

Chapter 4

ARTIST AND SOCIETY

Early Socialization of an artist

Social Background of the Artists

The place of the artist in the society is a challenging theme as it enables us to envision the juxtaposition of the social environs along with the growth of the artist in the general scheme. This section is an attempt to do precisely the same that is to describe the social background of the respondents, their age and sex composition; their religious background; marital status; education; rural - urban upbringing and the profession/occupation of the respondents' parents. Thereby, attempting to understand the conception of art in their lives; the processes of socialization of the artists; and their social interactions with the other social forces.

Age and sex

To obtain a complete picture of the relationship between the art world and the society, age has not been kept as a parameter for intense observation. For a comprehensive response from extensive time period, artist from three different age brackets have been included. The respondent artists belonged

to different age groups, ranging from 22 to 75 years. They were broadly categorized into three groups representing largely three generations of artists.

Table 1 : Age group and sex of the respondent artist

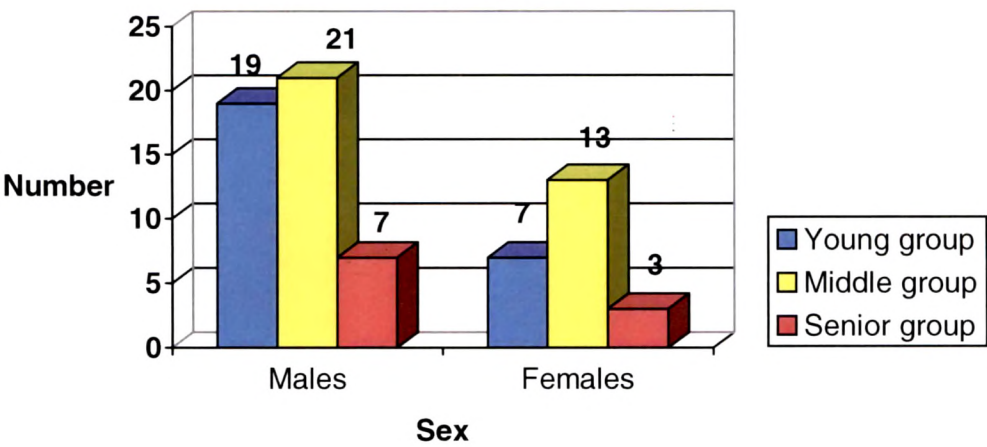
Category	Age From-To	Males N = 47	Females N = 23	Total N= 70	Percent
Young Group	21-35 years	19	07	26	37.14
Middle Group	36-50 years	21	13	34	48.58
Senior Group	50 and above	07	03	10	14.28
Total		47	23	70	100.00

The fifteen-year interval for the age category of the respondents was to get a desirable sample for each of the categories. These categories represent the years of experience in the fine arts field rather than a mere age grouping. The young group or the younger generation begins with twenty-one years, the age of acceptable maturity by the family and the peers. Further it is also the age when the specified graduate study would have been completed. This upper-limit of thirty-five years is also arbitrary and reflects more the societal view of what may be considered as young.

The next group begins from thirty-five onwards and as put forth in Table No.1 this is the group in which the majority of the respondents belong. From the data it is visible that out of the seventy artists nearly fifty percent were between 36 to 50 years, thus indicating the fact that the largest chunk belonged to the middle age group. This group is generally viewed as a phase of settling stability especially in the context of other professions, where the carefree adventure of the youth is replaced with the careful investment in the phenomena called life. Economically as well as socially, this group looks forward towards a more balanced and stable life with certain concrete achievements in life. In the succeeding discussions an attempt is made to compare it with the way, the artistic community is able to measure up and is moving parallel with it or whether it reflects different patterns of development. The next group is of the senior respondents, who have lived their lives longer and hence are more experienced in terms of their savoir-faire of life and work. They are the ones who have witnessed the changes in the art as well as the social scenario, and thus their opinions have been used to study the past as well as the present social context and then draw comparisons to formulate the conclusive analysis. Throughout the study there are constant juxtapositions between various situations confronted and

resolved by the diverse respondents, which enhances the present research and brings about varied components.

Figure 5: Sex distribution of the respondents



The other facet that has been consciously studied is that of gender. Women have always been overlooked in most studies and therefore it is imperative to study and understand their perceptions and predicaments about the world around them especially their position in the art world. The processes of their socialization are the central points especially in relation to art which is also a mode of questioning various issues around them. Their marginal presence is visible from the male-female ratio of the present study, where males form the major portion of the respondents that is about 67.15 percent and the females are a mere 32.85 percent.

Religion and caste

Religion is an important element to understand the establishment, growth and maturity of any civilization. It continues to be a central part of human existence. Since time memorial, religion has been used to unveil and to describe the baffling nature of everything that happens in society. It has also been more than often used as a way to exercise control over people as well as empires. Moreover, religion has tried to answer the fundamental questions such as meaning and purpose of life.

India is chiefly a Hindu populated country. This gets reflected in our data that suggests that ninety two percent of the artists are Hindus ($n = 64$). Of the remaining, one is a Muslim, one Christian, a Jain, a Parsi, and an atheist. One respondent mentioned not having any religion and is a Korean married to an Indian.

Table 2: Caste of the respondent artists

Caste	Frequencies ($n = 64$)	Percent
High caste	57	89.07
Other backward castes	5	7.81
Schedule castes	1	1.56
Schedule tribe	1	1.56
Total	64	100.00

Indian society is divided into various castes. One of the features of this basis of division of society was largely rigid occupational division, which had little scope for relaxation. However this dogmatism got eased with time and there was more flexibility later to adopt the occupation of ones choice. In last century or so, this division has slackened to a great extent. Yet large segregations still remained, especially those of high and low castes. The upper castes virtually were the harbingers of new cultural trends, art being one such trend. This mention of such distinctions is not judgmental, but rather is the reflection of the current social scenario in which the artists function. The data reflects that majority of the artists belonged to high castes (57 out of 70), 5 were OBC (Other backward castes) 1 belonged to schedule caste and 1 schedule tribe. Thus almost 90 percent of the respondents belonged to higher castes.

Living Arrangement

Until recent times, people had few lifestyle¹³ choices that were considered acceptable by society. A person either got married or remained unmarried, and in some cases devoted their life to the service of God. Anything apart from the normative prescribed marital living arrangement

¹³ The term lifestyle here refers to living patterns

was unacceptable and was considered going against family, society and religion. In contemporary social structure there are choices that are acceptable to certain sections of the society, which were not visible in the past. Marriage is even today considered the most vital social institution designed to stabilize and pillar the various relationships within it. There are other alternatives such as cohabitation, which are slowly becoming acceptable especially in metropolitan and cosmopolitan cultures in India. To enable us to get a better insight into the lives of the artists their living arrangements are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 : Living arrangement of the artists

Marital Status	Young N = 26		Middle N = 34		Older N = 10		Total N = 70
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Single	12	02	03	02	-	-	19
Married	05	04	16	09	07	03	44
Living In	02	01	01	01	-	-	05
Separated	-	-	01	-	-	-	01
Divorced	-	-	-	01	-	-	01
TOTAL	19	07	21	13	07	03	70

Twenty seven percent (n =19) of the artists are single, sixty three percent (n = 44) of them are married, seven percent are living in, three percent are divorced or separated. Thirty eight percent of the males are single, while twenty one percent of females are single. Majority of the artists are married.

As shown in the above data the majority of the artists follow the traditional and most accepted form of living arrangement – ‘marriage’. Out of those who were married 42.85 percent of the respondent artists were married to artists (same profession). This trend according to the artists is owing to the profession itself, which requires commitment that can be understood better by an artist. Further, the flow of a steady income or the lack of it, is an important element as someone from the same profession would be able to accept this as a part of the risks of the profession and hence part of life. Marriage in an artist’s life is an arrangement that may eventually revolve around art especially for the male artists. The male artists at large have the freedom to be whimsical when they are in tune with their artistic inclinations and may not want to interact with the society at large. Those women who are artists themselves can understand this behavior generically. This freedom is gender specific as the women artists have less autonomy to

do the same. Another factor responsible for this intra-profession marriage is artists are less commonly preferred by non-artist suitors and their families in an arranged marriage situation. Similarly the artists also look out for a partner in marriage who would be willing to let go off the traditional customary constraints and be a part of his/her world.

The new trend of living arrangement that becomes visible in the present context is called cohabitation or popularly termed as “living in”. It is an arrangement whereby both the partners live together without legal sanctions. Since there are no legal bondages, therefore the alliance can be dissolved much easily. The artists prefer it increasingly as it gives them a sense of freedom, which is akin with their professional disposition.

Art education of the respondent artists

Creativity in arts is generally credited to be a combination of heredity and personal endeavors. However there is the molding and learning of fundamentals of any art which are considered necessary for one to have overall understanding of the subject. The learning can occur through formal training in institutions or through practice, discovery and self-learning. The combination of these two would enrich an individual’s overall perception

and knowledge of the field. It is well accepted that any specialized atmosphere would enable advanced learning and hence even a creative art field has its advantages if pursued in a formal setup.

The artists in the study have undergone formal education and have a graduate or post-graduate degree or a diploma in Fine arts from an art institution. Many of the respondent artists were originally from different parts of the country but had come to Baroda either for undergraduate or postgraduate studies. Subsequently, many of them settled in Baroda city. The degree or diploma reflects their training in specialized art program; and their post-graduate study refers to further learning in a chosen specialization.

Table 4: Place of under graduation for art education

Degree/Diploma	Baroda		Other places	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Graduation/ Diploma	24	17	23	6
Total	41		29	

Out of forty seven male artists twenty four respondents have completed graduation from the Maharaja Sayajirao University (M.S.University) of Baroda and twenty three respondents from other colleges. Almost equal numbers of male students have done their graduation from other places. Out of those who have completed their graduation from other places fifty six percent are from Calcutta (13 out of 23). They have graduated from Calcutta and came to Baroda for post graduation. Others had their graduate degree or diploma from Trivandrum, Patna, Pune, Delhi, Mysore and Ahmedabad. Out of twenty three female respondents ten have a graduate diploma or a degree and thirteen have a post diploma or degree. Seventy four percent (17 out of 23) have done their graduation from the M.S.University of Baroda and twenty six percent (n=6) have come from other places. A few respondents had completed their graduation in other educational streams and then pursued their diploma in fine arts.

Rural or urban upbringing

The socio-geographic environment influences the rearing practices and this would get reflected in the individual's choice of profession. Out of the total, seventy four percent of the artists come from an urban background and were brought up in the city while twenty six percent of the artists came

from rural areas. There is a gender distinction here; more males than females were from rural background. From amongst the male artists, sixty eight percent of the males have urban upbringing while thirty two percent have rural upbringing. So far as female artists are concerned, eighty seven percent of the female artists have urban upbringing and thirteen percent have had rural upbringing. Not surprising that more males than females with a rural upbringing are in art field. There are reasons behind it. The opportunities for higher education are available for men more than women; girls in general have limited freedom not just regarding their desire for education but for choosing a field of their choice. Universally it has been evident that they are not even in control of their own lives (though this is changing today). Urban or rural divide has not had much of an impact on their art except that according to those from rural areas, joining an art college was like a dream. For a few from rural background, the fine arts faculty atmosphere was new and some said they faced a culture shock. This was owing to the 'cosmopolitan' culture of the faculty, which is known to have its own subculture and is regarded as the fashion hub of the city. In addition the language of instruction may have initially been a concern for those coming from rural areas as mentioned by few. According to them, the language

barrier inhibited their interaction initially but later within a year or two they got assimilated in the cosmopolitan culture.

Respondent's parents occupation

Seven percent (n = 5) of the respondent artists' fathers were in creative fields, out of which one is an artist. The others were architect, photographer and writer.

Table 5 : Respondents' father's occupation

Occupation	Frequency N=70	Percent
Professionals (Doctor, Engineer, Government officer, Lawyer, Bank manager)	13	18.57
Academics (Researcher/ School /College teacher,	8	11.42
Moderate businessmen (Tailor, tea shop, bidi shop)	5	7.14
Defence services	5	7.14
Affluent Businessmen (cloth shop, ghee wholesaler	10	14.28
Laborer	7	10%
Farmer	3	4.28%
Artist	1	1.42%
Architect, photographer, writer	4	5.71%
Miscellaneous (LIC agent, commission agent, foreman, clerk, accountant)	11	15.74%

From those in professional services, two were doctors, five engineers, three government officers, a lawyer, and a Bank manager and a researcher. Eight of them were school/college teachers. Three of the fathers were engaged in farming and seven were laborers working in mills or factories. 5 of the fathers were small shop keepers.

A few (n= 6) of the respondent artists mentioned that their fathers had keen interest in drawing, painting, music and theatre and were deeply involved in encouraging them in the formative years. This perhaps shows first of all, fulfillment of their aspirations through their children and secondly, providing a conducive and creative atmosphere to their children which probably they did not get.

Table 6 : Respondents' mother's occupation

Occupation/ profession	Frequency	Percent (N=70)
Housewife	59	84.28
School or college Teacher	5	7.15
Government employee, clerk	3	4.29
Research officer/ Doctor	2	2.86
Artist	1	1.42

In Table 6 it is shown that eighty four percent of the respondents' mothers are housewives. About seven percent of the artist's mothers are in the teaching field, and four percent of the mothers worked as clerks or in government offices. Further one was into research and one was a doctor. A few mentioned that though their mothers were housewives, they took tuitions, or were social worker or were supporting their father in business such as tailoring. Only one middle group male respondent's mother was an artist (painter).

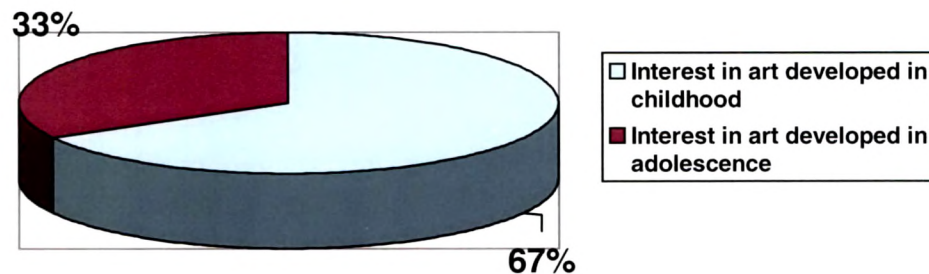
In the Tables 5 and 6 it is shown that the fathers of the respondent artists were in varied occupations whereas majority of the mothers were housewives. This reflects that there are no straight patterns of children following their parents occupation. Nor is it evident that these artists have inherited the creative skills from their parents as is popularly believed. However it is necessary to note that anyone with an inclination and inner creative desire can adopt a profession such as fine arts.

Early Socialization towards art

Art is popularly considered to be a hobby. In childhood almost all children dabble with colors and paints. Art and craft activities are a part of the curriculum in schools and it is introduced in pre-school period. Though it

is a common feature in early years, to take it up as a serious profession is something very few attempt. The study revealed as shown in Figure 4 that for sixty seven percent of the respondent's interest in art developed in their childhood (age 4-11). Thirty three percent mentioned it was in the adolescent phase (12-18). Within adolescent phase, most of them mentioned early adolescent period (12-15) as the phase in which their interest became more pronounced. One young female respondent mentioned that she got into an art college on her mothers advice but her interest started growing in her late adolescence phase when she joined drawing classes. But for majority of the respondents, inclination towards art began early in life. Fifty six percent of female respondents mentioned childhood as the phase in which their interest in art appeared or grew as compared to seventy two percent of the male respondents who mentioned childhood phase as important for growth of their initial interest in art activities.

Figure 6 : Development of Interest in Art



Inclination towards creative activity amongst children maybe considered as normal aspect in childhood but the creative atmosphere provided by caretakers, parents and teachers form the basis for the development of creative faculties of a child. Through the process of socialization children get molded and every society values certain traits over others and children usually pick up those traits, which are valued. Parents who introduce their off springs to art, have played an important role especially since in late childhood and early adolescent phases individuals begin to realize their interests, skills and the value of the same in their families as well as the wider society. As mentioned by the artist, Indrapramit Roy, *‘My most coveted birthday present would be a sketch book and colors...I remember every vacation I would get a sketch book and by end of the vacation it would be full. My father would take me to museums and*

exhibitions...I think it had an effect on my taking keen interest in art...'

Respondents also mentioned being taken to museums and art and craft exhibitions by their parents, which enthused an interest in creative field in the early periods of their lives.

Apart from interest getting developed during childhood or adolescence phase, the formative years of one's life may leave a lasting impression. It was also evident from some of the respondents nostalgic trips back to their childhood days that even after years, their childhood events and incidences get reflected in their art. One such male respondent says, '*I feel the kind of life you have led during childhood is very crucial as it is the time when your mental make up is being built...the past keeps coming back and it tends to influence your present...your art....'*'. About five artists mentioned taking active part in decorating the *pendal* for *Durga* or *Saraswati pooja* during their childhood. A male respondent remembered how in his village his aunt and uncle would be called in to paint the walls of the houses of families in which someone was getting married as painting certain symbols was considered auspicious. He would assist his aunt in doing up those walls. Such influencing episodes got reflected in the narrations of some of the respondents. Similarly there were others who felt that certain events and

occurrences of their early life has an impact even now on their art. A respondent Akash* who had an unstable teenage period stated, *'my adolescence was turbulent and more often than I want, it tends to get reflected in my art. I consciously try to keep it at bay but unknowingly it creeps into my works'*. Artists also mentioned depicting certain memorable episodes of their childhood in their paintings.

Since for nearly two-thirds of the artists' interest in drawing, painting, and other creative activities began in childhood itself, it would be vital to understand if the family, school art teacher, friends had any influence on them taking more interest in art.

Role of family members

Concerning the family, it is important to recognize that family practices reflect and transmit the values of the culture as a whole. The parenting practices that are being followed is not a product of an individual's thinking but rather is an outcome of role requirements for parents in their culture, which they have learned as the result of their own experiences and

* Pseudonym used

socialization. In other words the behavior of the family is not simply the choice that the parents make, but rather reflects the expectations of the community, to which the parent feel compelled to conform.

There is one more factor that needs to be understood and that is when considering socialization in family, it is important to include not only the parents but also the extended family, especially siblings and grandparents. Family relationships are more pronounced and acute in India and therefore decisions tend to be taken usually with common consensus. Therefore family support or family conflict is a necessary factor in the artist-etiology. There are many factors that affect the early socialization of an artist, which includes the occupation of the parents, their economic status, their responses to the artist's aptitude towards art which is largely dependent upon their failure or success in the non-art areas. Outside the family the other factors that played the crucial role were the acceptance by the peers, the encouragement by the school teacher amongst the other things.

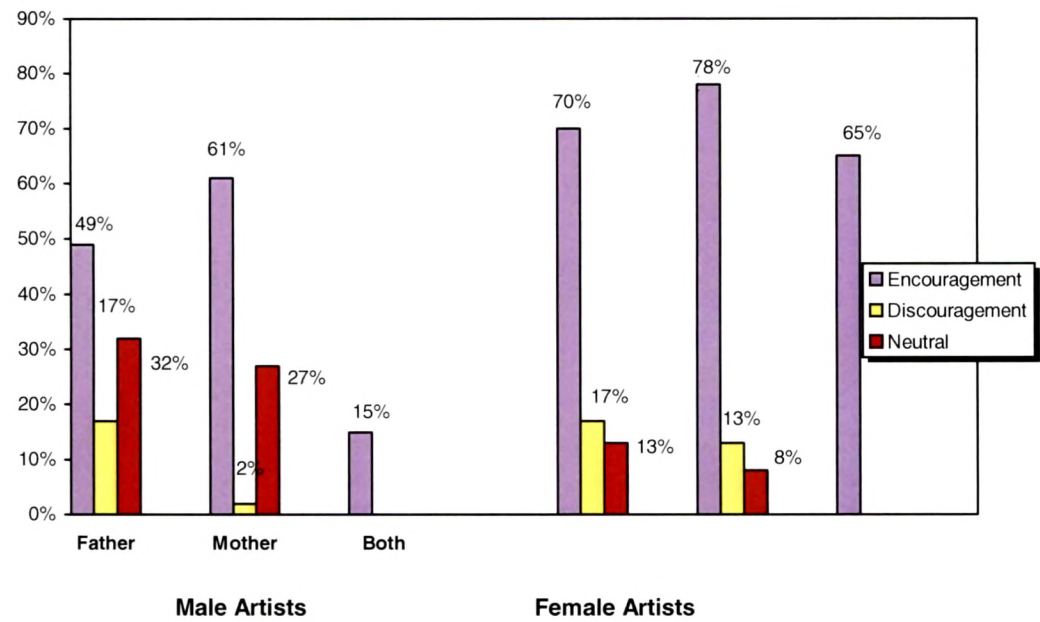
In the dynamic world of highly differentiated professions and jobs there is growing competitiveness and the traditional stereotypical beliefs regarding vocations and professions, which are lucrative and valued are

undergoing a change. In India, the career choice of an individual is influenced as much by the decision of the concerned person as that of his parents. Sociologists trying to comprehend the world are more concerned with forces that encourage individuals to take up an occupation or join a particular profession or the circumstances that prevent them from pursuing a profession. We cannot assume that all artists somehow drift into art as there can be various aspects revolving around their entry into the world of art. 'There exist whole social paraphernalia for getting persons committed to their artistic identities...' (Albrecht *et al* 1970 : 147). The following sections try to comprehend the various social trajectories of the artist toward their pursuit of art. Encouragement, discouragement or neutral attitude by family members towards the artist have in various ways led to intensifications of artists' desire to reach the position they are in today.

As shown in Figure 7, sixty one percent of the male artists have mentioned that their mother was encouraging whereas forty nine percent of the male respondents stated that their fathers were the main source of encouragement in formative years of their lives. This indicates that the mothers though were passive in terms of crucial decision making were relatively active in generating the initial interest. Almost equal percentage of

the male respondent artists remarked that it was their father who was the key decision maker and was the one who was responsible for kindling of artistic interest in them. Fifteen percent had mentioned both their parents as having encouraged them especially in the formative years in their art activities.

Figure 7 : Respondent’s parents’ attitude



Female respondents have received more encouragement as compared to male respondents. Seventy percent of the respondents mentioned their father as encouraging and seventy eight percent of the female respondents mentioned their mothers as providing them encouragement in their art activity in the formative years.

In comparison to the male artists among whom only fifteen percent mentioned both the parents as having encouraged them, sixty five percent of the female artists have revealed that both the parents have encouraged them in their formative as well as later years when they took up fine arts in college. In seventy percent of the cases fathers of the female artist encouraged their interests in fine arts and seventy eight percent of the female respondents said their mothers were strong supporters and encouraged them throughout their lives. A few artists mentioned that their elder brother or sister was the most encouraging person from within the family.

The encouragement given by the family to the artist respondents had certain exceptions as well. Nineteen percent of the respondents mentioned that their parents who initially nurtured and encouraged their interest in art began discouraging them when they realized or were informed by the artists that they would like to take up art as a profession. Role of parents is significant in developing and molding their children. Apart from the parents other members of the family may also be instrumental in shaping the individual, his/her interests and his/her future career choices. A few artists mentioned that their siblings were the ones who encouraged their interest in art the most.

Interest in art was encouraged till the activity was considered a hobby by some of the parents; however when it was thought as a serious profession there emerged a zone of conflict. Every society values certain traits, which parents and other socializing agents such as teacher, neighbors and the media encourage. There exist many intrinsic as well as external factors influencing the career choice and career graph of individual members to select a profession or a career. In the choice of careers family once again plays a very crucial role. For a career in fine arts inclination and motivation are imperative and here parent's role needs to be assessed and analyzed.

Thirty eight percent of the artists mentioned that their parents were positive towards any field of profession they chose. Out of the sixty four percent of the total respondents who received encouragement and support through out their life, thirty eight percent have added that their parents were open, friendly, broadminded and western in their out look. This liberal attitude of the parents gave them the autonomy and hence they were permitted to make their own choice of the career. A few (n=3) even mentioned that their parents knew that the respondent artists did not have aptitude for any other subject and hence the profession of fine arts would be appropriate for them. The approval or disapproval of the parents depended

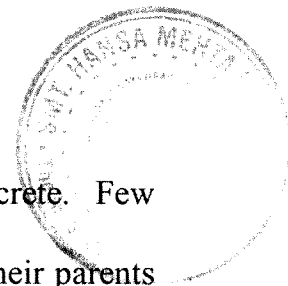
on various aspects. One factor is gender, where in, the female artists mentioned that they were always encouraged by their parents to take up any profession of their preference. This positive reception is seen as a static factor transverse across generations. The senior female artists mentioned that they were always encouraged by their parents to take up fine arts as a profession. This was substantiated by the middle group female artists and also the younger group (with one exception). The second aspect can be derived from the male artist's responses varied with the 'time' of their accomplishments. The elderly male respondent artists had to face some struggle to obtain familial acceptance. The acceptance was not easy to acquire as the times were different where some of them were young boys in the pre independent days and they had to choose a concrete occupational option to make their living. The responses were different of the middle group artists as there were different societal pressures to earn a decent living, to improve the social status; therefore they were expected to perform to some extent to that end, by choosing the more established and concrete professions of a doctor, engineer etc. For the younger artist the pressures to take up lucrative professions other than art were also evident, however the growing demand and appreciation that creativity in general is showered with has made the choice for some of them easier. At the same time there is

tremendous competition which they have to face and survive in the professional field of fine arts. The underlined factor that emerges is that though the respondents had talent, yet many of them were forced initially to take science or commerce and flow with the conventional norms. Once they were unable to perform as successfully as they were expected to. Only after meeting failure, a career in fine art and artist's talent was met with the approval of their parents.

In Indian society, parent's acquiescence plays a significant role to in almost all the aspect of their childrens' lives. This in turn is bound and influenced to a very large extent by social norms. Encouragement, for majority of the respondents meant being praised, appreciated for their artwork since the childhood. Many also mentioned being taken for exhibitions, fairs and to the museums as positive reinforcements leading to them taking more interest in visual arts. A few respondents also recollected that they were asked by their parents with a lot of pride, to show their artwork to guests or /and relatives and this itself meant appreciation for their work. It was not that the parents always supported the child. Thirty two percent of the male respondents said father was neutral and in seventeen percent of the cases father discouraged them. Twenty seven percent said

mother was neutral. From amongst the female respondents in seventeen percent cases father discouraged and thirteen percent said father was neutral. From the middle age group female respondents (n = 13), only one mentioned that her father discouraged her from taking up art as a career. Not surprising that in the case of all senior male artists (n=10) mother was neutral, this could be due to the position of women in 1940s and 1950s in India, which was restricted to home and hearth. Women were socialized to accept their subordinate role within the family and were not decision makers even when it came to their own children. Some of them were unlettered and hence could have played minimal or no role in the children's career choices. It was also mentioned by almost all these respondents that they remember that their mother was always busy in the kitchen and taking care of large joint families and it was the father who was the decision maker. Hence the mother's role in their choice of careers being neutral was natural. Apart from school art teacher, school friend, neighbor, family friend, cousin, dance teacher were other persons mentioned by few respondents who have influenced them in their art.

The cases wherein there was discouragement from the parents, the artists confronted their parents. They either had to convince them or simply



break away temporarily, till they achieved something concrete. Few respondents mentioned that they had to persuade and convince their parents to allow them to pursue educations in fine arts. A young male artist's verbatim is an exemplar, *'My father was happy when painting was a hobby in school, after my tenth I had to put up a fight with him to join art college....he wanted me to finish graduation in any stream as he did know much about fine arts but since I insisted and being the only son I usually got my wayhe took me to meet Jogen Choudhury in Shantiniketan.....'*. Parent's involvement in their children's career choices does reflect their own apprehensions about the career choice. Another middle group artist, Chandrashekhar Patil said, *'My parents encouraged me earlier but when I was in ninth standard, I told them in that I wanted to become an artist. They were upset especially my father, after tenth exams I tried to convince him but he was adamant, he tried to convince me to take it up as a hobby but join some professional course... We did not speak to each other for a month...he had refused to finance my further education if I took up fine arts...after H.Sc. (Higher Secondary) exam I started doing odd jobs so that I could finance my own fine art education...if it was my sister he would have willingly allowed her to join fine arts but for boys it always has to be education that would bring in stable income.'* Mason Griff has aptly noted

that, 'Parents in various strata introduce their offspring to art, stressing humanist, hobbyist, and other values; but not many parents consider the visual arts a propitious locale on which to fight the battle for class and occupational success.' (Albrecht, *et al*, 1970: 147)

There were many ways through which the parents counteracted the decisions of their children to opt for fine arts as a career. The response to how were they discouraged was in many cases similar, such as parents trying to talk the artists out of choosing art as a career. In most cases it the father who seemed upset and respondent artists had to make efforts to convince the parents so that they could take up art as a profession. A senior male artist Nimbalkar reminiscences, *'my father wanted me to join the defence services as he was an army man and I was forced to take up science as it was mandatory to join the navy...it was sometime around 1959I quit studies due to my health problems and eventually was allowed to take up fine arts.'* A similar sentiment was voiced, by middle group respondent Sumit*, *'My father was an engineer and wanted me to become one, so I did take up B.Sc. (Bachelor of Science) but failed in the first year. Then I joined polytechnique but left it after two months and finally convinced my father to allow me to*

join fine arts in Calcutta...my mother was very supportive of my choice...she knew I was not good in studies, she was concerned about my feelings...'

It is important to note that nineteen percent also mentioned that as long as art was pursued as hobby parents encouraged it but it was not the case when they decided to make a career out of it. The young and the middle group respondent artists who faced discouragement for joining fine arts stated that the uncertainty related to the profession of fine arts was the chief reason for parents dissuasion and parents wanted the respondents to take up professions such as engineering, science or graduate in a stream that would ensure them stable jobs, since these professions and occupations provided more promise of economic security as well as prestige. A young male respondent, Amarnath Sharma stated, *'my father had said this painting and art will get you nowhere, you will never be able to earn enough to survive and he always compared me to my elder brother who was considered by him as an ideal son who has graduated and has a stable job, income...'* This particular artist respondent has been painting in the photorealism style, which has many buyers (2005) and has become financially sound. Through the discussions with him it was evident that he had proved a point to his father where economic survival and financial stability was concerned.

The picture that becomes evident from the childhood and adolescent social experiences of the respondent artists is that there is congruence of encouragement and art as a hobby. However in this study majority of the artists did not face a complete reversal of parent's attitude towards their art after they had declared their desire to prepare for a career in fine arts. The senior artists' pursuit of art career was not a bone of contention in the homes of the artists because in post-independent India there were varied new careers options to people and art was one such option which was not known to people. Though commercial art was just beginning to take shape with magazines and print media forging ahead. The young and middle group artists especially a few male artists had to face parental opposition to their choice of fine arts as a career.

Previous studies suggest that because society conceives of the artist as deviant, and because there are financial drawbacks involved in art career, parental support is usually weak and nonexistent. A negative response maybe the usual response; however in some cases parents may remain neutral (Griff 1964 : 86).

Parents' objection was based on apprehensions that a painter cannot support himself solely from the sale of his paintings.

Female artists have received more encouragement from both the parents, in their pursuit of fine art as compared to male artists. The conventional image of women has been that of being a homemaker, further art and crafts were considered as vocations suitable for the traditional role, which women generally perform. Moreover, the stereotypical image of the male was that he must engage in occupations, which require physical and mental strength and pursuit of fine arts, is considered an unmanly sign. A career in arts has always been considered as a soft career option. It is interesting to note that the female respondents belonging to middle and senior group who received encouragement from their fathers mentioned that their fathers were progressive and broadminded. These female artists belonged to middle, upper middle and upper class (class as mentioned by them). Further it was also stated that parents who were not aware about occupations and careers generally seemed to be neutral regarding the career choice. It is observed that when parents have few or weak alternative courses to suggest or impose, then the children have an easy way to enter the fields of their choice such as the fine arts.

Today the perceptions of the family towards fine arts are changing. In spite of the fact that almost all of the respondents' parents were in

professions other than fine arts. Only 1.5 percent ($n = 5$) of the respondents' fathers were in art related or creative profession such as architecture, photography, writer and one was an artist. This did not help much as their number is too small to make any broad generalizations.

Apart from the approval of the family, the artist themselves did not at the onset choose fine art as their profession and so some of them have graduated in other stream before joining fine arts. Choices of career are influenced by several factors. It was possible that many who initially demonstrated deep interest in art and craft may later in life opt for other careers. A few ($n = 6$) of the respondents confirmed this when they mentioned that they have a degree in other stream or have partly pursued another stream of education before joining the fine arts faculty. For a couple of them the desire to join the fine arts was there but they did not feel strongly about it till they were already graduating in some other stream. One of the respondents kept trying to get into an art college every year and was simultaneously also pursuing a degree elsewhere in another college so as to not lose years in trying to get admission in an art college. The symbols of success that our society cherished in the past are rapidly undergoing change today, as more parents are helping their children to prepare for vocation in

fine arts. This is evident from the number of art classes that have sprung up and many of the younger group of respondents mentioned preparing for the entrance examination for getting admission in the fine arts college.

Role of Friends

A salient feature of day-to-day living in modern, ever growing society is the process of selecting from a stream of acquaintances some few with whom friendships are formed. Friends are considered to be having an immense influence in the lives of people especially during the adolescent and young adulthood phases. In the social life, individuals have relationship choices and one such option is in choice of friends. This choice to a large extent depends on the needs that get fulfilled in interactions with friends. This significant factor played a major role in the lives of the respondent artists, cutting across the differences of age and gender.

As shown through the data, sixty percent of the male artists stated that their friend/s had played a significant role in their lives as artists and out of these forty four percent mentioned college friends as a major influence. Many of the artists said that their 'friend circle' and 'college life' was a turning point in their career. These friends have directly or indirectly helped

them shape as artists. Seventy percent of the female artists said that friends have played a major role in their life and career. Women artists mentioned school friends belonging to the same sex, college friends belonging to either sex, family friend, and boyfriend.

Friendship patterns among the artists reflect a high level of interdependence. They emerge as close-knit groups probably due to the nature of the fine art course and the uncertainties involved in the profession. Majority of the artists mentioned that friends at some point or the other have supported or encouraged them in their career as artists. Many even mentioned that artist friends have influenced their art. Friends were considered by some, as their pillars of strength especially in times of frustration and failure. Some (n=12) have added that they received economic support especially during the college days usually for art materials. A career in fine arts has its added expenses in form of art materials. This becomes a major investment for art students. For those who had to support themselves financially, buying art material would become a pressing concern. To resolve this expense most of them sought financial help from their friends. A few younger artists, who have completed their art education, said that they still seek financial help from their friends, as they cannot expect their parents

to support them. They feel embarrassed to ask for money from parents. In a profession like fine arts where regular, steady income is not feasible unless the artist has a contract with an art gallery or a dealer such financial support from family and friends is common.

Financial constraint was mentioned as a major problem, which according to twenty eight percent of the artists was a challenging period since they were still studying at that time. A few even had to work and study, so it was natural for them to take financial support from friends. Many a time, they have had to borrow money for art materials or to pay hostel fees. A middle group male artist was extremely indebted to a close friend's mother for buying his student days paintings and also for recommending artworks to her friends so that at least he obtained a sufficient amount of money to survive. This reflects the high levels of interdependence between peers and close friends that entails a career in fine arts. There is some kind of a symbiotic relationship that is visible, and emerges as a unique feature of fine arts. The relationship has a certain arrangement between the interdependent artists. The young incumbent artists within fine art either a student or a struggling one is financially dependent. Since they do not prefer to borrow money from their parents, therefore they seek this support from

elsewhere, most likely from their friends. 'Friends' in this case could be classmates, hostel mates, seniors, fellow artists or anyone else. Usually friends who provide are the artists and they have themselves at some point of time or other been at the receiving end and are helped by other such 'friends'. They are financially dependent till they establish themselves. Once they are established this dependence is naturally reduced or ends. This symbiotic relation further takes a different shape and the one who was dependent becomes the 'friend' who helps others.

Few of the younger artists have mentioned that seniors or batch mates at times were strong supporters who have encouraged them to continue in times of uncertainty and insecurity. A young male respondent Aarav* expressed in a disappointing tone, *'I am still struggling...as my paintings don't get sold. The current group exhibition at ABS that you saw...most of my contemporaries have sold at least one painting but so far I haven't...I begin to have self doubt and it can become depressing...I am surviving because of my friends, their encouragement and support. They keep pushing me to continue and not lose hope as I am just beginning...most of my friends are artists so I gain courage from them...'* Friends do not just provide financial support but also encouraged by providing moral support to create.

A different point of view is noted though it emerges as an exception to the general trend. According to a middle group male respondent artist Anupam*, *'today friends have become secretive about their contracts and shows, during the college days we would support each other and would go out of our way to support friends...but since competition has crept in there is a change in the way friends interact...all vie for attention there is competition and things have changed...'*. There is an underlying competition that a handful of artists accepted as the result of art market boom. In a creative field such as fine arts, there is the fear of ideas getting copied, or even the theme or a painting being copied. Since uniqueness is valued it would be threatening for artists to share their art in the initial phases when they are creating it. Further it cannot be denied that the visual or mental images and ideas do tend to have an influence on artworks. Thus in such fields there is always underlying competitiveness which is operating. Though Becker has emphasized on the cooperative nature of the art activity, competitive process has become a part of this world similar to many other professional worlds that are influenced by commercialization and the global market economy.

The School Art Teacher

After the family, school is one of the most influential institutions molding an individual and art and craft are integrated elements of school curriculum. How art as a subject is taught in school can instill curiosity and interest in the subject itself. The question that surfaces here is why does art become the mode for inculcation of creative spirit amongst children? The answer lies in the fact that art does not have any boundaries and is free in nature, this freedom of expression enhances creative abilities in the children. School art teacher is a catalyst who brings out this talent amongst the younger children. A recent Hindi film "*Taare Zamin Par*" accurately displayed this very factor. The school art teacher in the film, with his compassion and sensibilities was able to reach out to a child suffering from dyslexia. He was able to achieve this by bringing forth the creative abilities and talent of the child, which acted as a therapeutic vehicle to built his confidence in himself. In case of some of the respondent artists, the school art teacher has played if not decisive, significant role in the enrichment of the artistic talent.

In response to role of the school art teacher, in inculcating and enhancing the creativity varied responses were noted. Out of the total, male

as well as female respondents, twenty nine percent mentioned school art teacher as having played an important role in their initial stages, which influenced their choice in taking up fine arts. Twenty eight percent of male artists have mentioned the influence their school art teacher had in developing their interest and encouraging them directly or indirectly to take up art in college in later years. Thirty percent of female artists mentioned about their school art teacher's role in developing their interest in art.

'At the age of 12 or 13, I had drawn a harijan by showing him carrying garbage on his head and my teacher had appreciated me and had shown it to other teachers as well... I can say it was a turning point...the appreciation I received was important...' a senior male artist Jyoti Bhatt narrated the encouragement he received from his school art teacher, which led him to believe in his own art and boosted his interest in drawing. The teacher saw the sensitivity of the young boy and praised him for it. Plate 1

This painting done by Jyoti Bhatt as a young boy, depicts a sweeper taking garbage and announcing to those around to move away, as it would defile them.



Plate: 1 “Chheta Rahejo Maa-Baap” (1946) Jyoti Bhatt

A few mentioned their school art teacher’s name and recollected their teaching method. A young male artist mentioned that *“Jamshedpur school of art had a drawing teacher who was from Baroda’s fine arts faculty and he inspired me to come here....he was different, he allowed our imaginations to explore the world of colors...he did not ask us to copy but wanted us to imagine and express”*.

Interestingly a few respondents had a different point of view where they mentioned that their art teacher in school did not allow creativity as they had to follow and copy their drawings instead of being creative. Teacher's ability to keep the interest of students in art alive throughout the school years depends to a certain extent on the teacher's art training. Many of the art teachers in school have an art teacher's diploma. In these training courses the traditional method of perfecting drawing, sketching and coloring are stressed upon. Hence most of these teachers try to follow the same practice with their students thereby repressing the creative spirit, which is now considered an integral part of an art activity. Undue emphasis on replication would in fact hinder creative outburst. An art teacher inadequately trained or disposed can have an impact upon the creativity of the students. The essence of art activity lies in its creative, novel and expressive depiction of the theme. Unlike other subjects taught in school, art need not necessarily be bound in prescribed curriculum.

The Art Institution

Art institution is a place where the art school functions to infuse artistic values and standards apart from teaching techniques and skills in the art field. The environment in the art school may help the art student to

develop self- identity. Training in an art institution has definite advantages, which need to be understood in a study of this nature. Nearly one-fourth (n=18) of the respondents mentioned that the art school ambiance is stimulating and exciting, in fact to a large extent almost bohemian and thrilling. K.G.Subramanyan, the famous artist of Baroda, says that in his life he was influenced by three teachers, Nandan Lal Bose, Binod Bihari Mukherji and Ram Kinker Baij, who are renowned in the art world. Interestingly, the artist also mentioned that most of the art education took place in the tea stalls near the art institution, as it was here that insightful art discussions occurred.

Though art does not have to be taught with strict curriculum in mind and be bound up in definite parameters, yet as a discipline it has certain principles of structure and form, which are a prerequisite for learning it. One form of such prerequisite is that there should be some basic awareness of principles of art. From the respondents, forty one percent had joined some kind of art or drawing classes before they entered the art institution for pursuing a degree or diploma in art. These mostly belong to young and middle group of respondents. They did so as many of them aspired to join the Faculty of Fine Arts in Baroda which has stringent admission

procedures. The respondents who undertook some art training prior to joining the art college felt compelled to do so to enhance their chances to clear the entrance test. A few gave credit to their private art class teacher as well for ensuring that they got into Art College.

What were the reasons for joining Art College? Most of the responses of the artists were the same, viz. interest in drawing or painting since childhood. However a few said it was like an inner calling and a passion for the creative field. A few others mentioned that apart from their interest, their performance in Higher Secondary examinations was such that they could not seek admission in any other professional courses. As discussed in earlier section, parents preferred other professional streams to fine art but if the choices are limited then they would accept the option of art education as well. A few had even either completed graduation in another stream or left it in between to join fine arts. A few (n=7) joined other courses before taking the decision to join art college. Some (n=6) had even got a bachelor's degree in some other educational stream before they decided upon a career in fine arts. This was because they felt that they had aptitude for creative field rather than other science based or commerce based fields. Some in fact kept trying to get into the art college but simultaneously were undergoing a

degree course in other stream so as to not lose valuable learning years in the process of trying to get into an art college. A few were even pressurized by parents or by societal valuation of certain educational fields over others to take up other streams of education only to find that it was not their interest or did not find motivation to pursue it further.

Almost all the respondents felt that formal art education is very important if you wish to take up fine arts as a profession. They thought it gives a foundation, provides proper guidance, and enables learning the technical and theoretical aspects of their field. A few mentioned that it is a systematic way of receiving information and exposure to the field. Through this formal setup art as a discipline is taught to them. Also the degree helps in establishing artists in the art world.

According to a young male artist *“teaching in the faculty is different....you are allowed a lot of freedom....teachers give us prescriptions but we have to take the doses....”* A young female artist who has created a distinctive style of her own in painting and creating art on huge canvases gives the credit to her faculty teachers who according to her encouraged the students to have their own style and discouraged copying other artists.

However, few (n=2) of the younger respondents also mentioned that the teachers were very permissive (non judgmental about work) and hence they felt they did not give them enough guidance and direction. These are the perceptions of different artists as some may be the kind who required more individual guidance and direction whereas others who would thrive in the process of discovering their own art style and expression. Some (n=6) stated that their teachers were almost like their friends and hence there was an atmosphere of mutual learning, which was emphasized upon. The prominent artist and art historian from the senior group, G.M.Sheikh reminiscences, *'Our teachers would paint in their studios in the college campus and not only at home, we could sneak in at any time to see them at work...to watch and learn...to see what Bendre sir has done today...our teachers were visionaries- in fact they taught us a way of life'*. Such reverence for teachers leads us back in times when teacher was considered 'guru' and every action was emulated as it would enable learning something new.

In contemporary times this aspect has undergone a change. According to some artists, teachers do not serve as occupational models as they are not 'commercially' successful. They are considered as good educators and knowledgeable critics. A senior female artist Rini Dhumal, who was an art

teacher in the faculty, says *'It is important when you are a part of the institution to maintain the ethics and the ethos of the place. An institution will blossom when you are dedicated and committed to the students and this should not conflict with your personal gains in the outer world.'* The responsibility that a teacher is entrusted with apart from teaching is to inculcate the appropriate values and ethics in students. In the esteemed profession of imparting education the conflict between the lures of outer world and the desire to uphold cultural values and ethics is bound to occur. The conflict may not only occur between the two professions that of teaching and professional artwork, but conflict would be at a personal level too. It would be between choosing the more lucrative but risky path or continuing with a job that gives stable income. Some have managed both, however they do accept that it is not easy to balance the two together. This could be one of the many reasons why teachers are not accepted as occupational role models in present times.

The above discussion suggests that however talented an artist maybe but to create an artwork without necessary practice and training is not easy. Each artist must learn the fundamentals and principles of their art before beginning to experiment and express their vision. For a person aspiring to

become an artist, training in an art school or academy is not mandatory. Constant practice is a way by which an aspiring artist can develop his ability and skill to express and create. Nevertheless an art school or an institution can provide structured and systematic art education, which can give an art student not only the skills but also much needed creative learning atmosphere.

The artists studied had either completed their graduation from the Faculty of Fine Arts, in the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda or from some other art college in another region and came to Baroda for their post graduation or post-diploma in fine arts. It was mentioned by some of the respondent artists that university art education allows them to learn art systematically and to be graded or evaluated not only by teachers but there is scope to evaluate oneself through teachers guidance. Besides the teachers the art institution is also venerated by most of the artists. Nearly all the respondent artists declared with pride the enormous role played by the Faculty of Fine Arts in their personal as well as professional lives. Being pupils of such a renowned school of art in it self lent credibility to their work as artists. Many of the artists have stated that the pioneers of the Faculty of Fine Arts in Baroda such as N.S.Bendre, Sankho Choudhury, and Markand

Bhatt have laid such strong foundation that being recognized as the products of the faculty gives them an edge over others coming from the other art schools of India.

Studying in certain schools or institutions of repute provide opportunities to students that can be advantageous for one's career. Certain social interactions that are possible in such institutes serve as opportune places for the students. It is therefore not surprising that twenty one percent (n = 15) have completed their graduation from Calcutta and come to Baroda for post graduation, in spite of Calcutta having the renowned Shantiniketan and Ravindra Bharti university.

There is an evident interplay of family, social background, school and college teachers' influence and the institution in which the respondents undertook art training in shaping the world view of the artist. In the journey of individual, the social world impacts upon the expressions, the choices and eventually the future of the person. Bourdieu's concept of the 'habitus' forms an interesting basis to understanding the creator's world. For Bourdieu, a work of art is not a solitary expression of an artists' genius neither is it only a reflection of that artist's social origins. Works of art,

according to him are the result of the convergence of a habitus¹⁴, which reflects the social origins and personal trajectory of a given artist, and a field and its historical evolution.

The habitus, for Bourdieu, forms ‘a durable and transposable structure of dispositions’, a set of internalised ‘practical taxonomies’, modes of viewing the world and acting in it that have been ‘picked up’, ‘incorporated’, through the experience of growing up in and inhabiting a particular socially marked cultural milieu (Inglis and Hughson 2005:35).

Artists’ Image and Status in society

According to Wolff, the stereotypical image of the ‘artist’ as a lonely and isolated person is a western notion. This has recently influenced the image of the modern artist of India. In fact ‘the idea of the artist as ‘genius’ is an invention of the Renaissance and early modern periods’ (Wolff, 1981:27).

This stereotypical image of an artist that became popular in the nineteenth century was in part a function of the self-understanding of the artists of that period. Artists then wanted to represent a more glamorous view of themselves. It may also have been due to the insecure conditions of employment that artists started facing from early nineteenth century onwards (Inglis and Hughson 2005 : 16)

¹⁴ Habitus –term used by Bourdieu referring to the “mental, or cognitive structures” through which the people deal with the social world. People are endowed with a series of internalized schemes through which they perceive, understand, appreciate , and evaluate the social world (Ritzer, George 1996:405)

Visual artists are an integral part of the expressive culture but are they considered isolated from the mainstream of society in contemporary Indian society? The respondents in this research had divided opinions regarding this view. Forty three percent expressed that to some extent even today artists are aloof or isolated. Some of them felt that it could be because of the personality of some of the artists who are introvert and hence unable to share their art. Many stated that in any creative field there is an image of the creator being remote and inaccessible. This is because art especially painting and sculpture is initially personal, only later on it becomes social when it is shared with people. A middle group female artist says, "*Painting on the canvas is a personal expression and I do not share or discuss it unless I have completed it. Once it is done then I share it with others and would like to know their view on it, exhibiting it also serves the purpose of getting maximum number of people to react to our work.*" Moreover if a person is aloof from rest of the society it tends to create certain curiosity for the 'not known'. Perhaps the popular image of the artist in post independent India was that the artist is 'unusual' and 'different' from the rest. A few (n=5) of the younger respondents said that sometimes there is a desire to purposefully generate such an image so as to create an aura surrounding the artist, this way his/her art's uniqueness catches the eye and gets recognition. It was also

expressed by a few (n=3) that this field lends itself to feelings of insecurity and leads to people creating their own nests or dens. This could be because an artist does not have a typical job (regular, stable income, specified timings); further they may find it complicated to elucidate to the wider society within which an artist has to live about the ways of their profession. Hence they may prefer living within their own 'dens' whereby they have limited interaction with the others.

Almost forty percent stated that now-a-days artists have become integral part of the society. This is reflected in their acceptance and respect they enjoy in the wider society which is visible through media, mushrooming of art classes and people's acceptance of this field which is in focus especially due to thriving art investment. Many (n=21) felt this was due to the media exposure as it has enabled the artists to come closer to the rest of the population. A few said that artists are a part of the glamour world and people are fascinated and interested in knowing about celebrities. Respondents who belong to the category of senior group stated that artwork reflects society. As a senior artist explains that his paintings are depiction of everyday life of people which he sees around. Especially, in themes such as, neighborhood and the *mohalla* culture of old Baroda where he grew up.

Status of the artist

The hierarchical ordering of the arts and the artists depend on dynamics of the processes which attribute a position to certain products and their producers. This in turn is largely dependent on different social groups that adopt certain art forms and the reinforcement of this adoption by art historian, connoisseurs, critics and the artists themselves on the one hand and audiences on the other. Further even the artist jockey for social position within the wider societal structures and the position attributed to the artist relies on the cultural value placed on the product created by him/her. The concept of status would refer to social position of the artists' within the social structure, in relation to other common professions pursued in India. The respondent artists were asked where they thought artists were positioned within the various professions today. A pattern is drawn whereby the majority (n=47) of the respondents placed the fine artists in a moderate position avoiding extreme high or extreme low positions. According to many of the artists, in the contemporary Indian society artist is not placed low, as was the case in the traditional Indian society, wherein art was considered to be produced by low ranked artisan-craftsmen for the royal and aristocratic people. The artists felt that owing to factors such as media exposure, globalization and cultural exchange between various countries, the artist

especially fine and performing artists have gained respect and popularity. In fact the elite Indians are willing to invest in art, reflecting materialistic values penetrating arts.

The theory of conspicuous consumption put forth by Thorstein Veblen¹⁵ shows the cultural elements by which an individual can gain higher status, and art is one such element. Affluent people purchase paintings and consider that 'costlier the better' so as to flaunt their social status. Moreover it has an additional value of anointing the owner as being 'cultured'. In spite of increasing economic and symbolic value attached to art the artists have positioned themselves in a moderate place because such valuation is not reflected in the individual statuses of the artists, as there are many who are struggling or many who have just begun to gain a strong hold in the field.

The status of the artists to a large extent depends on the dominant definition of the professional artist in that particular society. The media, art historian, art critic and the artist fraternity all influence this definition.

¹⁵ The term conspicuous consumption was introduced by Thorstein Veblen in his book 'The theory of leisure class'. Veblen used the term to depict the behavioural characteristic of the nouveau riche, a new class that emerged in the 19th century capitalistic society as a result of the accumulation of wealth. With significant improvement of living standards and the emergence of the middle class in the 20th century, the term conspicuous consumption is now broadly applied to individuals and households with expendable incomes whose consumption patterns are prompted by the utility of goods to show their status rather than any intrinsic utility of such goods.

‘Success of the artist is often evaluated according to implicit local and social criteria rather than reasoned public application of the professional art worlds’ says Tanner (2005: 107). Though there is acceptability of the artists as creative people, in not so distant past the artist was considered to be living on meager earnings. This sentiment is echoed by a middle group, Bengali male artist married to a Gujarati, *‘I am a Bengali and an artist, so two things were against me when I wanted to marry my wife, it was difficult to convince my in-laws. They may even have accepted me being a Bengali if I had a stable job or a job with a good pay packet... but not an artist...obviously they were worried about their daughter’s survival with a pauper like me...I was still struggling at that time and eventually had to do a register marriage as they were not willing to accept me. Today the art scene is looking better...they have accepted me but they still do not consider my profession a good source of earning a living...’*

It is believed that they have an image as unique creators, whose creativity is not a common trait and for which they needed appreciation and rewards (material and non material). Since creativity is valued and is elusive those who possess it would have a higher status compared to the rest. The status of the artist in contemporary society does not easily enable enquiry.

There is ambiguity regarding the status of the visual artists today, as not all fine artists are able to sell their art works through a distributor system. On one hand, there are a few artists who have gained international name and fame but at the same time there are many artists who are still struggling to create a market for their art works. But with the investment in art on the rise, contemporary artists are at least able to gain contracts with art galleries or dealers, which help them not only to, sustain themselves but gain prestige also.