavda.... "has technical ability, talent and emotional equipment and will contribute to modern Indian painting if he will arrive at a style having harmony and line".²⁵

Thus by the time Chavda joined the group, he had already established himself as one of the leading painters of India. Chavda worked as treasurer of the Group for many years.

The next equally important personality to join the Group was D.G. Kulkarni, who is known as 'Dizzi', the cartoonist. D.G. Kulkarni born on 28th December, 1919, joined the J.J. School in 1939 but had to give up within two or three years. However, he tried his best and rejoined it again in 1947, and passed his diploma with Palsikar in 1948. Dizgi was friendly with Souza and Raza and actually was requested by Souza to join the Progressive Group which for the sake of his own principles he refused. His early works showed linearity and a style derived from the traditional miniature paintings. In fact still today also his paintings reveal his love for the Indian miniatures. The male figures in his early paintings were broad-shouldered suggesting the strength and the female figures with slender body. The flat colours emphasised two-dimensional aspect and the bold black outlines brought certain linearity to the whole painting. He often used forms of bull or a horse in his composition. At the time when the Koyna dam was under construction, Dizgi visited it, stayed there for several days, observed the workers when they were working ^{on} ~~out~~ several types of jobs. He made innumerable drawings from this place. After coming back, he prepared a number of Linocuts from these drawings and held an exhibition of Lino-cut prints. He was probably the first ^{one} to use ^{this} ~~that~~ medium on a large scale. In this show he also exhibited one big mural of the size 10' x 4' based on the subject 'Koyna Construction'. The style

of these was derived from Indian decorative quality but with some slight changes. The decorative element was reduced and the patterns and forms though figurative mainly, were simplified. A wide range of greys was used and these were dominant in the colour schemes.

D.G. agreed to join the group with the purpose of having free discussions about art and such matters. It was he who suggested that when the artists returned from abroad, that they should be allowed to have membership of the Group and opportunity to exhibit with them. D.G. still remembers his career as a student in J.J. School and he states that Gerrard was responsible in turning the students towards modern trends and make them think about the expressive quality of painting. After 1950 for few years, he had to give up painting due to other difficulties. Finally he established his own place as a cartoonist. It seems that after joining the Bombay Group he started with fresh experiments.

The artists who came under Palsikar's influence and then separated, included V.S. Gaitonde, Mohan Samant and Laxman Pai. Out of these the first two joined the Bombay Group.

V.S. Gaitonde, born in 1924 was younger than Pai and Palsikar. He joined Sir J.J. School of Art for his art training and got his diploma in Art there. Afterwards he also worked there as an art teacher for some time. In 1949, when the Progressive Artists' Group organized their first show of paintings, Gaitonde and Samant became curious and joined that Group. They exhibited their paintings with the artists of the Progressive Group in 1953. Gaitonde started ^{with} ~~from~~ the academic style but then under Palsikar's influence

he turned towards the figurative type of 'Indian decorative', (Plate 66; fig.147) style.²⁶ ^A But after joining the Progressive Group ~~and~~ (as we know that these painters came under the influence of the Modern French painters,) Gaitonde ~~also~~ started painting in the manner of Klee. Before joining the Progressives, Gaitonde had obtained awards at the Bombay Art Society's exhibitions. (Silver medal in 1950). He experimented with textural surface of the painting and skillful use of linear forms. At first the paintings that he exhibited were totally abstract, but after joining the Bombay Group he seemed to come back again to the figurative types, or tried to create abstract forms derived from the figurative ones.

Mohan Samant, born in 1926, also had his art training in Sir J.J. School of Art from 1946 to 1951. After getting diploma in Art, he held his first one-man-show at the Jehangir Gallery, Bombay in 1952. Samant too, like Gaitonde came under Palsikar's influence in early fifties. In the 1953-54 Exhibition of the Bombay Art Society, his painting 'Steps unto Pride and Prestige' won the Gold Medal. This and his another painting 'Garden of Eden', both show dominant influence of Palsikar. Samant studied and copied the Jain and Rajput miniatures which helped him to enhance his use of symbols in painting and also to handle the themes of the traditional Indian painting. Mohan Samant in earlier years of his career as an artist experimented in two different directions. The first was in the direction of the Indian decorative style, and the other was in the direction of abstraction of forms. So his painting showed two types. The first experiments towards abstraction are seen in his

paintings, 'Abstracts' and 'Still-life' both in 1951, including his attempt at the harmonious use of colour, line and patterns. But along with these, the paintings in decorative style like 'Garden of Eden' (1952) or 'Steps unto Pride and Prejudice' (1953) were also there, which showed the influence of Indian miniatures and Palsi-kar's style. Samant's symbols in paintings bear resemblance to the musical notations and reflect his love for Indian classical music. It was at the time of their last exhibition that he joined the Progressive Artists' Group in the year 1953. That year was fruitful in the sense that it saw his experiments in several new directions. The paintings were of the figurative type but the figures were inclining towards more abstraction and distortion. His paintings 'Odalisque', 'Chariot', 'Fisherwoman' and 'A woman in water colour' showed the form becoming more rectangular and markedly distorted. In the latter painting, 'A Woman' with Watercolours he disintegrated the form of the woman completely. At about the same time he also did the painting like, 'Steps unto Pride and Prejudice', returning to his old Indian decorative style. It won a prize in the Bombay Art Society Exhibition. But his 'Kathak' (water colour) and 'Three Women' (oils) in 1954 showed the reassertion and less distortion of the form and the maturity in handling the colour. In his 'Odalisque' he used water colours directly from the tube. In the 'Woman in water colour' he applied water colours from the tubes but afterwards developed the forms by scraping and adding the colour wherever necessary. His paintings now revealed more freedom in handling the colour, simplicity in the treatment as well as the clarity in design. Samant joined the Bombay Group but

exhibited with them for only a few exhibitions and then parted.

The painters of the Bombay Group exhibited their paintings together in the year 1955. It was treated as a 'significant landmark in the art trends in this part of the country' by the critics²⁷. It was also acknowledged as 'an aggressive bid for survival' which revealed a talent which had been hitherto hidden away or suppressed by forces beyond their control". The seven members who exhibited were H.A. Gade, M. Samant, V.S. Gaitonde, K.K. Hebbar, S.Chavda, S.B. Palsikar and D.G. Kulkarni. It was discernible from the show that they were all striving to find the best solution for their way of expression and it was worthwhile to watch. Each of them showed his own individuality in expression and distinct landmark and thus have remained as the critic Arkay remarked in his review of Free-press Bulletin, "separately together", with their common desire to search for their own individual form of expression. The exhibition was opened without any formal function or any publicity unlike the first exhibition of the Progressives. Nor was there any manifesto of the Group as was given by Souza on behalf of the Progressive Artists Group. They themselves hung the paintings ^{and} also ~~they~~ were attending at the counter to sell admission tickets.

Palsikar's paintings established that he had developed his own technique of using colours and form. His painting 'Ranga' was the best of all his lot. Here he had used decorative and weird patterns as well as exaggerated forms and his use of black and red was quite remarkable. His another painting 'Plane Todi' also attracted the connoisseurs. Palsikar's experiments with colour application and

towards abstraction were significant. Hebb^aer's painting "In weary steps', 'Thirst', 'Rhythm', 'Gleening' and 'Leisure' were appealing²⁹. In the first one, he painted the great difference between the rich and poor. The way in which he created the three-dimensional effects, was significant in his experiments in handling the forms. His 'Thirst' was even more effective as it proved how Hebbbar could do wonders with patches of shade and light and few lines added to them. His mastery in drawing, rhythm i.e. sensitivity and a maturity of technique created an immediate appeal in his paintings. It also made clear Hebbbar's inherent nature of sympathising with the joys and sorrows of the common people and his fascination for the village life, while he himself was living in urban environment.

D.G. Kulkarni exhibited eight paintings in all. His 'Nymph' showing a nude in a totally unusual angle, and its grace and beauty and his skil/ful handling of the white and green created an 'enchanting' quality in his painting. His 'Blue Note' showed a massive grey male figure with a blue violin, ^{ivoking} ~~created~~ a mood of melancholy in his painting. D.G.'s power of handling the colour and his freedom in application showed his capacity as a colorist.

Gade exhibited 12 exhibits in all and some of them were landscapes. 'Omkareshwar' with its bright colour scheme, 'The Rock-Temple' with its bright yellow and massive quality in it and 'The Boats and Houses' with utter simplicity in handling with minimum strokes were significant. His 'Chowri Bearer' with blue lines and black streaks and a background with tiny spots of blue was a new experiment. Gade once again proved his ability to use bright colours.

Gaitonde exhibited thirteen pieces. He used abstract geometrical forms with angularity and sharp points. Thus, human figure, was constructed with basic shapes including squares, cubes, triangles. The colour schemes were bright and the blending was skilful. It was surprising that from total abstraction Gaitonde came back to the figurative forms but the figures were not of Indian style but like the cubistic types, constructed with basic geometric shapes. His notable paintings were 'Drawing', 'Queen', 'The Masks', 'Red-women', 'Doll', 'Black moon', 'Bird and the Moon'. Gaitonde showed awareness ^{of} ~~about~~ the textural surface and the compositional structure.

Samant's subjects were equally inclin^{ed}~~ing~~ towards fantasy. His works showed ^acertain primitiveness and spot~~ain~~eous handling. 'Agony from Burning Moon', 'Blue Night', 'White Shadow' were some of his notable paintings.

Chavda's paintings included animal paintings with the figurative ones and especially the painting of the 'Deer' was lively.³⁰ Although ^{the} Bombay Group ~~though~~ did not engage in much publicity, ~~but~~ their sincere attempts for searching and experimentation created quite an impact in Bombay regarding their work. The group exhibited nearly every year and at least evidences are there to show that the Group existed upto 1968.³¹ The members not only gathered periodically to discuss various problems but also celebrated when the members like Souza or Raza came for a short visit. They had a small gathering in the form of dinner or tea-party. Such parties were arranged when Souza came in 1963 and when Raza visited Bombay in 1968.

In the exhibition of the 'Bombay Group' in the year 1956, ^{along} with all other members Sadwelkar's name is also on the invitation card.³² It seems that Sadwelkar was abroad when the Group was formed and when he came back he joined the Group. Like Sadwelkar, Harkishanlal^l also joined the group later.

Baburao Sadwelkar, born in 1928, had his schooling in Kolhapur. He joined the J.J. School of Art for his art-training and got his Diploma in Art in 1952. He worked in J.J. School as an art teacher for a few years. He won several awards including the Gold Medal of the Bombay Art Society in 1959. Sadwelkar started ^{with} ~~from~~ the academic discipline but soon turned towards nonfigurative abstract style. After his tour to America he had a one-man-show giving his 'impressions' of European cities.

Harkishan Lal^l, born in 1921 in Ludhiana, took a degree in history and Political Science in 1940. Travelled widely in Punjab and other places, Harkishan^Llall then joined the Sir J.J. School of Art. His early paintings were in the Indian decorative style with subjects based on village life, and having formal rhythm. The influence of Ahiwasi was more on his mind. Afterwards Harkishan Lal^l inclined to paint landscapes more and more with post-impressionistic use of colour with full intensity and impasto-technique. In 1950 he got the Silver Medal for his landscape at the show of the Bombay Art Society.³³ It seems that in the exhibition of 1956, Harkishan Lal^l's name was not there. But he probably joined soon after. But again in 1958, the review shows that Palsikar, Samant, Harkishan Lal and Gaitonde did not exhibit in the exhibition by the Group and only Heb^obar, Chavda,

Ara, Gade, D.G. Kulkarni, Hussain and Sadwelkar exhibited, and out of these Ara, Hebbar and Chavda showed signs of search for new types of expression and freshness.

'Bombay Group' served as an inspiration for ~~the~~ experiments in the various directions. The painters, though ^{they} dispersed gradually, continued their experiments and have made their ambitions travel to the goal much fruitful, ^a As Hebbar, Chavda, Gaintode, Samant, Hussain are still among the galaxy of the leading artists.

Palsikar showed the first sign towards abstraction in 1953 before he entered the Group. His painting 'One without Second' afterwards showed a come back to the figurative. But then again his paintings turned towards abstraction. His colour and sound showed his attempt towards total abstraction. Having a mind inclining toward Hindu Philosophy, it was but natural of him to express the spiritual content through his paintings. With abstract patterns he also used colour symbolically (as he used in his previous paintings too) and started using the calligraphic forms which were significant according to the Tantric philosophy. Thus starting from the 'Indian decorative' style Palsikar has reached upto the stage of Tantra.

Hebbar starting from his academic realism, had passed through various stages. His style then took the Indian decorative form with the emotional and rhythmic line taken from Ajanta, yet the figures were built with massive patches of impasto. Then ^{followed} a sort of post-impressionistic treatment which came for a short time because of Sher Gil's influence with bright colours and his line became

stronger, (See Plate ⁵⁹~~61~~; fig. 134, 34). Upto this time the influence of realistic training was indirectly seen in the chiaroscuro. This disappeared after his tour to Europe and observation of Western masters, and now a quality of design developed side by side with colour orchestration and experiments on space. Interweaving of space and form in various ways, various influences came and disappeared but the quality of design, colour orchestration and the expression of his concern for social content remained and became part and parcel of his present style. Even a simple theme became significant with the touch of his brush and persuaded the mind of the spectator. But the sorrows and tragedies became more appealing by his treatment. Every significant happening gets reflected in his paintings and tries to find a universal truth out of it. His paintings, 'Tragedy', 'Cry', and 'Victims' after the great catastrophe at Koyna dam are reflected in Hebbbar's sensitive mind. These were treated with simplified forms and colours. Here he used dull greens and grays (his usual gaiety in colours changed) to reveal a tragic note. His paintings after the Bangladesh episode, like 'Atrocities', revealed his sensitivity and ^{alertness}~~alterness~~ of the mind which registers immediate reactions. Here he also used red and black to convey the horror ^{of} with these sad happenings. The advance of science and man's victory in the space also were immediately given expression in terms of happiness and as an imaginative feat, which gave birth to the series that he painted on space. His painting 'Overflow', suggests a rhythmic note and abundance by which he was struck, (Plate 61 ; fig. 137).

With all this, Hebbbar's main quality is that he is unorthodox, though he was trained in a very rigid system of realistic style.

His mind is always fresh and alert to receive new influences. Even then he rarely becomes too emotional and never abandons himself totally. A critic has rightly remarked that, Hebbar always stands with his feet firm on the ground and always he is aware of the world which surrounds him.³⁴ He very scarcely paints in non-objective style but has achieved abstraction through the figurative mode.

Along with the thematic content, his technical mastery, the impasto of bright and fresh colours creating a sensuous textural surface, a quality of design and a fluency of drawing make his paintings flawless in handling.

As a professional painter he also accepts commissions for portraiture, ^um/yrals, illustrations and in these ventures also his creativity always peeps. The advocates of realistic style who criticise the modern painters should see Hebbar's portrait of the late S.A. Krishnan which is at once so lively and revealing his personality.³⁵ Nobody but a close friend can paint such ^{an effective} portrait,. Hebbar's emotions towards Krishnan as a close friend, and his masterly handling has resulted in a rare quality in this painting which has reached up to an 'art-work' of very high level.

Chavda, whose painterly preoccupations ran almost parallel to Hebbar upto certain stage has changed a great deal. Like Hebbar he also started ^{with} ~~from~~ the academic realism and then painted in the Indian decorative manner. He also painted subjects like folk dances and festivities. His sketches of Indian classical dances are the best example of it. Chavda afterwards went to more

simplified forms and flat ⁺ tonal values. After seeing tribal people of Assam and his visit to Indonesia and Bali, his paintings on the tribal life of the people had some influence of folk art. (Painting on Indonesian people - Plate 62 ; fig. 138). In some paintings he also used slight distortions, ^{yet} he rarely resorted to violent distortions. His tendency to see the better side of life is reflected in his painting. He scarcely paints the tragic side of life. After several stages now Chavda has reached towards the non-objective style. But his bright colours and ^{the quality are} rhythm ^{of} is retained. His line continued ^s to be lyrical. After toying with total abstraction again he brings in the suggestion of the landscapes through abstract forms. Chavda's strong colours and the contrasting tonal values remind of the colourful textile and craft objects of Gujarat. Together with these the rhythmic patterns are inseparable from his paintings.

Like Hebbar, Chavda presents perfect skill in executing professional assignments like portraits, murals, illustrations. Best examples are his murals in the Nicholson Gallery at Nariman Point, Bombay.

D.G. Kulkarni started with the inspiration taken from the miniature paintings. During the exhibitions of the Bombay Group, though he was experimenting mainly in colour and form in his paintings, he was still using a figurative style. In the later years of the Bombay Group i.e. in 1962 D.G. painted a 'clown' series. ^{He did several} ~~Several~~ paintings ~~he painted~~ on this subject and used different colour schemes according to the mood of the painting. Some paintings in this series show high key colour scheme with very little

contrast, while some showed high contrast colour-tones. Some paintings showed very bold use of strong greens, with orange, red or mauve and black outlines. In several of D.G.'s paintings a bold use of very strong green intensified with other contrasting colours is revealing. Actually some critics agreed on the point that skilful use of green and ^ymauve was Dizzi's forte. The 'Clown^o-series' was much appreciated by the critics.

In 1965, D.G. Kulkarni had one more thematic exhibition. This time he painted the series of 'The Metamorphosis of Women'. He depicted ⁱon these paintings the seven different stages of women. These were full of his compositional skill and his high taste of using bold colours and confident brushwork. Critic Jag^oMohan remarked, "It is a mystery how this painter of considerable achievement has not been accepted by the 'establishment'".³⁶

Dizzi's later paintings are characterized by a sculpturesque quality. His later paintings were inclining more and more towards distortion and abstraction. As Dizzi started to do stone sculptures (but rarely in wood), this naturally had its influence. The reason why his later painting showed sculpturesqueness lies there. His female nudes in the paintings of the year 1964 were executed with the sculpturesque volume which was surprisingly similar to Souza's paintings who was also showing in 1962. But comparatively Dizzi's figures were less vulgar, ^{but} ^{three dimensional.} and more ^λsculpturesque.

In 1970, Dizzi's paintings showed a marked change. Now he used two-dimensional forms in the space, composed of several flat or sometimes in various tonal values to create a pleasing effect.

When Dizgi exhibited his sculpture pieces they revealed how the folk element had entered in his sculpture, this was reflected in his paintings too. He won several awards for his paintings as well as sculptures. After several experimental stages now he has reached upto his present style emphasizing two-dimensional form and the graceful dark lines which overlap with his admiration for the Indian miniatures from which he began his career. His art has the characteristics of total abstraction.

The change in Gaitonde's and Samant's paintings was faster than the others. Gaintode soon turned away from his figurative paintings towards abstraction. He wanted to develop the sense of pattern and colour to get the total impact of design. In the Bombay Group exhibitions such paintings with basic forms were shown by him. Thus his painting became free by avoiding the obstacle of the figure. Now his search was towards the purity of form and more concentration was on space.

Gaintonde soon came across Zen philosophy which made a deep impact on his mind. The thought that abstract feeling, love, courage etc. can be valid only for a given moment and that such experience cannot be stretched over a long period, led him to paint speedily. Speed gives more intensity, he says. Sooner the completion of the painting, the better or more concentrated is the result. A mind capable of deep thinking, according to him, is more important than actual act of painting. Gaitonde never gives title to his paintings. He thinks that his experience of painting is purely personal. Usually his paintings show a single colour dominating

the whole painting. His painting is never multicolour^u. It also shows the forms and shapes arranged horizontally due to his interest in calligraphic design. The forms in his paintings are evolved from alphabetic script, developed in the patterns according to their own character.

Gaiatonde has held several one-man shows in Bombay as well as abroad. He participated in several important group shows in India as well as foreign countries.

As for as Samant is concerned, he too changed his style fast. His paintings show in their formal aspect the shifting from the early abstraction in 1951, which was a sudden change, when he exhibited along with the 'Progressive' artists. The suddenness with which he went toward the type of Kleeish expression with the same suddenness he returned back to the figurative again. Subsequently he shifted towards distortion and gradual disintegration of form, and finally towards total abstraction. He also turned to Tantra and used the tantric symbols and symbolic colour in his paintings. His paintings 'Advaita and Shabda' shows thick impasto suggesting sound through the colour. Similar, feeling is expressed in 'Gatha Vivada Echo'.

As discussed before, Gade painted the landscapes from a position above the eye level like Cezanne. Gade's approach to painting was more intellectual than the other members. S.A. Krishnan has mentioned the discussion between Gade and Raza about the importance of content and form.³⁷ Krishnan writes that Gade emphasized that though in the beginning 'content' in its varied forms might have

to play a greater role, in fact, all plastic arts, would have ultimately to submit to the discipline and limitations of formalisation and to the fundamental elements peculiar to the medium. While Raza was of the opinion that the ideal position would be that of the integration of form and content. This clearly explained why sometimes we feel that Gade is a little bit detached from the sentiment and is lead by intellectual approach.

During his association with the Progressives, Gade made his mark as a colourist and as Krishnan has rightly pointed out, '....basically, his work was outstanding because of his analytical mood and intellectual approach'.³⁸ It is worth comparing Gade with Raza as both had a common interest in landscape and both took the reference from the environments around them. Both attempted to simplify their formed arrangements, however, Raza painted more passionately while Gade was directed by intellect. Both turned towards abstraction in their later phases, however, Raza used abstract forms in a Cubistic way, and then used two-dimensional rendering with impasto. Gade was attracted by the certain aspects of child art inspired after seeing the paintings of his own son. His colours became more dominant and the forms lost their volumes and became more flat, the arrangement did not show any use of perspective. Gade's 'Ananda-Parbat' (1959) and his 'Yellow and Green' (1955) have such qualities. The first one however, is more dreamlike in its colour scheme.

In 1950 he travelled to Kashmir and stayed there for few months. After coming back he painted series of paintings on

Kashmir themes, with its peculiar architecture, people with typical costumes which were picturesque. His paintings 'Pahelgaon', 'White horse' and 'The Horsemen' belong to this series. Afterwards his trip to South had an important influence on his paintings. His colour scheme became warm due to the experience of ^abalzing sun and people of darker complexion. Even the sculpture and temple architecture had its imprint on his paintings.

Gade is sometimes criticised as being very much restrained in the emotion. It is also infered^r that too much emphasis on intellectual analysis brings this effect. However, Gade says, "I am scientific in my temperament." It is part of me and perhaps, it is seen ⁱⁿ as an exaggerated measure because of my education. But so insistent is this faculty that I am told I am denied emotion entirely. This is not true. I think quite a lot about a painting and rationalise for a long time, but when I start painting it is the emotion that is at work. I paint passionately, leaving the intellectual problems in the background. As a colourist I owe much to emotion".³⁹ His colours do have that emotive ^{quality} colour. His figures, houses, trees are treated as shapes and patterns and not with any symbolic or metaphysical meaning. He says, "whatever emotion is in painting, it is within it, born out of it and developed within the nature of medium".⁴⁰ His rendering of colour and the textural quality of the impasto explain his statement. Gade's real contribution is as a colourist and the intellectual aspect of his paintings. Gade turned to abstraction in his later paintings but these never miss the reference to the objects in reality.

Although the Bombay Group did not include any sculptor among them but it is possible to discuss the sculptural work of N.G. Pansare who shared with them many of the creative intentions. Narayan Ganesh Pansare born in 1912 at Uran, in Raigarh was brought up in Poona. In his childhood he used to try to chisel the stone to create interesting shapes and mould the clay into the forms of idols. His inclination towards sculpture was recognised by his parents and they took him to Bombay to join Sir J.J. School of Art. For this imaginative power and sincerity towards his work he won the ^a Mayo Medal which was reserved for the best student. Even before completing his Diploma he won several awards, including the Silver Medal of the Bombay Art Society.

Pansare went to England in 1938 and joined the Royal college of art and got the A.R.C.A. degree in 1941. Pansare's creative talent was revealed when after his return to India he did a number of architectural panels. These ^c suggest clearly the source of inspiration from Egyptian relief panels. These reliefs are still extant ^a in Bombay on the facade of the New India Assurance building. Pansare's sculpture is infused with a truly indigenous spirit whether it may be a figure or a head or a composition. Take for example this relief printed in Bombay Art Society's catalogue, (Plate 70; fig. 154). His 'Standing Woman' exhibited in the recent exhibition 'Indian Sculpture Today' (Plate 70; fig. 155) or his award winning small size 'Torso' (~~Plate — ; fig. —~~) are the best examples of his chiselling as well as his style of creating a sense of volume. His 'Head' in bronze (Plate 70; fig. 156) ^{two} with its

patterns of shade and light and graceful angular contours give a certain feeling of Indianness. His small sculpture 'Deer' which is now in the collection of ~~Piloo~~ Pochkhan^awala^a and which was exhibited in the above exhibition was a rare piece bringing out the graceful posture of a deer.

It was Pansare who guided Adi Daw^vierwalla and Piloo Pochkhan^awala in their quest of exploring their own way of expression. Pansare worked ~~on~~ ^{on} several commissions including the equestrian Shivaji at Shivaji Park, Bombay, Architectural Relief for the Ashoka Hotel, Delhi, etc.

Pansare died in 1968 when he was too involved with commissioned work.

The painters of Bombay Group started from the Indian decorative style and absorbed several influences like that from the paintings of Amrita Sher Gil as well as from their experiences and observations of the existing art/trends in Europe. Their Indian style gradually combined with the other factors like the textural feeling and the distortion of forms. Some of them like Chavda, Palsikar, Samant turned towards total abstraction while others (though occasionally paint^{ed} with abstraction) usually express their affinity to human figure in its existing environments.

REFERENCES

1. The exact date of the meeting where the Bombay Group was formed is not recorded anywhere. The interviews of the artists concerned and the name of the Group referred in the reviews led to guess the year to be 1954-55.
2. Based on the personal interview with Mr. K.K. Hebbar and K.H. Ara.
3. Names of the awards and the year

K.K. Hebbar	- 1947
K.H. Ara	- 1951 - 52
Gade	- 1956.
4. Confirmed by ~~the~~ personal interviews with the artists concerned with the Group.
5. See the catalogue of the first exhibition published by the Group (in the collection of Fine Arts Faculty, Baroda)
6. See the review in Marg, No. VII (2) Pg. 32 - 36. and Marg VIII (4) Pg 32-33
7. The painting published in the catalogue of the Bombay Art Society (in the same year).
8. About symbols - snake, couple, fire etc. from the article in 'Design' magazine by Vinayak Purshit.
9. Compare Palsikar's painting with the prize-winning Indian decorative painting of Nirmala Desai's gold medal winning picture or Ahivasi's painting 'Message'.
10. Painting 'One-world', published in the 'Catalogue of National Exhibition'
11. Painting 'Maya' published in Catalogue of Art Society of India Silver Jubilee issue in the year c. 1943.

12. Series 'One Without Second' in ~~the year~~ 1950's consisting 8 paintings.
13. 'Oh Mother' published in the year 1952.
14. From 'Artis's Quest', by K.K. Hebbar
15. From the catalogue of the year 1942 of Bombay Art Society
16. Review, Times of India dated Feb. 17, 1945. It is in high key.
17. Review, 20 Jan. 1942, Times of India and the Bombay Chronicle dated Jan. 21, 1942.
18. From the catalogue of Bombay Art Society, year 1944.
19. Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni, *in a seminar at Bombay.*
20. Review in the Indian Weekly Magazine under column Art Forum - dated 9th Feb. 1947.
21. Confirmed from personal interviews with K.K. Hebbar and K.H. Ara.
22. Review, Times of India dated 30th Jan. 1934, p.7. col. 1 to 4.
23. Taken from the ^{personal} file of S.D. Chavda.
24. Printed in the forward of catalogue of Chavda's exhibition.
25. From the personal file of S.D. Chavda.
26. See the catalogue of The Bombay Art Society, year 1953 for this painting.
27. From the review from Free-Press Bulletin dated March 29, 1955.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. This belonged to Chavda's animal paintings.
31. From the record of S.D. Chavda, who was the treasurer, the amounts spent for the meetings, exhibitions and the parties (for the members from abroad like Souza and Raza who came and met the group members). It is evident that the Group existed upto 1968.

32. The catalogue of this exhibition is in the collection of the Fine Arts Faculty, Baroda.
33. From the review in 'Forum' dated 12th Feb. 1950.
34. Article on K.K. Hebbar's Art by Baburao Sadwelkar in Maharashtra Times date not known.
35. This painting is now in the collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi.
36. Jagmohan in a review of the exhibition of Bombay Art Society.
Date & Paper unknown.
37. S.A. Krishnan - 'Gade', Sadanga series of Modern and contemporary Indian Art, Edited by Mulk Raj Anand.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.