ANUPAM SUD

The graphic artwork of Anupam Sud encompasses the finest quality of printmaking that has emerged on the printmaking field. She has made her mark on the Indian printmaking art scene. Though her creative output is not so prolific, her prints reflect her experiences and intense emotionalism in the treatment of her themes. The elusive reality, fantasy, duplicity and myth present in human relationships very much peculiar to modern industrial society have been portrayed with a definite preciseness avoiding the pitfalls of abstraction. It should be interesting to go through the viewpoints of some art critics, who were tempted to probe deeper into her amazing and powerful work and found something valuable to capture their imagination. Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni, one of the admirers of her prints has said in 1985: "Anupam Sud is one of the finest graphicist to have emerged on the Indian art horizon during the past decade and more. She specializes in etching and these etchings are often in sepia or in dark tones. One sees human beings portrayed under the pressure of urbanization and industrialization. Their limbs are not so much truncated or dislocated. The situation that Anupam depicts in a stylized manner reminds us of a milieu partly of our world and partly belonging to some limbo."

Anupam has been able to create an aesthetic sense of harmony in the prints due to her fastidiousness in employing the use of space and inanimate landscape with human figures.

This sharp-witted expert of printmaking was born at Hoshiarpur, in the year 1944. She acquired a National Diploma from the College of Fine Arts, New Delhi, in 1967 and studied printmaking at Slade School, London. While in London, she has given to her
work delicacy and a distinct mellow sense of colour. Her devotion towards printmaking can be best understood in her own words: “Printmaking medium has fascinated me from the time I was introduced to it. The beginning was with lithography and collography, wherein the linear quality of the first and the endless possibility of the latter process, provided scope for a lot of adventure, satisfaction and enjoyment. Dependence on machinery and equipment is well compensated for by the adventure and revolution going round the medium. Now I am doing metal etching and I find this discipline appropriate for my imagination.”

Jagmohan Chopra, who taught at Delhi College of Fine Arts, guided Anupam to mould herself as an able printmaker. In fact, he deeply influenced her. She seriously took up printmaking in 1968 as she joined ‘Group 8’ as a co-founder with her mentor Jagmohan Chopra and a few others. The style of representation in Jagmohan Chopra’s prints was entirely abstract. Initially, the style was striking and effective, but later on it became repetitive and remained confined to the limitations of a particular form. But, as a teacher, he has been successful in inspiring his students effectively and particularly Anupam Sud with the finer nuances of printmaking technique. She modified her own particular style of figurative compositions and forms in consonance with her mentor’s non-figurative conception. But after graduation, she overcame the influence and returned to her well-knit figurative imagery.

Anupam is not only accomplished in the technical aspects of etching, soft ground and aquatint, but she has also developed a remarkable compositional sense. Her works evoke a dramatic dynamism. She has achieved in her work a balance of the historic awareness of the world in which she lives and an understanding and knowledge of the methods and materials that she uses. In fact, Anupam is considered to be one of the foremost Indian printmakers and her expressive prints have been honed with an unmatched skill and consistency. There is a subtle wit and irony in her perception of the human body, a starkness about the limbo in which her men and women, usually shaven-headed and stripped down to the essentials, seem to be adrift. What she is preoccupied with is urban chaos and vulnerability. All the nuances of the human condition seem to be shaded into her superbly crafted works all of a high technical order. The details in her work are provided by a multitude of intricate line and stroke combinations. The variation of depth in line is achieved through the chemical process of acid reacting on metal when the plate is eaten or ‘etched.’ An infinite number of cross-hatchings as well as variations
of strokes, which she demonstrates with her extraordinary technical facility and sensitivity, enhance the forceful effect in her prints.

We can divide Anupam’s printmaking career into five phases. The first phase started around 1968, when she had already completed her education and had started holding solo exhibitions, especially in Delhi during 1967, '68, '69 and '71. Gradually, she was able to build her own style and to achieve a good number of outstanding prints. Let us, for instance, have a look at her ‘Untitled’ colour intaglio series that she achieved by using the process of cardboard instead of metal plate. Some of her other creations such as ‘Composition B,’ ‘Floating Existence,’ and ‘Human Frieze,’ all of them executed in 1968-69, are also good examples apart from ‘The Whole and a Part’ lithograph, 1971. In these prints, Anupam started getting a sense of an advanced form of composition and was eager to depict the prints by using her favourite collograph technique, which she called ‘colour intaglio.’ However, in some of these prints, she came to fill her figures with vibrant colours and her human beings are very small, but their number is somehow large, so she arranged them in closed units and in a completely locked area. These tiny figures reflect escapism and look so defeated that they seem to be reveling in their embryonic shelters. Some of them seem to be symbolic of seeds, some still curled in their embryonic posture and some restless with the desire of liberation from the shelter.

Looking at Anupam’s earlier prints, we find that she has chosen a singularly different pictorial solution to represent the utter reality of man and beast, laid against a dismal and hostile world and intrigued with a rather bleak prospects of survival. With pieces of painted cardboard that are ingeniously pasted together to create a three-dimensional reality (and not a painted illusion of receding depth) of hostility, she has tried to evolve a different image-making technique. In these earlier works Anupam schematized human figures, at times like cells of amoebae in fluid, at others in curled-up, foetal positions, caught in sweeping currents expressing generalized humanity, with no specific or cultural identity. Occasional works depict women forlorn and destitute. One can observe that some of the prints in her first phase may lead the viewer to the realm of an inner organic world, symbolizing fertility with imaginary human forms, groping for boundaries outside their foetal existence. The repetitive flavour of these images blunts the edges of symbolism. However, the design that emerges out of her aesthetic self comes out in the prints in all their beauty and richness.
Anupam feels that as an artist, "One has to be open to various forms, because printmaking is a three-dimensional art and this particular quality generates a lot of possibilities. In fact, printmaking in some ways is similar to sculpture, for instance, to the collograph process and the surfaces, which are created during the act of processing. The artist goes from one form to another easily. This technique has a tremendous potential in permitting one to build a variety of reliefs, especially, because the nature of metal plates is different." Anupam discovered different possibilities with it. She found special advantages in the metal plate, the precise line and the range of tonal gradations through a combination of techniques and processes such as aquatint and mezzotint etc. In this process one can work more slowly using different kinds of metal plates and materials while building up a plate with a plastic medium, which demands that the artist had to be fast and absolutely certain about what he wishes to do.

Actually, Anupam loves any medium, which enables her to portray her emotions or thoughts, for instance, drawing, which has now been recognized as an important branch of plastic art and has established itself as a popular medium of aesthetic expression of line, tone, texture, proportion, perspective, space and form. She has explored into this expressive and interesting medium, which has been very helpful to her in the field of printmaking because many of her etching prints acquire the quality of pen and ink sketches. In some cases it is a keen study of black and white qualities portrayed as bold and steady human figures. The reason, which makes her enjoy this medium so much is perhaps the fact that being the most immediate mode of self-expression and visual communication, it suits her restless character. She maintained a personal diary in the form of a sketchbook and its contents serve as an excellent reference material while developing the themes of printmaking as well as painting.

Generally speaking, Anupam's work reveals her concern for the contemporary approach to the medium of graphics and expresses the spirit of its time; the personality of the artist is not lost in any novelty or mannerism. The role of the subject matter in a pictorial expression is emphasized in Anupam's graphics. They constitute her reaction to her immediate environment, the experience of familiar things and the look of the common people and provide a touch of intimacy to her work. Machines and modern buildings are very much a part of her reality. "Men and women are caught up in this environmental vortex. However, her work shows diverse permutations and combinations." Her images are always steady, powerful and suggestive. Anupam's career began with the inception of 'Group 8.' She has shown her works in several solo
exhibitions and group shows in India, Britain, Yugoslavia, Italy, Germany, Australia and U.S.A. She has won several prestigious awards in New Delhi and Chandigarh. Her works are preserved in art galleries, museums and as private collections in some important art institutions where she is a life member. At present, she heads the graphic department in the College of Art, New Delhi.

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In our quest to understand her way of thought, we step ahead, leaving her forlorn and destitute women to their own fate, on to the period of 1971, around which we find an emergence of upright male figures from the former nondescript mass. By this time, Anupam was preparing herself to set foot into her second phase, but then she had to leave for the Slade School of Art, London for about eighteen months during the years 1971 and '72. She observes, “What I saw in England baffled me to some extent when I arrived there. In the beginning, I thought what I saw was bereft of the many things that I had learnt to value. But later on, I found them to be knowing what they wanted to do and that they get to it uncompromisingly.”30 S.A. Krishnana asked Anupam: “Why did you choose the Slade School of Art?” She stated: “I must confess I knew nothing of the facilities for graphics at Slade. What fascinated me frankly was the rare fact of being there. Referring to my position as a student of graphics at that time, I was confident that I was doing fairly well because I had by then won awards at Amritsar, All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society and a medal at the ‘Group 8’ show. But then I also knew that there was a lot more, which I could do with my scholarship that came at a very appropriate time.”3

It is a fact that Anupam was able to experiment there with a variety of fine quality materials, which were available in plenty. “When one applies oneself to one’s calling there is so much that one discovers. One more thing; for the first time I was in the company of so many students from other countries and of several shades of perception and this meant a tremendous range for an exchange of ideas.”30 Before coming to England, Anupam was working on cardboard, shaping it into a plate using polymer glues and other synthetic builders. But at Slade, she took strongly to the metal plate and mainly to the process of etching. The cardboard has a tremendous advantage in printing, especially when it comes to the building up of a variety of reliefs. On the other hand, the metal plate enables the printmaker to go after the fine, precise line and the range of tonal gradations through a combination of techniques such as aquatint, mezzotint, viscosity, collograph, etc.
After this stay in England and after being exposed to some brilliant printmaking know-how Anupam now entered her second phase and started to carve her own niche in the printmaking field through a number of significant etching prints. ‘Composition’ 1972, was her first print in this phase, followed by ‘Window-2’ 1973 and then she embarked on her socio-political prints like ‘You’ 1975, ‘Biography of Crime’ 1976 and ‘Homage to Mankind’ 1977. By the year 1979, her second phase came to its end after she accomplished her controversial etching print ‘Darling, Get Me a Baby Made.’ What is important here is the attitude of the artist. Though Anupam does not pronounce any judgement in her prints, her criticism of leaders, upholders of law and ethics and some others in society comes out strong in their representation, playing their appropriate role, acting out their pantomime performance within the realm of outstanding etching prints.

Two significant prints are worth the highlight: ‘Composition’ 1972 - this print is an encounter with the human nature. A body with a mind that does not think and eyes that do not see is similar to a body from which these parts have been severed. There is a mindless ferocity, this mad acquisitiveness of modern man for money and only for money; the whole pursuit is shamelessly sensuous, unbecoming of an era of science and justifications, arguments, vain activities and inhuman practices. The other of the two significant prints is a depiction of the surrealistic idiom and a sense of unease and menace, which can be seen in ‘Window-2’ 1973. In this print a part of the land in the lower part of the frame stretches upwards, towards the two seated nudes and appears to take on shape like a phallic symbol. There is a sense of uneasiness despite the apparent placidity of the two seated nudes. There is also an inkling of intimate interaction, such as homosexual gestures.

The pessimism and a lurking sense of mysterious threat and fear is starkly projected in her etching ‘You’ 1975. Here, we see a headless but well-dressed man seated in an office room. This powerful print conveys the affluent and guilt-ridden power seekers. The barred windows in this print and some other prints such as ‘Biography of a Crime’ of a year later, suggest forced confinement, the feeling being accentuated by the darkness of the background and by the conflict between the black and white values. In her ‘Homage to Mankind’ etching 1977, we can feel the anguish of constructions and contradictions; this is because against the shadowy image of the Taj Mahal, modern man is seen as a prisoner of medical monitoring. One can observe that her human figures are often depicted as confined and tortured. She is very much absorbed with the phenomena of germination, liberation, birth, creation and the forces of life and nature. For her
designs, she draws her inspiration profusely from them. Further more, we find Anupam
drawing her themes from her immediate contacts and surroundings. Her approach to the
problem of what is ‘Funny and Hypocritical’ is surgical, cold, incisive, and even cruel.
But what she portrays is highly emotive. One does not plainly see and realize it. One is
drawn deep into the abyss of aesthetic experience - a maddening medley of acute wonder,
admiration and even aversion.

Revealing the unique qualities in Anupam’s prints, I think it is better to see what
the prominent art critic Keshav Malik had to say: ‘Despite her use of many figures, she
tries to divest her style of all anecdote and illustrations and to subtilize it to the point,
where the experience of the viewer will be wholly aesthetic. This is the basis of all
enduring art. Spatial relations provide the heightened tension in her compositions. She is
moved more by pure rhythmic form than by the associative process. She ignores the
naturalistic representation and is preoccupied solely with the fundamental laws of
composition, the placement and displacement of mass, the balanced organization of
forms in three dimensions. Realizing that a work may extend itself into time by dramatic
presentation, she appears to have recognized the need for building up towards a formal
climax that would serve as a point of departure for the eye to take trips into the kinetics of
composition.”

Anupam also examines contemporary alienation. Her prints are also about the
inability of men and women to communicate with each other. Regarding this, she points
out: “There is always the relationship that we see and another one that exists. Even if two
people are arguing, during those moments they may not be really far apart and actually
may be much closer together than they are when they are just sitting together, but isolated
in thought. Sometimes people will talk to each other, but not even look at each other.
These are the things that intrigue me more. My works comprise of the content from my
life. My experiences transform into an inner reality, which are expressed through
figurative images. The use of nude in my work is to liberate the form from the limitation
of one culture or society towards a universal image, without losing concern for pictorial
values and elements.” Anupam’s preoccupation with this kind of autonomy represents
her rejection of conventional knowledge. She seeks surprise and exuberance from
creative art and this is poignantly reflected in her works.

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As a fine draughtsman, Anupam has been able to create a kind of poetic
verisimilitude for her compressed and contorted configurations. The somnambulistic
movements, the prenatal postures, the body proportions seen in their various stages of
growth, etc., all possess a sort of natural animation. She relentlessly continues her
engagement with the human figure in her architecturally fastidious drawn prints; she
seems concerned basically with the physics of space, or the configuration of shapes in a
demarcated area. Her compositions may accordingly be called the landscaping of sundry
elements - walls, pillars, buildings, human beings and other creatures - into a harmonious
whole. Let us turn again to Keshav Malik, who has something interesting to say, "When
we come to the body of her work, we realize at once that Anupam has tried to annihilate
all social connotations and that she seeks to achieve a kind of autonomy in her work.
Though her graphics give evidence of much skill, culture and understanding, these are
not the attributes she is after... Anupam tries to forget them altogether. The refusal to
know is not sheer obduracy, but a patient, overcoming of the commonplace, rather bald,
conventional knowledge. This is the price to be paid if her sort of work is to establish a
fresh beginning, one which makes its creation an exercise in freedom." However, we
can see that the very life of her images in all their dazzling splendour is conditioned by
their ability to exceed the premises of a pedestrian sensibility.

Around the late 70s, we start to see some particular figures emerged in her prints,
for instance, the figures of men in her prints have acquired a substantial form, though
frequently they appear as mysterious and even sinister figures, crouched, headless and
some are as silhouetted shadows, etc. Anupam's prints of this period depend on one, two
or three figures, who are seen in angular, claustrophobic interiors: "There is an uncanny
atmosphere of implied threat or possible crime in the dark, cold rooms; barred windows
in the background suggesting imprisonment rather than liberation. The man gives an
intimation of an affluent, guilt-ridden business class." Anupam reveals her love for human beings through her expressive depictions. She
is known as much for her experiments in the medium as for her serious subjects of
contemporary life and the course of materialism with its tensions and worries. She has
done a number of successful series of intensive black and white prints, in these prints the
subject matter acquire the boldness of powerful figures. On the other hand, we see that
Anupam is fond of the artistic qualities of her own, takes much care of her colour scheme
and uses them in a skillful and intimate way. At this juncture her work become more
interesting.

Anupam's prints are often in black and white, these prints possess an element of
the austere, by converting the image into shadow and light - thereby invoking, at times,
the values of good and bad. "The artist employs these effects to great advantage, by using chiaroscuro to heighten differences and summon up the psychic qualities in her figures, we begin to sense alienation, the 'otherness' in images of men and women, who, on the face of things, are portrayed in 'real life' situations. The situations now are commonplace; but the titles to her work take on a double-edged, even haunting meaning. 'Thanks to Power' 1976, may just refer to a fan purring noiselessly in a room, where people languish on a hot day; but it may refer to different kind of power that controls and executes and the privilege of having electricity."8

There is another major aspect in her prints of this phase concerning her men and women; their essential togetherness, their concern for each other and their loneliness. These figures formed the themes of her prints in this period of the late seventies. Anupam has a refreshing sense of colour, she used ochre variations mixed with different hues of special yet precious greys, which when juxtaposed with warmer colours such as rich red and royal blue, become tremendously vivid and yet acquire the magnificent aromatic-like reflections. She also has a fine sense of composition and takes much care of the surfaces of her prints. Amazingly Anupam can contract strong formal arrangements, which are hard as rock crystals with lively, animated and almost primeval creations. She is always aware about her career, future insight as well and one more important thing; "perfection of the technique belongs to her."

It is hard to believe the following statement by Anupam: "My work and interest do not have anything to do with the social predicament. The presence of the human figure while remaining a vehicle of my expression is primarily involved with the psychic relationships and balance between the animate and inanimate at the mundane concern, which makes the observer mistake the reaction. My involvement thus basically is with a sense of gestalt that can be completely destroyed if in place of a psychic synthetic relationship the observer replaces this concern with the socio-economic commitments."9 Let us now have a look at her 'Darling, Get me a Baby Made' 1979,44 which marked the end of her second phase. By this time, Anupam became very close to enter a new phase of greater realism, where her figures are no longer phantom-like passive victims. They interact, they gesticulate and they react to the world around them through themes of social relevance. A major breakthrough is provided with that unforgettable image. "Here, in this poster-like etching, Anupam inserts the newsprint advertisement of the 'test tube baby' and photo images of the two doctors responsible for this daring experiment. Above is the workshop, where men disguised by their surgical masks into bandit-like goons are
manufacturing the babies; below are the women, sexy, volatile, eager for the experience that might change the course of their life and values. Grouped about a telephone, a strange connection is established between the telephone wire that snakes around like an electrocuted umbilical chord, to disappear into the navel of an aspiring candidate. "10 Says Geeti Sen.

In these prints, Anupam has brought alive the changing facets of womanhood in an urban set-up, with her abuse and liberation being borrowed from Westernized concepts. This sterility of the sexual act and a modern man's attempts at 'liberation' can be best viewed in the mentioned print. The scientific intervention that reduces human reproduction to a laboratory function, with her, elicits a cynical response. Here we can feel the mysterious atmosphere mixed with some gestures and indications, which somehow compel the eye, to follow the representation of an implied threat present in society.

"Anupam's body of work processes its own intrinsic logic of development. This is a process in the search for identity, through a long journey over some thirty years; from anonymous embryonic forms, struggling to be born through 'Earth Mother,' to the superb mastery of torsos in her compositions 'Tilted Window,' to the faceless undisclosed mysteries of 'You' and 'Homage to Mankind.' Even when she turns to commenting on Indian society in those bold, indelible images of 'Darling, Get me a Baby Made' and 'Pickup Girls,' it is never the faces, but the torsos and animated gestures, which tell the story. It is only with her 'Mask' series that she turns to the face and the face is now in the process of being unmasked."11

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Anupam initiated her third phase by the beginning of the year 1980. By this time, she had acquired more boldness and bore the stamp of having a unique compositional sense and also achieved a remarkable balance between her ideas and the techniques she employs to represent them. Her technical wizardry reveals her study of proportion and perspective bringing flashes of Italian Renaissance style. The truth that is revealed to us in different perspectives from her works, which are rather few in numbers, is refreshing and enlightening. This is the reason, perhaps why Anupam Sud is acknowledged as a brilliant printmaker in India today. In this significant and progressive phase, Anupam achieved some good number of striking etchings. Four of these significant prints had been executed in the year of 1980; 'Pickup Girls,' 'Way to Utopia,' 'Morning Walk,' and 'Shifting Halo.' In these prints we see the women beginning to assert themselves in the
works. Singly, in pairs or in larger number, occasionally reflecting their inferior or abused social status. The situations are strongly dramatized and this is emphasized by the grouping and movement of the figures, by the excellent, taut draughtsmanship and by the effective use of light shadow and other powerful compositional elements.

Let us turn to Anupam’s viewpoint, “My work is not about sexuality, people interpret my etchings and ask me if they are about homosexuality or lesbianism, but I do not judge people on their sexual life. I like the human body – when light falls upon it and modulates the form and the tonalities. It stimulates and inspires me to work. It is not only the woman – it is also the man. The male torso is the most perfect form!” Going further with Anupam, approaching her etching ‘Pickup Girls’ 1980, here we see two girls, naked and engrossed in some game along a street pavement, this may be a game of marbles, or of dice; they possibly gambling for money. Electric lights from the windows above flood the street, silhouetting the figures of the women, so they appear more conspicuous as bold, intensely dark forms against pools of light. Geeti Sen has interesting comments on this print, “In the immediate foreground, another female form emerges to look down at the street below. Her naked baby is exquisitely modeled in chiaroscuro, but the face is obscured with her fine black hair blowing across, caressing the shoulders. The woman reaches out, furtively it would seem, to a basket of small shapes on the table – could this also be money?” In fact, Anupam is fully conscious of the mysterious power of her etchings, evident from a casual remark, made with her wry, unmistakable sense of humour. “I have a tendency to give titles that have a double meaning to them – so that anyone can pick up what he or she is capable of....” Anupam also believes that “Nothing could be more provocative or startling than the human body revealed in its entirety and combined with faces in shadow. A mysterious aura emanates from such women as that of scent of their bodies – arousing in the viewer the predatory, animal instinct. Viewed thus, the woman becomes an object of carnal pleasure rather than a subject of artwork and the attachment of material objects is suggested by figures in vulnerable postures, they are without any protection or even self-defence.”

In her third print ‘Way to Utopia’ 1980, we see a rickshaw puller in the foreground with a frightened nude in the background running away from a light spot called Utopia. Anupam's items are very trenchant and imaginative and it is a congestion of the modern rat race. ‘Morning Walk,’ 1980 features two or three figures walking along with the frame of their door encasing. Hence, it is not merely the figurative images that bring the mere and trivial suddenly to life. In certain instances and situations into the
realm of dreams and her motifs, even when formulistic and there is a two fold movement in her prints. Movement of design creates figuration as well as dramatic interest. Besides, her work is sure as in inspiration, but it is not the played out 'surrealism' of ghost and ghouls as one tends to see around. Going through the early years of the 1980s and a little further, we can see some interesting observations about the womanhood: “The emblematic middle aged, poor-working class, hard working Indian woman establishes her presence in the urban milieu and going about her daily chores, or her fate epitomized in tragic events, the status of widowhood seems far more disastrous than the loss of the breadwinner. There is little sentimentalism; the drawing, as always is excellent; the compositions are powerful and the use of light and shade relentless in drawing attention to bitter reality.”

Indian woman entrapped in perpetual drudgery has been epitomized in her prints, as in her ‘Steps-2’ 1982 and her ‘Of Wall’ etching of 1982, we see the old unfinished wall giving a new dimension to life, one is exterior and the other is interior. A hopeless poor looking woman sitting beside the wall. The woman’s posture is seen without any identification. On the right side of the picture there is, partly seen, a human body lying in the foreground with legs crossed one on the other in a prenatal posture. The drawing, as always, is excellent. The composition in its powerful position, enhanced by that masterly use of light and shade, is relentless in drawing attention to bitter reality. These expressively depict the reality of the downtrodden Indian woman. “One can observe that the focus in Anupam’s prints of the 80s is on figures in the context of their urban environment, streets, pavements of cement, broken walls, barbed wire and battered lamp-posts – elements that define and circumscribe human existence – begin to form an essential part of her vocabulary. These elements bring about a play between light and shade, between life and death, as her commentary on people, who live precariously at the edge of survival.”

Among these extremely dry, urban works, are one showing people – as often - with shaven heads and bald men. It is the ‘Conference,’ etching 1984, which stands out by its usage of certain earlier myths. The men around the conference table have frozen lifeless features and masked faces and are shown to be motionless, except when the politician demands that they do whatever he wills. “They can move only by the command of those threads captured by the hands of hidden politicians. It is these doll-like persons, who conduct such kind of conferences to deceive their own people and make them..."
respond to their demands." Approaching such kind of discerning etchings is rather a privilege; 'Dialogue I' etching 1984 is yet another powerful print of this period, in which Anupam narrated a story to convey the lack of communication between the man and his wife. In essence, this print explores the subtleties, the nuances, give-and-take in human relationships. The couple is seated before a ramshackle house, which is distanced from them by barbed wire. Though they are close together, both of them seem to be coming from completely different worlds and are looking in opposite directions, seeking different goals and have given up on each other. There is nothing left to be shared between them. This print apparently reveals something about Anupam's personal life and why she refuses to have a family life with a husband. There is a hidden message to her art lovers. May be the freedom that comes from living an independent life far from the realm of manhood is quite appealing to her. She advises all women to acquire the same virtue.

By creating prints like 'Conference' and 'Dialogue I,' Anupam came to the peak of her third phase. Now it was a suitable time for her to step forward to the year 1985 into a more progressive phase for more innovative prints and more confident delineations. By this time she entered her fourth phase and went through a significant and prolific period until she reached its peak in the year 1989, when she produced her striking etching, 'For an Apple Only.'

Here, in this phase, between 1985-89, Anupam achieved some good prints, which indicate her steady and powerful command over her printmaking output. This enabled her to reach a higher level in the art of prints and to present some striking pieces of etching. 'Grill' 1988 as well as 'Dialogue-4' little earlier in 1985. In the following year, she accomplished her lovely etching 'Fish' and 'Persona' 1988, and lastly, her outstanding etching 'For an Apple Only' 1989. This last print marked the end of her fourth phase. After that, Anupam started reaching great heights in her printmaking career. By this time she became one of the top ranked printmakers in the country.

It is worthwhile to approach her print 'Persona'; "In this etching, Anupam resorts to a device, where she purposefully returns to an age-old symbol of vanity. A woman naked stands before a mirror holding up to herself a mask with just a pair of slits for the eyes to view the world. On the table before her lies a wig to complete the disguise. It is not clear as to whether she is in the process of wearing the mask or of removing it. A face in the mirror reveals the shrunken older shroud of the woman." Though Anupam is by nature a slow etcher, yet she can successfully do her exclusive and outstanding prints in just a few days; I will refer to her viscosity print 'The Dice' 1984. She did this
magnificent print in the graphic workshop at Bhopal Art Centre almost in five days. Let us have a look at her ‘Dice.’ This bold depiction of three strong men grow together as out of some common destiny, which binds them. Yet each represents a different person with a different outlook. “One looks for opportunity, the second gambles away his chances with dice and the third contemplates the choices open to him. While the facial features are sharp and aquiline, the bodies are superbly built and beautiful.”

It is worthwhile to mention here that Anupam’s reference to the male body becomes the most substantial argument against those who would see a latent eroticism in her depiction of women in the 1980s, such as her print ‘Pickup Girls,’ but it is obvious in her print ‘The Dice,’ which pivots around the male nude four years later. She points out; “A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude. Nakedness reveals itself. Nudity is placed on display. To be naked is to be without disguise.”

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However, some critics are of the opinion that she explores the psychological interaction of human beings through her artworks. There is an existential isolation to her theoretically pollard figures trapped in spaces. In fact, there is no limitation for her imagination, the front line however is her favourite place and she always looks for new horizons to explore, such as photo-generated imagery, which juxtaposed with autographic passages, this process will create a tactile tension that intensifies the spatial separations. Anupam acquired a deep knowledge of the processes of photo-imagery projections, but because she often mixes this process with hand-drawn images, there is a spatial separation, which reinforces her intended sense of isolation and alienation. However, it may also give a strong sense of a constructed setting like an artificial background for the ‘mini-dramas’ in which each of us participate daily. The year 1989, was a very important year in Anupam’s printmaking career. In this prolific year, she held her significant exhibition of prints in Bombay to be followed by another exhibition of her new prints and drawings in New Delhi. Her representation of India in an international printmaking workshop in 1989 in the Fukuoka Art Museum, Japan, is also of special significance.

Anupam strides forward gaining a wider and deeper understanding of the art of print and the expressive language of this powerful medium: “Some of her works have become much wider in scope, bringing in echoes or memories of the distant, historical past ‘monuments, religion, iconography’ or the more recent past ‘decaying city dwellings.’ The human beings are involved in habitual ritual, lost in thought or lonely reverie. Communication seems to be in silence, though unspoken yet shared thoughts.
The scenes, being suggestive of city life, also reflect a rural atmosphere. The cow is ubiquitous. The compositions have become more complex subtle and refined.17 Let us now have a look at her achievements. Anupam was the winner of a good number of national awards between the years 1975 to 1996. She also gained the Printmaking Fellowship Award. Centre for International Contemporary Arts (CICA), New York. She also involved herself in a good number of printmaking activities, including, writing about art movement in Delhi and her curating of some of significant art shows, which she also participated.

Anupam effectively uses all the vehicles of printmaking techniques. By this time she gained wide range and intimate flexibility of her favourite technique-etching and intaglio, which can accommodate a diversity of styles in its engraving and acid technique, 'etching,' with its sharply defined lines; 'dry point' with its medium and fine lines; 'aquatint,' with its tonal areas; and 'mezzotint,' with its rich nuances of tone and experiential values of light and shade. Anupam has the sensitivity with which to create different effects of ink on paper, wiping technique and the viscosity process right since her earlier days in this career. The organic structure and the rhythm of human body has over the years been not only a source of inspiration and appreciation to the point of training her major concern, similar rhythms are also to be seen in the entire universe, which for ages have been closely associated with man and his immediate environment. This primary concern coupled with chiaroscuro; the beauty of textural details intervening spaces between the organic life objects created by man tends sometimes when superficially observed to give an impression indicative of a social concern. These configurations of figure and postures have, in fact, something to do with one’s personal experience. It is relevant however to refer to her mysterious print ‘Treachery’ 1989.17

Anupam affirms the enduring rhythms of human nature and gathers these essences into icons. She declares gravely, “The human body is my temple.” In this regard, she would like to quote Ananda Coomaraswamy: “The love of man for woman, or for nature are one and same as his love for God. Nothing is common or unclean. All life is a sacrament; no part of it more so than another is and there is no part of it that may not symbolize eternal and infinite things. In this great short sightedness the opportunity for art is great.”50 Anupam believes that developing distinctive individual voices will help the artistic community to mature in diversity, for her artists are people with their own kinds of urges, they are also people, who will follow their impulses as they see fit. Any kind of leaning is a compromise, which makes the art-maker a commercial artist. It is relevant
here to mention that though she does not pronounce any judgement in her prints, her criticism of leaders, upholders of law, ethics, morality, etc., in society comes out strong in the representation in her prints. Her disillusionment is due to a bitter experience with doctors, a profession, which she has always held in high esteem and considered as noble. This experience led to her disenchantment. Let us approach her personal tragedy. The tragedy of her mother’s untimely death as told in a personal interview speaks volumes about her strong social concern. Her mother who had a slight stomachache was wrongly diagnosed, had to undergo several operations and at the same time given unnecessary strong medication. After such several operations, her mother’s body seemed to Anupam to be stitched like pieces of rags sewn together. Her mother, no longer able to bear the pain pleaded to be taken away from the clutches of doctors. Anupam was shocked by this inhuman vegetable-like treatment meted out to her mother. She could never fully accept her mother’s pain and untimely death. She internalized this callous treatment and its effects, projecting it scathingly in her prints.

Some of Anupam’s etchings give the feel of the unexpected. There is no question of their reproducing scenes from everyday life. She recreates these and presents them in the form of tableau and in a style that is startlingly new. In doing this, she creates the possibility of fresh impact. In fact, she is a very acute printmaker, when she in peace in her college studio, her favourite place since a long time. She is very keen, very precise as well. Enjoying her superiority in etching process, Anupam says; “There is no need to dash off a print in a hurry.” Sometimes she takes as much as three months on a single plate working labouriously towards a fineness of texture and other technical qualities to acquire the high standard of printmaking characteristics. By this time of the early 90s, Anupam mulls over the proportions and rhythms of the human anatomy with a rather simple pitching of themes. They relate to urban chaos and aggression, to the degradation of the feminine body and to role-playing and power. Her close understanding and respect for her materials enable the coaxing of her definitive human form and stance. She has some special approaches to her materials such as her drawing with the burin and other such tools on metal plates, meeting their resistance is an act of prying into and excavating the potential of one’s drawing skills and one’s state of mind. Let us cope with the viewpoint of P.N. Mago to reveal some particular aspects of Anupam’s special qualities concerning her image-making process. “Anupam has generally simplified the background and foreground, omitting all unnecessary details to focus upon the nature of the subject: dignified, worms and human beings. The figures however, possess their prominent
Anupam often uses her concrete figures giving them a high power of potential expression through her angst, meditation and melancholy, all of which are the sonorous under-currents. But any exclusive identification of these in her strongly controlled drawings would create impressions of a banal and stilted language of image making. Moving to Roshan Shahani, who points out some of Anupam’s special elements of expression in 1993, “The face and its mask, the dog in a waste land, the androgen with one breast gouged out, the bald, oracular heads are immensely readable configurations, in which one can locate a narrative pertaining to the present civilisational order and anxiety. But her emotional commitment and pursuit of spiritual equilibrium are seen in the engineering skills she possesses for crafting and sculpting the body with the clinical attention of a manufacturer who is at measured ease with technique.”

Let us consider some of her new etchings, ‘Ceremony of Unmasking’ 1990, ‘Dialogue-8’ 1992, ‘I Promise You the Moon’ print collage 1993 and lastly the symmetrical composition, etching, ‘Don’t Touch my Halo’ 1995. At a time when the discourse between the ‘self and the ‘other’ is being related not only to political and plural identity, but also to gender studies, “The work of Anupam Anupam becomes acutely relevant. This is a gradual, marvelous unfolding of identity, with an increasing preoccupation of the figure not as object but as subject, marked more and more with personal traits. The face has now assumed a distinctness and persona not to be seen in the anonymity of her earlier figures – yet is shielded still by the mask. However, the mask series is a breakthrough, to a more complete realization of the figure. With each step, she has come closer to arriving at ‘the stark truth’ in the sense of truth being revelation of the human form.”

The above mentioned prints clearly marked her fifth phase, her interesting etching entitled ‘The Ceremony of Unmasking’ is a powerful and striking print, wherein Anupam shows two equal rectangles, side by side, yet in confrontation. The powerful and masked men take their positions where one of them is the boss and the other two are forcing a nude woman to respond to their will. They unmask her revealing secrets of her womanhood, while keeping themselves behind their unsympathetic and lifeless masks.
Further more, we can go deeper to reveal some hidden meanings, which Anupam might wish to draw our attention to and also to grasp the intellectual approach to such outstanding artwork. Her unmasked faces seem to have been formed and generated by stripping off layers of their outer skin to reveal the anxiety-ridden beings underneath. She reveals a sensitivity that allows for going beyond the skin to reveal the personalities and characters of her subjects. The mere reality, obviously, does not limit her perception. In relational works like 'Purush and Prakriti' or 'Dialogue-8' 1992,\(^1\) which remind us that the conservation of our humanity is a collective effort. ‘The Rear Window’ 1992, is yet another significant print and one of her socio-political themes. This wonderful depiction of a packed crowd in the back of a bus, with a broken bar reflecting the violence inherent in such a melee, Anupam successfully creates the atmosphere of tension, which is explicit of people being driven along unable to shape their destiny, by leaders, whose aims and purposes are quite different from those of the people, they have herded together. Approaching such socio-political themes reveals the intellectual handling of her career. She always keeps mastering her media and message.

Let us move to some significant aspect of Anupam’s personality. This leading printmaker shies away from making social statements. Over the years, individual tension within the figure has emerged as personal tension between men and women and social tension in groups. “At times the sexual divide obscures these to some extent as in ‘Contestants for a Woman’s Favours’ or ‘The Ceremony of Unmasking’ 1993.”\(^2\) This sense is further undefined in at least two works ‘Don’t Touch My Halo’ 1995 and ‘Tribute,’ where the vanity and lack of confidence of the leadership that has driven us into our present impasse\(^3\) is lampooned. There is nothing mechanical in the solutions she offers. She shows us how art can be conscious, subtle and political without degenerating into slogan mongering. Good art forces the instruments of political expediency to transform them or unmask them. In this process, Anupam unmasked some corrupted politicians in her metaphorical symbolic depictions.\(^21\) Says Suneet Chopra. It being needless to indicate or point to any particular person-she would never do so she freed herself from the limitation of place and time to be free doing whatever and whenever she demands. In this regard, it is advisable to mention, the sycophancy and the crudity she mocks in ‘Don’t Touch My Halo,’ ‘Undesired Company,’ and similar works. In this process, Anupam’s work of the mid-90s is definitely a step forward.

By this time, from the mid-90s onwards, she becomes deeply concerned with consolidation of a communion between plastic form and content. Her work reveals her
concern for the contemporary approach to the medium of graphics and expresses the spirit of its time; the personality of the artist is not lost in any novelty or mannerism. Anupam successfully reveals clarity of concept of what she intends to achieve in its contents and about to its plastic rhythm. Added to these are her different technical processes of which she performs combinations. Such as mixing lithographs with silk-screen and both of these techniques with etching. She also did some collage and achieved some wonderful acrylics on canvas such as her captivating painting ‘Tighten Shadows’ c.1995. However, a good example of her mixed print and collage is her ‘I Promise You Moon’ 1994. When seeking the example of her mixing silkscreen with collage we better go back to the year 1986 to her ‘Shattered Rainbow.’ However, this print is not a successful one, but just an ordinary rendering of some human figures in an odd atmosphere and the composition is somehow poor and not interesting. Anupam’s real forte is etching and when she abandoned her wonderful etching experience to go for any other technique, it was as if she had allowed herself to be similar to an average kind of printmaker, an act similar to a fish jumping out of water.

About her intellectually interesting theme ‘Laundry,’ she says, “I reject all decorations. That is why I reject clothing on my figures. The decorative element is totally absent in my work. It is the stark truth.” In this outstanding etching ‘Laundry’ 1994, Anupam extends the use of the nude form in her etching to the washing and drying of bodies as multiple identities. We see a line of bodies hung up to dry on a washing line, as if they were clothes and there are torsos and legs dangling, while the female standing figure giving her beautiful and somehow sexy back to the viewer, this appealing naked woman surveys the ‘Laundry.’ Are these identities from the past, washed up and hung on the clothes line like the reworked etching? Anupam offers only one comment: “It is the outer skins of ourselves, which are hung up to dry.”

For her a print should be neat and perfectly executed to achieve pictorial aestheticism, content and technique are both important for her, “She has been quite satisfied in expressing in this printmaking technique and in fact she is proud to be called a prominent printmaker in today’s situation.” As a prominent printmaker, Anupam feels that the situation for printmaking is that print still needs to be recognized by most galleries. The media can help by popularizing the qualities or prints and critics should write about them and let the correct message get through. Otherwise, she does not see anything lacking in the printmaking media.

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Moving to another aspect of Anupam’s career, let us consider her wonderful paintings on canvas titled ‘Tighten Shadows.’ This painting of 1995 shows a torso of a nude woman holding a white mask in her left hand while her breasts are nicely exposed. Two mysterious male figures in the dream-like background are standing between the nude and the semi-nude figures performing kind of suspicious postures, while they are intentionally showing their backs to the viewers. Though the combination of warm and cool colour scheme is simple, but it is a quite rare, rich and attractive painting catching our eyes, arousing our imaginations and I might say, it also arouses our erotic motivations, as there is a hint of inviting sexuality in this mysterious picture. However, eroticism here is elitist. This suggestive situation attracts us to take our share of bliss. But it is better to be with Anupam, while handling her intaglio. She often uses a combination of intaglio with other systems and mediums like silkscreen, sand blasting and some other newly discovered materials, all to an aesthetic advantage. These techniques have inspired her to create some desirable effects as revealed in the quality of draughtsmanship and technical virtuosity of ‘I Promise You Moon,’ which is a proper example for this attitude.

It will be quite interesting to have a look at her ambitious project, which reveals a rich pictorial imagination while interpreting the ‘12 Zodiac Signs’ with some symbols and emblems, linking them to the life and fate of humans, in her own way. It is a unique project, which consists of 12 prints executed in the early 1994. It is also relevant to refer to her sentimental etching ‘Between Vows and Words,’ 1995. The connection between the male’s hands and fingers tightly holding and pressing the female’s hands and fingers to express the eagerness of going further to achieve perhaps an intimate action. Generally speaking, Anupam’s works reflect Indian contemporary society and its problems deeply without any preaching involved and are therefore more successful in communicating the need for human brotherhood and also in portraying the individual problems of survival. Her powerful graphics successfully enable her to condense the expressions of social emotions encountered in day-to-day life and transform attitudes of people for their own selfish benefits.

She realized a prominent achievement at the multi-group ‘Mini-Print, 96,’ at New Delhi. In this extraordinary exhibition, Anupam presented her print entitled ‘Dilemma.’ She has this to say about ‘Mini-Print’: “Though I make very large prints myself, I think small is beautiful. While in the big plates you have to etch. Lift plates time and again, roll them manually and all that, I would say that I have at the most three or four more active years. As time passes by, it becomes difficult.” As we know, Anupam
specializes in making large print, which she says, take time and are physically very taxing. However prints are now gaining ground since this is the only medium that is going parallel with technology. Her ‘Dilemma’ marks the end of her fifth phase. Anupam is now preparing herself for more striking artworks and also for more advanced participations here in India and abroad. I would like to quote her on the occasion of ‘Mini-Print, 96’ which was curated by her: "The present list of 67 artists that are included in the show emerged after serious deliberations. A few names might still have been left out due to various reasons beyond our control... a majority of the prints included are the most recent works of the artists, produced specially for this ‘Mini-Print, 96.’ It is unfortunate that some of the pioneers and important artists with whose participation the show would have been even richer, were unable to contribute their works."22

It is quite a privilege to get a chance to be with some of your colleagues following the printmaking processes done by one of the most distinguished printmakers of India. Baroda is a familiar place for Anupam, ten years ago. She held her solo exhibition in Vithi Gallery, Baroda, 1988. She often came to the Faculty of Fine Arts to join the judgement board concerning the final examination of M.F.A. (Graphics). Other times she came here to join and participate in printmaking workshops and seminars. The most significant in these activities was her participation in the splendid printmaking workshop - March 1994 at Baroda. Many leading artists and well-known printmakers participated in this well-organized and well-equipped workshop. Artists like Laxma Goud, A. Ramchandran, Anupam Sud, Jai Zherotia, Rini Dhumal, Naina Dalal and Jyoti Bhatt and some other prominent printmakers were among the participants. In this environment of exciting, fruitful and full of high quality printmaking projection we as former students of the same graphics department, got a unique opportunity to see aspects of these innovative activities especially the printmaking processes of Anupam. We approach her to see her outstanding handling of the graphic medium, especially those of etching and aquatint techniques and all other processes, which were executed in amazing manner very similar to a magical performance. Her expert hands were moving in a mysterious ways to prepare her large zinc plate and then to pull out her printmaking masterpiece from the womb of her inner existence. In fact, for us, this was an unforgettable experience.

Once at a seminar in the Faculty of Fine Arts, Baroda, in 1994, one artist asked about the reverse progression found in her work. Usually any artist progresses from figurative figures to semi-abstraction and further he may be completely abstract. Surprisingly enough, in Anupam Sud's case, reverse phenomena is observed. She started
with semi-abstract forms to the strictly representative, photograph like realism in her recent imageries. She reacted this way: "Unconsciously, I may be seeking the comfort and the carefree days I enjoyed as a child. May be that’s why my human figures seem to be convoluted and foetus-like in some of my prints." In fact, this is a psychological answer. I will not be taken in by. I would like to reveal the other side of the story this way. In her earlier prints, Anupam was following the footsteps of her admirable guru Jagmohan Chopra, who is an abstract printmaker. Abstraction was also the main stream trend of those years of the mid-60s to the mid-70s. She was following the fashionable abstraction either owing to the Western influence or because it is an easy way to project such kind of average abstract-like artworks and raise controversies around one’s artworks and avoid severe art criticism. Anupam might be influenced by one or more genuine abstract artists of the day, viz., Kanwal Krishna, Devayani Krishna, Jagmohan Chopra, Shanti Dave and her previous guru - the emigrant great printmaker - Krishna Reddy, who created tremendous influences on the artists of those days.

I got deeply impressed, when I came to know that Anupam loves her career more than anything else. In fact, printmaking career itself is her whole life. She makes this very clear when she strikingly states, "Now, when I look back, I am entirely satisfied," adding, in the same breath, "I decided not to have family, since dedication to my career would suffer, but I have no regrets." 

NAINA DALAL

The instinctive, existential world of Naina Dalal is terse and direct even though incomprehensible, the impressive projections of psyche emerge through her vision. Whether in drawings, paintings or graphic prints this artist’s style has consistently portrayed alienation, hostility and an unnerving energy. Anahite Contractor, a keen observer and prominent art critic remarks; "Over the years, Naina’s figures - predominantly female - have evolved from lyrical, sensuous forms to virile, powerful statements of the artist’s radical views concerning women’s status in the outmoded society, which at large, may focus a feminist angle. Her graphic prints are portrayed with spontaneity and deep expressionistic terror without being throttled by technique or a gaudy overuse of material. Her artistic purposes are expressed primitively without burdening itself with frivolous formal detail. The content is divested of external, academic concepts of beauty and is thus at its strongest. Collographs at which the artist excels spout the frenzied expression with an immediate effect".
Naina was born in Baroda 1935 and did her M.A. (Fine) Painting in 1959 from Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University of Baroda. She studied under the distinguished painter N.S. Bendre. Naina learned lithography, woodcut and linocut as subsidiary subjects. But she preferred printmaking as her medium of expression. She was a proficient painter when she decided to take up printmaking, where the scope for further developments in dimensions was possible. Naina explains about her Western graphic studies, "In 1960, I left for London with my painter-husband Ratan Parimoo. He studied at Courtauld Institute of Art under Commonwealth Scholarship. I joined the printmaking department of the Regents Street Polytechnic, which is a part of Chelsea School of Art London. As a continuous and prolific printmaker, Naina's work was inspired by her will to express. She often took subjects from her surroundings and experiences from life. She has a simple manner of expression, where the pleasure of portraying the 'face' of 'people' symbolizes the whole aspect of human nature."

Looking at her early paintings from the early 60s onwards, we find that they are marked by expressionistic bold brush-work, impasto of powdered pigment mixed with wax medium. She worked on large size canvasses for rendering themes such as 'Adam and Eve,' 'Man and Horse,' 'Death,' 'Despair.' One of these paintings was exhibited at the Young Commonwealth Artists’ Exhibition in London. While her litho print 'Adolescent' was exhibited in London among Snefelder Group of Artist's Lithographs. Initially, Naina learned to do lithography in black and white. These works have a powerful imagery in lines and in compositional format. The motif taken in its simple lines and forms is representational rather than a narrative. While in London, Naina concentrated on lithography. Significant in her lithos is 'Awaiting,' 1962. The atmosphere is quite gloomy as well as sad - a woman waiting for her husband to come. A kerosene lamp together with her pose and gesture expresses her helplessness. "I would see the expressionistic approach of the subject matter rather than correctness of the drawing, etc. Again I would say that in my childhood I had seen neighbourhood women waiting for their husbands to return home late at night, while some of them were drunk."

When Naina talks about her prints, she always concentrates on the event, which concerns the subject-matter. "In my opinion, the artist is free to search for the meaning and theoretical aspect of her work. I am not in the position to give advice to the artists, but I really think that the quality of the artwork depends more on its aesthetic aspect than its topic." However, Naina has all the required qualities to achieve good results in both directions. I also feel that her approach to her career is faithful, original and deeply
humanist, besides, she achieved a good number of interesting prints, supported by powerful points of view, stated in some papers under the title "The Artist as Girl," Woman and Mother" 1997.

Let us have a closer approach to her stint at London, which was of great significance in her printmaking career. Her lithographs of this period had the same approach 'no more no less,' as to her paintings with only a slight difference due to the different medium. At this stage, Naina deliberately used distortion to obtain stronger expressiveness. The best example is her 'Adolescent' litho - 1962." Revealing some points about this print, Naina states: "A girl reaching this stage, becomes aware of the changes in her body. Suddenly, she finds herself a new person; especially when she exposes her new attractiveness to steal the sight of the boys, looking at them from the corner of her eyes." Her wonderful gesture fascinates us; for instance, the flower with its tender fragrance, which is always considered as a symbol of love at this age. Hence the position of the head, neck and also the flower, are all elongated to enhance the Adolescence. We will very rarely see this kind of delineation in her later prints.

In this litho print, we can see the beautiful rendering of black and white values creating a sort of vibrant atmosphere, which is enriched by spots of light. Sadness seems to permeate the form. The elongation of planes and dimensional representation of this portrait strongly reminds of cubistic imagery. The stance or attitude in her pose, the wonderful delicate fingers holding nice flowers, with the eyes inviting and addressing the viewer to grasp his share of this innocent beauty, the handsome features, the superior outlook, make this an exceptional print as one of the most successful lithograph prints of the 1960s. In fact, the traditional typicality combined with expressionistic tendency with its Western influence was a hallmark in the art of those days. For instance, this 'Adolescent' lithoprint, strongly recalls the style of portraits of the Italian painter Amedo Modigliani, 1884-1920. To be fair, the elongated attitude is one of the phenomenal aspects of some artists in the East as well as in the West. However, Naina's work, in general, has a simple outlook. Her lines, texture, definitions and her expressions of this period have a poignant meaning and beautiful delineation. All the same, Naina at that time was more spontaneous and never encumbered with unnecessary details or systematic projection.

Yet another significant one in her lithos of this period is her print 'Leper' 1963 that shows the painful suffering because of this deadly and horrible disease. Of her linocuts of the London phase, we can select two more significant prints, "Two heads"
and "The Beggar." In the latter, Naina reached the peak of her powerful expressionist quality. In my opinion, it was a great success and an outstanding masterpiece of linocut print. She masterly infused her inner feelings in such an original print. One can enjoy the powerful rendering of the dramatic delineation and boldness of the black and white areas, combined with meaningful creation of linear qualities. It is amazing to see her white lines confronting the black areas and going deeper to penetrate the hopeless face to express his deep sadness. We can vividly see the pity and suffering. The thin, disheveled white hair sweeping over his dark-encircled and sightless eye; yet an eye strikingly expressive and unique. Meanwhile, the other eye of this miserable entity beaming a pathetic message seeks the merciful hand of help. But the future looms uncertain and elusive with no room for his great expectation. The wretched mouth agap with its dislocated teeth, the bared waist, the meek body with thin and fragile shoulders revealing the tiny ribs, indicates a continuous damage of health and miserable fate. The depiction, on the whole, succeeds, indeed, to arouse compassion in the viewer's mind.

Remembering her exciting days in London, Naina recounts: "The three years at the Institute and the frequent visits to the galleries in England made me aware of the immense potentialities of graphics. During our vacations, my husband and I used to go to the continent where I would see some important works by the European masters in originals. I used to enjoy the German Expressionists. Their graphic works fascinated me the most. Artists such as Kathe Kollwitz, Emile Nolde, Odilon Redon, Picasso, are amongst my favourites. I enjoy looking at their works for hours and hours. May be I am very sensitive and emotionally a susceptible person." While in London, Ratan Parimoo was very interested in his wife's printing activities, encouraging her to improve further, helping her to achieve her goals. During those productive days, Naina was under the guidance of Henri Trivich, the well-known expert of lithography. Parimoo noticed that Naina had come to acquire the proper know-how of Western printmaking techniques, lithography in particular. Revealing these coincidences, he quotes, "Naina's work is always based on themes usually expressed through the human figure. While facing her canvas, she finds images staring at her of deformed, misshapen, miserable human beings, who unconsciously encroach into whatever she paints or draws. Such themes are much suited to the medium of lithography, with the deep blacks contrasting sharply with whites, it is possible to intensify their expressiveness. They could represent the hideousness of the leper, the pathos of the beggar or the apprehensive melancholy of the
sad-eyed adolescent. Naina has abhorrence of the graceful and the delicate, yet there is a
certain lyrical element in the crisp-tonal variations of her prints."

We have already mentioned Naina's outstanding lino-print 'Two Heads' 1962. This particular print needs to be highlighted. Looking carefully at this print, we see the
noble rendering of the beautifully elongated faces of the two figures. The dramatic
expression of the delineation of the white and black values, the tender effects and the
friendly approach, which reveals the relationship and the intimacy between the couple.
Just in simple, yet effective rendering of the medium, Naina was able to achieve the
intensity of the original expression. Looking at the attractive eyes, noses, lips and necks
and then the graceful hair, one feels like touching the picture to know whether it is real or
magic. In my opinion, we can truly say of Naina's prints that 'old is gold.' Let us move to
Naina's viewpoint, "My earlier works were done in London, away from the people I
depicted, they were with me in my unconscious state of mind, coming out with more
powerful expression. The attitude changes with time and experience; the way of working
may differ between my activities and motivations when I was running in my twenties and
later on when I entered the evening years of my life." I think the turning point in her life
started in the year 1985. In fact, Naina talks candidly about her earlier times when her
enthusiasm for art was very great, matching with the youthful spirit. These days, without
too many household duties and no children to look after, Naina was free to concentrate on
her work. So we see that her work of the London phase is more impressive, powerful and
creative. Naina may partly agree with me, but any way this is my personal conviction.

Naina keeps relating to certain aspects like the faces of people since the early
linocuts of her student days in London, such as her print 'The Beggar' and the 'Two
Heads' - both in 1962. "Here, faces seem to be a symbolic identification of any human
being in a group or alone, or in some cases, of their parents. The strong, positive and
negative space created by her black and white has a significance of its own. Her images
are always enriched by the different values of textures to reveal the meaningful
indications of the surfaces." In fact, Naina has hardly ever felt the need to include more
than a few colours, in her painting as well as printmaking. Naina prefers earth colours;
yellow ochre, brown-orange, rich red ochre, tender green and warm greys, the last two
are used in some particular circumstances. After returning to Baroda, though Naina tried
to keep up her artistic pursuit continuing, her activity during the eight years between
1965 and 1973 tended to be of low key. Soon Gauri, her daughter was born. Though
Naina was tied up with the newborn child and the household responsibilities, she

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continued her paintings and drawings and held four exhibitions in Baroda, Bombay and Delhi. This may be considered as Naina's second phase. However, during this phase, she could not do much printmaking. She exhibited her prints, which were executed in London and managed to add some new paintings and drawings to her shows. However, she strove to build up her name as an artist.

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In 1974, Naina and her husband again went abroad, but this time they left for New York. Naina was eager to acquire more advanced techniques, for the fact that she was in this vast city with its wonderful facilities, a number of masters and expert instructors, highly equipped graphic studios, etc. Such surroundings encouraging her to grasp the golden opportunity, she ventured to go ahead even through the trial-and-error process, to acquire further know-how on printmaking techniques. At this juncture, we may infer her having embarked on her third phase. During the ensuing days, her images evolved to be more interesting, nonetheless her themes concentrated on the gloomy side of life. Nilima Shiekh comments on some specific features in Naina's works: "The image in her paintings and graphics is of the human figure; very often a woman, as the emotional vehicle of pain. Even where there is more than one figure, with some interaction between them, it is as though their suffering has been spelt out of the spectator to behold. This method, which draws from the conventions of portrait, is not uncommon amongst women painters: Anjolie Ela Menon, for instance, Baroda artists like Rini Dhumal, Kavita Shah and Savita Panditji and others. Their work seems almost to constitute a genre: the 'anguish' of the woman protagonist contained in the format of frontal representation, whether full figure or the upper half".9

Naina found collograph techniques not only safer, health-wise, but also more conducive to her own way of expression and the type of images she wanted to portray and the requirements of her compositions that suit her images are well rendered through this technique. As a matter of fact, collograph technique was familiar in India, especially when the prominent artist Kanwal Krishna started his series of collograph abstract prints in New Delhi in the mid-50s. Since then, many Indian artists took to this technique and during the 60s, it became widely used in some particular regional centres in the country.

All the same, having started her collograph prints around the early 1970s, Naina became more and more involved in this process, getting obsessed with this expressive medium and her endeavour eventually culminating in mastery of this technique. "Through the years, she developed this particular technique and enriched it by her
consistent experiments. Naina uses the uncommon method of expression through found objects. A plank of wood of an irregular shape or uncommon texture is enough. She uses these naturally weathered objects to print and connotes direct meaning into them. The directness and simplicity, moulding it to the right extent, is an aesthetically pure expression. The object speaks and the print expresses. This suitable and expressive medium Naina masterly used for her projection.\(^{10}\) With her successfully improving own collographs using those new materials and discovering or rendering some attractive elements and textures not otherwise acquired in intaglio printing, one can say that she tamed the medium to serve her demands and her inner expressions as well.

It is worthwhile to elaborate more about collograph technique, since it became the main forte of Naina's experimental field. Mostly the conception of her work begins with zinc oxide and white adhesive 'Fevicol.' The ingenious faculty of the artist facilitates further in building up the image by incorporating found objects such as plants, rags, wood, etc. Shivaji K. Panikkar aptly commends her style: 'Naina avoids the use of any cut-out object and geometric strictness in the image building. The totality of such an assemblage is always invariably organic in quality. At times the images are incised into the surface wholly or partially, like in dry point, resulting in very fine linear constructions. In certain cases, small collographic plates are pasted over large irregularly shaped wooden planks, which enable in achieving varied textual qualities. By deliberately avoiding the use of colour in prints, Naina's works achieve enhanced and tense serenity in expression. The modelled surfaces evoke the tactile sensations like a relief sculpture or detailed drawing quality in collographs. Particularly in human figuration, this would be considered as a marked achievement in the use of the medium.\(^{11}\) One should know that collograph is a relief technique, where the surface is made up of several levels on a plane. When inked and printed, the levels act as relief as well as engraving; creating depths of great variations. The board or plane may be incised or a surface is attached to it. I think it is difficult to use a cut-out object properly in order to create a striking print; the same thing happening when using different colours because in this case the print requires a special kind of experience and also an immense power of control. I think, avoiding all these qualities might be for some particular reasons, but not for the sake of interesting image making.

\* \* \*

At the Pratt Graphic Center in New York, Naina formally studied both intaglio and etching techniques. Since then, she has been concentrating more on graphics than
painting. However, she strongly took to etching during her stay in USA, which was about six months. Naina did there a series of etchings, such as her successful series ‘Sisters.’ ‘Women,’ yet another series of etchings and aquatints were also executed there. In all those prints, Naina shows some progress in doing etchings. In fact, she benefited much, studying in that famous graphic centre. By this time, she became more sensitive, effective and also more aware about her image making. Let us highlight two etchings of the mentioned period: ‘Woman’ 1974. Here, we can see one of Naina’s beautiful and powerful prints. I truly believe that this young, nude woman having passionate inner feelings, shyly exposing feminine beauty in the foreground of the picture, yet she moves her body in a particular gesture to show her inner fear of some unknown danger. She is alone, naked and without any protection. Her mysterious gesture and firm position of the head sending a whisper for help from heaven. Here, we also see the attractive face with its dove-like eyes, tempting the onlooker to go further to enjoy looking at the dark beautiful hair flattering the breasts with their innocent bosoms. With the anxious atmosphere around foreboding, this nude seems to be asking for help to save herself from the intention of the predator in the background, evolving ominous gestures suggestive of erotic desire and intent to assault her.

In ‘Companions’ etching, 1974 we can see the expressive faces of the two sisters revealing their inner melancholy. Naina wanted to use different techniques on one plate in order to achieve better handling of the etching process. The subject matter shows two friends attached to each other emotionally, leaning on a friend’s or a sister’s shoulder in the time of grief. “I am very much attached to my younger sister. We share many things in life and depend on each other, companionship between us concerns our deep feeling and emotions through friendly relationship and wonderful harmony.” I feel that Naina did her best to improve her etching through her consistent efforts, but at what level she could do so is another story. When we compare the etchings and aquatint prints ‘Woman’ 1974, ‘Companion’ 1974 and both ‘Adam and Eve’ dry point and ‘Bench-3’ 1983, I wish to add her most sensitive drawing ‘Women’ 1978, with her later artworks such as ‘Hope-1’ etching 1987, ‘Hope-2’ etching 1990 and ‘Mother as Protector’ aquatint 1994 and such other works, we find that the quality of etchings and also other mediums of the earlier phase are more genuine and coming from her inner self. They are more consistent and striking. While after the mid-80s, her prints as well as her paintings started reverse track. To my mind the highest summit for Naina was at the year of 1983, when she achieved her outstanding print ‘Bench-3.’ ‘Those were the days’...
However, through the years Naina has acquired the quality of routine motivation, which attitude affected her work. One can see that her work became more precise; especially in her etchings, where she started giving an extravagant finishing as if she wanted to make her work nicer and more elegant. Take for instance, her print, ‘Mother as Protector’ 1994 and the portion of arched form of an aqueduct in her ‘Hope-2’ 1990. This intention is a new characteristic of Naina’s 90s’ etchings and aquatint. Naina might have parted with some of her previous genuine qualities. To be fair enough, we still feel Naina’s aromatic accent in her prints, some of which, in some way, still project her talented outlook and show hints of vigorous depiction. I am afraid to say that something serious has happened to her career after the mid-80s. Later on, however, we will see that she is still very active and assiduously worked out her redemption. Now, it is the time to consider her ‘Father and Daughter,’ etching, 1978. About this print, Naina quotes, “I was very much attached to my father.... As a compassionate man, he was very close to all members of the family. For me, he was more of a friend, because of being endowed with remarkable qualities. His image often comes to my mind. At some critical moments, I miss his presence, yet he lives within me.”

Naina recounts memories of her childhood, especially those of her father. In many of her works, she portrayed him. It is very nice of her to have such a noble attitude towards her kin. As a matter of fact, Naina is completely obsessed by some sentimental themes. To my mind, there is no justification for the great subject matters by itself. However, there is no harm to go further with some selected themes, but, always, we should bear in mind that consideration goes for genuine piece of art; “art-making is the only goal.” We should turn our back to the narrative attitude and concentrate on plastic art language. From this perspective, let us consider her significant drawing ‘Women,’ 1978. In this drawing, her talent is adorable, in particular, her adept handling of pen and ink medium. Gauri Parimoo-Krishnan relates some points significantly relevant here; “The finely textured rendering of the cross-hatching has brought to life the powerful faces of women. The hatching technique helps in darkening the tone, lending three-dimensional as well as bold outlines to the forms. Eyes, as often exaggerated by the artist in her other works, seem to communicate the unspoken word. The kindred feeling shared by these two women comes across through their touch and proximity as if both are giving solace to each other.”

* * *
In the late 70s, Naina achieved one of her most successful etchings, which depicts the tragic events of ‘Morvi Disaster’ 1979. The great disaster took place when Morbi dam in Saurashtra broke and washed away thousands of people. Houses collapsed and were washed away. Children became orphans; some of who were drowning and others were about to die. Naina talks about events, referring to her inherited myth, about the overpowering ‘Kaal,’ which dominates the top portion of the picture. This monster, which is the personification of ‘time’ and ‘death’ – has an ugly featureless face, with graceless terrible teeth. Naina shows her powerful rendering of those hopeless women and children desperately lay on the muddy ground, awaiting their unpleasant fate. In this etching, Naina successfully captures the tragic atmosphere and portrayed it with a masterly touch. One can feel the inner delineation of this theme and also the proper understanding of the graphic language.

Then there is the ‘Load of life’ collograph 1979. In this print, we can see a poor, cursed, deprived and worried man, his gloomy portrait taking a small position in the lower foreground, while over his head there is combination of an immense load of problems, tensions, unfavourable conditions that a poor man has to silently bear. For him, the sky is full of problems, which may take over the miserable life soon, he can not seek help because the clouds project different kinds of moving images and shapes pointing out to a stark and doomed future looming large over the horizon, bringing about more suffering and more hopeless conditions. For Naina this collograph brings back nostalgia when she remembers her childhood, when with her father, she looked at some strange events and combination of Satan-like faces; all having been crafted by moving clouds. Such old memories are still very fresh within her and constantly surface in her work. One may conclude that a large portion of her sensibilities and motivation are fully dominated and even enveloped by the curtain of past; leaving only a narrow trail for both the present and the future. This disposition, however, does not cast any aspersions on her performance. On the contrary, it seems to have fortified her grit in reaching her goals: the adorable prints she often produced are the proof. Naina’s views on this early controversial collograph print are rather enlightening. About this depiction, she says; "It represents the face of a common man in a tense and uncertain mood, feeling rather scared to face the world. There is a white space around him, which signifies the blank and a nowhere destination. He is so insignificant in this world and the problems he has to face are so big, too many and yet unavoidable. The cloud turning into a demonic face is, according to me, quite innovative."
One should highly appreciate Naina’s power of innovation. I am indeed deeply impressed with this print. I convey my admiration to her brave words, praising her own print, “according to me, quite innovative.” In the same year, i.e., 1979, Naina also portrayed her ‘Portrait of My Parents,’ which is also a collograph print. She said she wanted to show the expression of an old man and old woman, whom she had seen and observed very closely. Wrinkles on the old woman’s face have also been depicted expressively through this medium. "Father, though strong at one time, became very weak in old age; while mother remained the same strong will-powered person till the last, which can be seen on her face in the print." Let us now highlight her collograph ‘Cry’ 1980. This expressive print is the portrayal of a working woman. For Naina, she is "A labourer working from morning till evening to feed her family and children. The face is full of agony, which she faces everyday. It is the cry of a poor woman who shares the larger load of the problems of the family. Her hand is her strength. It is this strength, that keeps her going. It is a juxtaposition of two images, head and hand, which are related to each other. They are complementary to each other to face the agony of the times." I accept everything in this statement except this strange phrase “a juxtaposition of two images.” I see only two quite separated images, but in some way, it shows that the hand is related to the woman’s face, no more, no less. To my mind, a well-knit composition is something else, as well as the composition for printmaking is something entirely different. A powerful composition acquires its concrete connection from within, for instance, when two images come to create one composition, we should feel some kind of unity and coherence, which make them completely one vigorous and expressive form; nobody can ever separate them. However, we must remember that Naina and her peers are masters of picture making and they definitely have another point of view that may be more logical than ours.

It is obvious that the major issues of Naina’s artworks are feminine themes such as mother and child, man and woman; common man and the calamities caused either by nature or man. In fact, Naina’s themes, as Gauri Krishnan says, “Move from eroticism to estrangement and death, her images are poised in the reverie of a personalised, romanticized world. It is this that she makes tangible in her prints. She is more of an observer, feeler of emotions rather than a vocal commentator.” Though her works are somehow dynamic and full of passion in the conventional sense, yet they are not shocking or striking. This kind of quality lends expression to emotional overtones in the faces and human bodies. Gauri Krishnan explains this aspect: “Looking more carefully
one realizes that an academic norm will fail to assess the essence of Naina's drawings. Instead, a different aesthetic paradigm will have to be enforced - perhaps the same paradigm as the one applied to expressionism or, let us say, surrealism. Naina's work cannot be categorized; its range of content and 'maniera' does not allow itself to be typecast. From her individual standpoint, her imagery alludes to the universal and the particular at the same time.16

I hasten not to agree with Gauri’s point of view. Firstly, I do not think any of the connoisseurs of art or art collectors come to judge the artworks of any creative artists through the academic norms. However, a keen art lover could easily discern the original powerful rendering of the artworks as well as the poor rendering. There are many ways to approach the artists’ projections. In fact, some art critics and writers are original, faithful and do not compliment or flatter; they always seek the actual, original and truly aesthetic qualities. Then, there are other journalists who are either opportunists or vengeful, who do not want to give credit to the artist. They often mislead the artist and give him fake impressions.

Naina has won some prominent awards for her distinguished prints, which are indeed of high quality with an undercurrent of humane touch and lively outlook. She has made great strides in the last three decades and she is reckoned as one of the illustrious printmakers of India today. Let us, however, ponder over her significant views to reveal some of her individual characteristics. “My images are mainly of women and their world, that is the way they relate to the world and life in which they find themselves. As a woman, born and brought up in a typical, middle class family, since childhood, I have seen, heard, felt and even undergone some agonies. So the Indian woman, her surroundings, sufferings, her day-to-day problems, lower position in the society as a girl child, adolescent, young woman, married woman, wife, the mother, etc., are the images constantly before my mind. Such rich repertoire of images has been evolved during these long years through my graphic work. I have also side by side been working on numerous drawings and watercolours to concretize these images. These imageries have been appreciated both in graphics and paintings.”17

It was the early 80s, Naina started doing her famous ‘Bench’ series using her powerful well-knit delineation and proper approach to etching medium. I think those were the glorious years of her printmaking career. A lot of her splendid etchings were executed during these prolific years of the 80s - and some, though less, towards the end of the decade, which I consider her fourth phase ‘the golden phase.’ However, during the
period between 1962 and 1985, she did a good number of interesting prints, positioning herself as a leading printmaker. During the years 1982-84, Naina was awarded a fellowship by the Government of India to work on alternative printmaking techniques. This helped her to explore extensively in the field. She was also able to purchase her own etching press, which she could handle any time at home in whichever way she liked. However, Naina, with the help of these facilities, was able to concentrate on collograph medium. It is a matter of fact that her taking up etching mostly owes to her own special studio facilities and also etching being a new venue to experiment with. The Bench series has a symbolic significance. A bench, which is usually put in a park or in any area is a place where people come and rest for a while. Naina had the advantage of observing just such a sight from her house. The 'bench' had serious implications for her when it became directly connected with her own moods. Looking carefully at her sketches and drawings executed from late 70s to early 80s, we find her presenting the versions of bench series one by one through this period. She made concerted efforts to enrich her project, using different materials such as slight inks, water colours, charcoals, etc., rendering her spontaneous and sensitive feelings come true through these mediums and culminating in her lovely and lively sketches and drawings.

* * *

In the year 1983, Naina reached the summit of her career. We are now face to face with the masterpiece of her life, the best etching she ever accomplished: the splendid print ‘Bench-3’ 1983. Let us be with Naina when she was completely obsessed by such ‘benches.’ In this particular series, she made use of all the tools, had the proper understanding, did the required sketches and drawings, took recourse to studies done through several years and capitalized on her keen observation. This combination is the secret of this glorious achievement. I am afraid to say that Naina is preoccupied by a fixed idea about her themes, I can not say this to be wrong, simply because one of these themes was so successful as to enable her to create an eternal masterpiece in ‘Bench-3’ symphony-like etching. However, this masterpiece is an exceptional case, once and over. In this outstanding etching, Naina was engrossed in all events related to this theme as if she were watching a pantomime performance. When Naina mustered all the material for doing this project, she prepared the suitable medium for projection and selected ideal tools for building up such a wonderful composition. With missionary zeal, Naina went ahead acquiring the philosophical concept of her ritual performance. She subtly identified with those souls who wander all around, trying to find a place for their tired legs and in
the physical act of relaxing, rested their emotional burden on the bench. Now, it is time to
listen to Naina’s point of view.

“The time I was most touched by, is the afternoon’s sun shining at its peak, no
noisy silence at any corner and suddenly I see a lonely man or woman, sometime women
with children in poor clothes. May be beggars or insane or homeless; but deserted by
family, wandering in the park and sit on the bench - nobody will throw them out from
there. The bench is a silent listener to the complaints and murmuring of such deserted
people, one sometimes heard of birds.”50 We can enhance this atmosphere by seeking the
help of Gauri Krishnan, who wrote about her mother’s sketches concerning this subject
matter, executed between 1979 and 1983. Gauri concentrated on those drawings, which
deal with the problem of alienation, loss of communication, rejection and disinherittance
by the kin. “This leitmotif consists in depicting man turning to Nature ‘his mother,’ for
comfort in this flux of social upheaval, the immediate by-products of which are alienation
and estrangement. The misery of our living dead, the forsaken geriatrics of our ‘young’
society is a constant leitmotif of Naina’s work.”18

However, Naina can easily create a harmonious environment, giving meaningful
messages to all the elements and figures in the roundness. Let us perceive her ‘Bench-3’
etching of 1983. The dominant female body in the foreground has a mysterious
featureless face rendered in such a beautiful and powerful hatching - combined with that
inviting naked torso, which projects an unusual beauty of the breasts. The gesture of the
arm with its tempting fingers arouses our inner urge for an intimate embrace. The erotic,
but innocent touch of the hand that is also slightly tapping the upper part of the breast.
The captivating feminine roundness of the form masterly accomplished by an expert
hand. The boldness and the darkness of the background acquire a fainted, narrow area
enhanced by a few glitters of lightening, which lend credence to the mysterious spiritual
atmosphere. The horizontal wooden white bars of the seat tenderly embracing the
beautiful body. The unknown seated female projects a kind of suggestive magic mixed
with surrealistic fantasy and enchantment. Nothing can match ‘Bench-3.’

Naina elaborated her lithographs, linocuts and etchings to suit her temperament. It
is my opinion that she is, to some extent, proficient in all these. However, linocut and
woodcut have expanded into collograph and printing from found objects. For her,
collograph is the most meaningful technique she has ever achieved and mastered. She
thinks that these mediums bear the deep profoundness of her personality and experience.
“She is equally at home with the conventional intaglio method, but even here, her own
stamp of mature experience is conspicuous in the manner the condensed image is carved through the mysterious depths built out of pitch dark tonalities of the black ink. These expressions are portrayed aptly through her well known themes.19 The ultimate concern of Naina’s prints lie in the human predicament persisting with sanguine fear. Anahite Contractor reveals some original qualities of Naina’s drawings; “Her drawings are sensitive, poetic precursors of the painted and printed forms. But they are to be valued for their own strength and vigour. In fact, certain drawings had intrinsic value, surpassing that of the canvases, as they undulate with immense spontaneity, freedom and unstilted wrath of an expressionist.”20

Some of Naina’s prints seem to have been eroded by seasons on primeval rocks in the Mediterranean forests of winds. Other prints seem to have been scratched on mossy walls of weathered stone. The suffering of John Hawkes impresses Naina: “The scream that was clamped between my teeth was a strenuous black bat struggling, wrestling in my bloated mouth.” Naina has both passion and compassion to project through her expressive printmaking. “She is a very acute printmaker always searching for new ideas. Whenever approaching any issue or event, which impresses her or touches her sensitive inner feelings towards mankind in general, or those hopeless, starving and tragic children with their downtrodden parents, as well as victims of injustice living in poor, squalid and inhuman situations.”21 Here, we can see that the humanistic approach of Naina comes to be known through her true intentions. One can realize that when talking to her, while she is showing some of her artworks, Naina is very soft-spoken. She eloquently discusses her and others’ points of views, the discussion often supported by her inborn wit and open-mind, enhanced by powerful personality.

Some Controversial Expressions

Before we get involved in the dilemma of her collograph print ‘The Old Man and the Crow’ 1984,16 let us first have a look at her drypoint etching ‘Adam and Eve’ 1983.7 We should do so, to acquire the virtue of going about things in a chronological order and also to study the quality of periodic achievements through different stages. Let us have a look at her etching and drypoint, ‘Adam and Eve’ 1983.8 This print has a different sort of significance. We need enough courage to talk about such a controversial print, which might make us recall the Biblical masterpiece of Masaccio’s fresco ‘Adam and Eve’ being expelled from Paradise, Florence, 1427. In fact, I can not claim that this particular painting of Masaccio is the perfect example, but, however, some other painting, which
has depicted this conventional subject matter by some other western master will be enough as an example. When looking at both the pictures, i.e., Naina's and Masaccio's, carefully, we can see some slight similarity and some difference between them. Naina imbibed some elements from the work of the Renaissance Master, such as the gesture of agony, the body language of the two couples, also the movements of the hands, the striding legs, the deep inner sorrow revealed by the shameful gesture of the hands and the anxious fingers strongly pressing the guilty faces. All these tragic elements combined with the dramatic atmosphere portray the dismissal from God's mercy ... God's paradise.

However, it is fair to mention that all the above mentioned qualities were accurately depicted in Naina's print according to her own personal sensibility towards the importance of comprehension. In this case, Naina successfully gave a new birth and a new angle to the ancient Biblical perennial story of Adam and Eve. Besides, she was clear enough to create a few meaningful indications while modifying the gestures through some of oft used elements to give the whole outlook her personal accent and also to project the taste of her flavour. She took a step forward and dismissed the angel of God out of her picture in order to create a new vision for mankind's destination without seeking or even expecting any heavenly help. I think this concept may give us deeper knowledge of her etching and dry point. Naina has a deep-rooted and concrete concept concerning the human relationship; "Here, I would like to mention such etchings, which have a man and woman together. These I called spontaneously 'Adam and Eve.' But they are not derived from any Biblical themes. They stand as archetypal man and woman... The naked youthful man and woman are images of universal entities and what each of them is made to speak psychologically. They run the show of the universe. Together they are the 'Man and Woman' etching 1983, as well as in another version the 'Man and Woman' - expression of despair - dry point, 1985, in which they are running away from a storm. These two creatures are running together, the bond of togetherness is there, that is, not leaving the other behind. In a copper plate etching, 1986 the faces of man and woman are like rocks, nobody can shake them."

Naina explained that she had another source for 'Adam and Eve,' linking her alliance with the concept of 'the cycle of rebirth' annunciated in ancient Hindu scriptures. The man and woman know each other since ages, they come again and again on this earth as man and wife. I agree with Naina concerning the issue of abstract man and the abstract woman. However, she has another intention in her dry point version. She gave this version a completely Biblical title, with its composition tending to be Western and the
whole atmosphere showing the Western impact; especially the depiction of the two figures; what else left is, however, a minor thing, but truly Indian. I think that Naina has done some changes in the background to create the storm-like atmosphere, that is all. Let us move to another aspect. Jagdish Shivpuri, a very sensitive Indian poet, who admires Naina’s work, pointed out in the early eighties: “The unity in Naina’s work is essentially an emotional unity. She is occupied with the unuttered suffering of the human race. The suffering may be imposed biologically, psychologically or simply metaphysically. Time has eaten away the substance of these characters, who are instruments in the hands of Nature. The world of Naina’s graphics is closing in upon her characters. Her imagination sees the ever-growing matter pervading the vacuous spaces. It is a loss of solitude, which is expressed in these frames. The faces in Naina’s work seem to have been salvaged from a flood of molten lava-seared and charred. They are conceived in a country where heat dries up everything. There is always an organic continuity between figures and faces - the vestiges of Time-eaten Humanity begin thrown into massy spaces by cruel chance.”

I would like to discuss the controversial aspect of Naina’s expressive collograph print ‘The Old Man and the Crow’ 1984.*16 This significant print depicts a crude crow feasting the head of a dead body; one of the victims of the 1971 war. Perhaps, the composition as well as the whole idea had been taken from the famous catalogue of ‘The Best of Kishor Parekh,’ which was published in March 1976.*17 Parekh sent a message for all ‘Human Beings’: “Before I die as a photographer, I must do this.” There are some particular elements similar between Parekh’s expressive picture and the print of Naina, regardless of some superficial differences here or there due to the nature of collograph medium and also to pull the eyes of the viewer from the site of whatever depicted in Parekh’s picture to a far away site depicted in her print. In fact, this is only an arbitrary point of view. Now, let us say, from an artistic point of view, there is no harm in an artist drawing an idea or inspiration from photographs of very high standard. The history of painting has revealed some examples of this relationship since the era of French impressionism and post-impressionism. One can look at Degas’ painting the ‘Cotton Market in New Orleans’ 1873. Toulouse Lautrec did the same with some of his paintings concerning the ‘Dance at the Moulin Rouge,’ 1884. Manet, Renoir, Monet and some other prominent artists later on did a few paintings of a photographic origin. Gradually from the early years of this century onwards, photography has been acquiring great popularity as a significant medium in the field of painting and graphics. By the sixties
photography assumed importance as a major source for all creative artists - their inspiration, imagination as also innovation derived from the art of photography.

What is amazing here is a completely different story of Naina. Let us revert to her point of view: "I had not seen Kishor Parekh’s photographs before I made my print. In ‘The Old Man and the Crow,’ the idea is, to portray an unknown person dying on the pavement, left for a number of days, unable even to lift his hand or head to shoo away the bird sitting on his head; as if the crow has had experienced the helplessness of the dying man.” There is no doubt in Naina’s assertion. I feel that she had experienced an incident full of sympathy, sentimentality and also charity. “There were two miserable dying persons; I used to watch both of them. One day I bought two blankets to cover them and save them from cold. I went and covered them myself. There was no response from them.” This happened - according to Naina - during the winter of 1970 and it clearly shows that the idea preceded those expressionist pictures of Kishor Parekh. Naina successfully conserves her original quality and individual accent in this controversial work of art. In this print, we also enjoy looking at Naina’s expressive masterly rendering of the collograph medium, which make evident her inner feelings. These qualities are even beyond those expressionist photographs of Parekh that portrayed the disaster of war. Naina’s war is created from within; she is a faithful insider and has her own pain, suffering and love for Humanity. Sometimes, she projects these feelings through her expressive artworks and also vocally through her personal views. Regardless of all these aesthetical norms or any modern art concepts, she has her own spontaneous ideas for her art-making processes, which were more evident and vigorous from the mid-60s to the mid-80s. Nevertheless, I concede Naina is free to have her inspiration from any sources she finds herself attracted to. However, to evaluate Naina’s artwork, we need to traverse in several directions to familiarise ourselves with her individual ways of delineation in consonance with her thinking, reaction and even her special ways of communication.

There are no boundaries or limitations for creativity of artists. He is always daring to challenge difficulties and commands his process, especially when he is involved in trial and error process. On the other hand, the artist always creates some kind of healthy communication between himself and others, who are concerned with his art. The most important approach may be his relation with art critics. We may suspect the intention of the art critics when we find some artists are showered with high praise, while their works are really no more than modest rendering of mere depictions. Particularly we feel that the
critic/writer went beyond fairness and indulged in flattery without a respectable amount of quality analytic study, showing the negative and the positive aspects. A real artist should be happy when the art critic points out his negative qualities. However, in all different cases, the balanced approach to the artwork should be the only acceptable option, otherwise we can say; "fake art criticism is only suitable for those fake artists." In fact, we can not point to any particular case. Such comprehension is but a general approach to the above-mentioned circumstances, which might be a global phenomenon.

Naina continuously adds some technical qualities to her printmaking career, to enhance this aspect, let us first look at a point of view subscribed to by Ajay Sinha concerning Naina’s artworks around the mid-80s. "A combination such as effect of a crayon or slight pencil work modulation of tones similar to oil painting with a spatula, a deep velvety black as in mezzotint and surfaces similar to a craggy skin or eroded earth, achieved by sprinkling particles of sand of sticking woven fabric on the cardboard makes the body grain of her images. In wood collage, she waits watchful, as the shape and fibre of plywood found in scrap suggest to her the musculature of human form. Improvising on the material with tremendous scope for uninhibited responses to play a role, Naina changes its texture, as she prints, into a throbbing pulse of her personal values."

Naina always wields different kinds of mediums and at the same time, she may enjoy searching for something new. It should be worthwhile to look into some of these aspects. Talking about her expressive sketches, Gauri Krishnan has this to say: "One is amazed to see piles of drawings, quick sketches, doodling and neatly constructed preparatory drawings for paintings or etchings, bespeaking the artist’s prolific handling of the visual medium. Naina’s imagery, as one brings to observe and get familiarized with, grows on the pathos, despair and at the same time, compassion - forcefully created by the artist."

At this juncture, it should also be worthwhile to quote one of Naina’s art-lovers that highly praised her as one of the top printmakers of India, nay, ‘almost the best’.... "Naina’s general responses are tuned to the art forms as it was understood by East-Asian masters of yester centuries, such as Durer, Rembrandt, Goya, Picasso, Kathe Kolwitz and the rest of Expressionists. In contrast, the modern printmakers seem to allow in their craft some meagre achievements, which are purely technical in nature. In this milieu, aesthetics is permanently at risk. The intaglio that was imported into our country during the late 50s and 60s was the brainchild of the British printmaker residing at Paris, William Hayter. Fortunately, Naina has never chosen to imitate the surface gloss of
Hayter. She has opted for the inherent artistic qualities of the medium, "The medium is made to accommodate the crucial visual message and technique that never dominates over pictorial values. Here, the methods of rendering seem to be apparently straightforward, but not as simple as they seem at first. Gradually the immediate challenges will be overcome, but not until it goes through a turmoil of decision and indecision and many revisions. From the beginning, each of her works is organic in its growth." Let us enhance the aspect by turning to Gauri Krishnan, when she highly praised Naina's artwork. I am very confident to say that Gauri is very much familiar to Naina's prints and paintings, by virtue of her being very close to her kin's creative process for many years. She knew her mother's attitudes, aspects, anxieties and even agonies. Observing how "Naina bespeaks her technical versatility, patience and creativity, which is being gradually recognized... The mingling of creative power, expression quality and skill certainly brings to the fore a very powerful expressionistic work of art; a quality that I have witnessed in the nuances of her style and technique blooming into a kneaded and grinded image of humanity. Some of her images are marked by lyrical, suave lines, fragile and soft, which appear to vaporize almost at any moment, especially, her dry points and etchings, pen ink dryings of female nudes, trees and benevolent nature. While in complete contrast to these delicate forms are the most powerful rough and imposing images."  

Captives is one of Naina's powerful etchings and aquatint, 1985, "the mere, but simple composition shows five faces. The intention of this rendering is to show that they are unable to defend themselves, so they are hopeless, nobody will care about them. One peculiar figure looks curiously from behind his colleagues' shoulders. They share a tragic story together, waiting for something unpleasant imminent in the air. Being behind the barbed wire indicates that they are suffering inner agony. The gazing eyes are eager to convey their anxiety and despair. They are forcibly pushed to the corner of negligence. They are captured in a small, polluted detention camp. Soon their health worsens. These captive creatures are the product of our modern civilization. Here, Naina wants to say: when the humanity comes to its dead end, the scars will go deep under our skin destroying our inner-selves as well as our bodies; corrupting our global atmosphere and poisoning our living sources. "We, the hopeless creatures, should send 'S.O.S' messages to some unknown planets hoping somebody may come to help". It is evident in this
collagraph print that Naina did indeed stride forward, but the way she depicted all these faces in a frontal position diminished the impact of this print, which otherwise is enjoyable. However, the expressive reflection and the deep inner feelings combined with faithful handling of the subject-matter amply covering up; overcoming any negative hints, I feel the touch of a mysterious, yet spiritual reflection coming out from the facial features.

What about that peculiar ‘Old Man at the Window’? It is an experimental collographic portrait 1985. For the medium, Naina went outside her house to pick up some pieces of plywood from the nearby roadside. She looked around to see some pieces of hand-made paper in the corner of her studio. With such paper cut in required shapes and pasted on the surface of the plate, Naina creates an impression of brick construction around the window frame. These bricks ideally served to vouch for the age of the ancient looking man dominating the black area of the window. Going further, one sees the impression of the fragile pieces of the plywood support much of the feeling of the old man. Besides, Naina comes with her pencil, using her expert hand to give her picture more lively effects. In fact, this subject matter is amazing enough, exuding a genial aura, substantiating such meaningful depiction. When she, as usual, presents her ordinary composition, every thing is directly facing the viewer, with all the elements overt. There is only a little care in composition wanting: But what about this old man? May be, the window is the only way to see what is going on in the daily life, because he is unable to go out owing to old age and poor health. The limited area of the window is the only way to link him with the outside world. We can read the story of years of suffering on his face. Naina has executed his features on this face with the help of her special materials such as zinc oxide, etc., with some slightly coloured areas softened to be suitable for the use of sharp tools. The rendering of the fragile and weak hands and their positioning on the base of the window adds to the meaning concerning long awaited events, which, alas, will never be available for him to play any role in. Now, he is just a vestige of a man and what he sees out there is a dreary, monotonous cycle of life with incessantly drifting images and events, as on an obscure screen, against the backdrop of vague reality.

Leaving the image of the old man with its despair and going forward for hope, Naina now prepared her elements and tools and looked around for a new theme; instead of ‘despair,’ such as her two previous pictures - the hopeless old man with the crow and the hopeless old man at the window, she turned to the mother and child and ‘hope,’ let us
seek some hope with Naina. When thinking about Naina’s depictions and attitude, we feel that we need to have further guidelines in approaching her printmaking career. She herself has observed that Western printmaking, as we know today, is the result of the advancement of science. "Printmaking is based on science and technology. Throughout the world these techniques are used by artists. They adapt techniques, which are suitable for imagery and feelings they want to express. I have not come across any new technique developed by Indian artists so far. I wish Indian printmakers had their own imagery. However, skill is a technical perfection, which artists of any nationality should have."  

Naina is not a feminist, in the cliched sense, but her approach to reviewing situations is feminine. Actually this statement is a part of Gauri Krishnan’s analytical study concerning one of Naina’s significant drawings: ‘Despair,’ ink and charcoal, 1987. “The protagonists of this drawing come from the streets, pavements, railway stations and markets. The pedestrian proletariat full of hope, expectation welling with sentiments and feelings are represented here in their ordinary disposition. The harsh and wrinkle faced allude to the labour and uncertainty of their survival. The textured surface shrouds the faces of the common folk in an untimely old age and fear. The cruel realities of survival seem to express themselves through the disfigured, fatigued feet of these untiring figures.”  

Naina has expressed in mostly all the techniques of printmaking and the commendable fact is that - as Jayati Mukerjee points out, “She relates the thematic concept of her work directly to the medium. Using softness and delicacy of etching and aquatint, where the theme demands and textural roughness and harshness in others, where a weary roughness is the concept. Inspite of this, her forms retain simplicity. The negative space is of greater importance in her work, it is alive and vocal. Her work has been steady and according to the availability of material. The use of expert techniques in different methods to express the best through it shows that graphics had been an inspiring medium for her.” Let us have a chance to inspect some individual characteristics of Naina’s prints. ‘She’ - a series of collographs-1985, ‘Humanity in Prison’-1985, ‘Woman and Bench’ - collograph-1985, the later selected for the second Trienniale, India-Delhi, 1986. In these collograph prints, Naina successfully attempts to achieve an image at once rustic, direct, bold and expressionistic while attempting a tactile quality. She builds up the figure layer by layer and changes the texture of different materials to a throbbing pulse of her personal values. In this regard we can refer to her collograph prints ‘Disaster,’ ‘Portrait of My Parents’ and ‘Cry,’ to name a few of her
successful prints. In all these artworks, Naina did her best to achieve some sort of improvement in her printmaking expressive language, through her individual quality concerning both her medium and her message. Sometimes, one can see that the context is portrayed again and again, but we should be fair in saying that each time Naina strove to step forward for some extra meaning or slight adjustment to give the impression of a new imagery's representation, Naina always strives hard to achieve progressive quality of prints while enjoying her rewarding career. Besides, she was often able to create the suitable atmosphere for her projections.

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Naina is one of the prominent participants in the significant camps, which are often held in the major graphic centres of the country, because of the quality of her artworks and her sum of printmaking achievements through the last three decades. In one of these camps, Goa-1987, Naina christened her new theme 'Hope.' This series gave the woman-mother an important role. The masterly handling of the printmaking medium helped to increase the potential rendering of this subject-matter. The dramatic events come to acquire all the virtues of these prints. The most significant event in this series shows the woman as the saviour, portraying as a mother holding a new born baby above the outstretched hands of corrupt mass of humanity. Let us highlight her first print of this series 'Hope-1.' Naina came to efficiently employ her sensitive handling of printmaking techniques enhanced by her expressive aquatint, which enabled her to create a soft tonality on her print enriched with the sentimentality and delicacy of the theme, which helped to impart a deep meaning and suggestive hints to her work. For example, the great figure of the mother carrying her baby, who is shown in plain white, symbolizing the purity and innocence of the new born human being. Naina has this discerning explanation: “This white baby has not experienced the ills of this world. The position of this ‘white symbol’ in the middle of my picture makes the subject more effective. Soon the ‘Vultures’ came to the scene showing their eagerness to eat those people, who are scattered all over the ill-fated area.”

I will accept all these opinions since Naina is closer to her themes. As an outsider and of limited role, I will not venture to judge such eminent artworks. Still, modestly I may hold a different opinion. Due to my limitation, I may find those dramatic themes with such depiction, in some way similar to those tragic performances or I am afraid to say, similar in some way to the informative materials. This is actually one side of the
truth, but when the subject matter is repeated again and again, it would evoke discord. With such repetition, the artwork would assume a mere outlook, tending to have a literal attitude and vocal quality. To my mind, the innovative artist may as well repeat the subject matter in some particular cases, especially, when he acquires a new vision, then trying from the very beginning to expel our old expectation, he would always be able to present something advanced and interesting enough to draw our inner-most appreciation. Furthermore, he tries to cast an irresistible attraction. When the artist has some forward or outstanding projection from the core of his inner eye and his exceptional genius, nobody can say, this is just a mere repetition, or it is without further message, simply because it acquires its own new power and its own glitter without any preceding and dependent relations. Fragile artworks, of course, have completely different attitude; it is a combination of weak and meek sources and also deserves oblivion. On the other hand, genuine and valued artwork will give a jolt in the bosom, capture our sense of fascination, irk us with wonder and awe, suffocate with rupturous delight and by all means throw us into ecstacy. Mere works and familiar projections always fail to elicit any of these rare responses due to limitations within the artist. The artist may be sensitive or not aware about these facts, because he has a great idea about his work and himself as well. He may fight against such kind of faithful and constructive criticism. On the other hand, we see some artists, who are more cautious, but co-operative and open-minded due to the power within.

Let us now approach one of Naina's controversial prints, 'Predators'- dry point 1987.*20 This print has its symbolic message, wherewith Naina, as usual imbibed some dramatic events through her print. The gesture of the hands hiding the face suggests the unfortunate event of an innocent girl being raped. The ugly, brutal and harsh birds - which symbolised the rapists - severely attack the frightened girl and the events creates an emotional atmosphere, which enhances the unfortunate incident and reveal some extra penetrations. As usual, Naina is deeply fond of some particular indicators and symbols. I wish to quote her: "The crude ugly birds are shown coming to attack the 'Victim,' the young girl is encircled by the barbed wire of the society... some norms of the society she has to follow without any question."*0 Here, Naina is portraying in a strict perspective the conditions of women in society. I wish to point out some notes, which may not be very important but there is no harm when we quickly pass through them, such as the conventional and symmetrical composition, showing the girl in the middle of the picture and both hands having the same movement. The barbed wire fence is also depicted in
such a symmetrical manner. To my mind, these simple things will reveal something about how the artist approaches his image-making; there is no need to explain this point. However, the artist is fully free to do whatever he intends, like, or believes. This is fair and completely acceptable to the viewer. On the other hand, the viewer is also free to approach the artwork using his own tools of evaluation and his own points of views. However, my personal point of view is the following: "The real artwork acquires its powerful impact from within and not from its literal indication. In this case, the powerful subject-matter alone will not help much and will do nothing significant; especially when the artwork comes to be meek and exhausted."

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Once again, I find myself referring to Sandip Sarkar - whether I agree with him or not - but I think there is no harm in listening to him; "Her non-narrative approach, away from the cult of abstraction marks her out as a unique artist. Her still-life with an empty tea set on the table after guests have departed, has no story to tell, it is a clearcut composed visual. The imagery conveys some of the beauty of solitude, while to others the depths of the well of loneliness. Here, a woman seems to be preyed upon and the faces of her old people can not be forgotten in a hurry. Through her prints, Naina speaks of the hazards and the joys of living in a post-modern world." Sandip also believes that Naina has deep feelings in colour, both black and brown in chunks here and there, through shades of grey, seeking the purity of light colours aiming to arrive at the white quality, giving expressive atmosphere and creating a multitonal monochrome. Here, he goes further to say; "The linear image dominates all her prints. Her image is surrounded with significant spatial interludes; specially those figurative shapes when masterly forms emerges reassuringly breaking through the defence of formless abstract areas... This precise passing from abstraction to figuration builds up tremendous pressure. The human predicament that she delineates is sometimes traumatic. It is shrewdly angled and the attack always evokes a positive response when danger threatens."

Each element in Naina's pictures has its significant role and its significant depiction, which enriches the whole meaning and reflects an inner quality of the emotional or sentimental expression. The hot noon sun creates unbearable atmosphere - the languorous pedestrians collapse on the grass-yard. Here, we see that the simplicity of expression is marked by certain figures of birds, trees, benches and lonely human beings. These qualities are the core of Naina's career. She also has an adequate faculty and power within; she also has her ups and downs exactly like many other artists. However,
printmaking is a medium. "This medium has lots of possibilities for serious Expressionistic art. I have tried collograph techniques extensively. I could produce very expressionistic images, which I always wanted to express. Here, the immediate result of this medium overpowers the intellectual aspect. Trial-and-error methods are experimental and have already been done during the process of learning the printmaking techniques, so the professional artist knows what techniques to use for that particular kind of image. We learn more by making mistakes and the next time improve upon them."

By the end of the 80s, Naina acquired some new characteristics; she was preparing herself for the decade of 1990s. To enumerate her achievements through these coming years, let us first pick up one of her significant prints, 'Hope-2.' Naina, as usual, changes the places of her readymade elements and inserts them inside her conventional compositions. Let us see the cliche of the white newborn baby and the dead bodies playing their role in the tragic event. In her etching 'Hope-2 1987,' we see the dead bodies are pushed out through the tunnel after the disastrous events had taken place. The mother is trying to stop these events by lying flat on the ground. Naina points out: "See the firmness and confidence on her face. Here also the baby, white with delicate lines shown to express the mother as saviour." This particular symbol of the baby and also this comprehension of the mother-saviour is repeated many times in Naina's depictions as a sort of an ordinary and often used projections, or let say, as a story that has been heard before several times.

As we know, graphic art is Naina's real forte. Her series, 'Disaster' 1990, has grown into a sketchbook full of drawings depicting bodies mutilated, strained, lying helplessly bearing gruesome fate. Naina always loves to go after the dark side of our daily life. Again I would like to share Gauri Krishnan's point of view and her adequate description of all these events. Gauri, who has a deep understanding of Naina's work, mixes her writing with some of nice praise and faithful approach; "The essential theme is destruction wrought by furious nature in the form of a terrible deluge, abetted by the winds and a ceaseless downpour, some of the 'mother and child' constructs in this, drawing remind us of similar situation depicted by Delacroix... The sketchy, broken lines, purposefully mutilated and jagged add pathos to the subject. This is in contrast to the highly linear, attenuated representation of the female nudes or the worm-like treatment of the foliage. The variety of lines in Naina's drawings and its surface activation ranges from the harsh to the subtle and even to the sensuous-meaningfully acting as tools of expression rather than of embellishment, which is the true object of genuine art."
Naina started her fifth phase in the early 1990. By this time, we can feel some new special characteristics in her career. The significant event in this year was the inauguration of her solo exhibition in Cymroza, Bombay. This particular exhibition acquired different types of acceptances, that is because her controversial and paradoxical artwork. However, we do not have enough space to dwell upon Naina's oil paintings. Instead of this, let us approach some of her significant aspects of career in order to reveal more about her individual characteristics. Naina always reflects her reminiscences in her artworks. The foetal representation of the child evokes paradoxical overtones, especially if it happens to be a baby girl. "The same hands of the motherly warmth deprive it from her mother's protective warmth only for her little life to be stifled" just because she is a baby girl for no fault of hers." Naina often depends on her rich vocabulary of tragic events and symbolic indications. In this regard, she eventually acquired the deep expression for her themes. Gauri Krishnan has this point of view: "The artist achieves these ideas and feelings through her bold strong images, which are laden with remorse, pity, silence and suffering. Despite the strength of her images, the elements of drama in her compositions is subdued almost to the extent of silence. It is that silent statement that enhances the expressiveness. Naina has achieved a peculiar balance between the expressionistic imagery boldness with a disturbing silence at the symbolists. Here lies the measure of her originality as an artist." Of course, there are some few prints of Naina that really acquire all the best attributes of successful artworks, while others do not - especially, those of her fifth phase - due to particular reasons, some of which we already identified and later on we will try to reveal all about these depictions.

In the well-organised workshop at Baroda's M.S. University Graphic Department, held in 1994, a good number of prominent printmakers from all regions of India took part. As a significant participant, Naina came with her 'MAA' - 'Mother as Protector," intended to project the concept that: "The mother can foresee the unforeseen catastrophic events coming. Here, she is going to give protection by enveloping them in her 'saree.' Mother Goddess cult is very obvious here." There are some powerful expressions reflected from the faces of these women; the gesture of their hands and the agony of the hopeless features. Let us move from this aspect to another and have an example to illustrate Naina's specific way of depicting her own individual style. To make this clear, let us go through her 'Hope-1' etching-1987, her painting 'Disaster' 1990 and her 'Mother and Child' woodcut, 1993. Then, let us have another look at her etching 'Mother' 1994, just to see the same mannerism in all the faces of these works.
Sometimes we find some sort of typical way of depiction, which Naina often follows, when she wants to give a kind of progressive outlook to her faces. We should be aware about Naina's artwork 'Medium and Message,' to dispel any misunderstanding concerning her 'Time of Life' career - we tried our best, however, to do such difficult interpretation and we tried to adopt a fair approach.

The instinctive existential world of Naina is tense and direct, even though incomprehensible, abstract projections of the psyche emerge through her vision. In this regard, Kamla Kapoor comes to give us a deep insight of Naina's artwork, revealing some new points. I find myself agreeing with the maximum of her point of view: "Naina's apocalyptic vision remains unconvincing and her apparent attempts to transcend the anguishes are unconvincing and her apparent attempts to transcend the anguish of human kind, or more likely woman kind, fails to touch the raw nerve it ought to. Also, for an artist, who has been painting for more than three decades now and whose formal technical base and draftsmanship are evident, there is an unbargained technical futility, to some of her work and somewhat fledging vision to the images and problems tackled that are inexplicable."38

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Several months ago, I talked to Naina about some major points concerning her artwork. Firstly, her extra-tragic themes were depicted in such manner of catastrophic, reminiscent and interior themes. Secondly, I drew her attention to her mere and conventional way of building up her composition. And thirdly, I talked to her about her repetitive attitude, which overcame her artworks. I gave a few actual examples and pointed to some particular prints to substantiate my point of view. My intention was to show my friendly approach and to present a free-of-charge advice. Amazingly, when I examined her response to my point of view, I found it completely different from mine. Furthermore, Naina opposes my friendly remarks upon her artwork; I can easily visualize her negative commentary on my above mentioned points through the following verbal projection. Naina states in fully self-confident words: "To put it in simple words, the main concerned character 'The Mother' is given a central space. There is no conventional elements as far as I can understand. In all my compositions, I put the main character in the centre. Birds of prey are the symbol of cruelty. They need not be seen as just flying creations. In 'Hope I' painted version also the mother holding the freshly born child is placed centrally. Here, the heads are scattered on the ground. Still the mother is the centre of the composition."39
Naina says that she puts it in simple words and that is good enough to encourage us to acquire the same virtue to do so. Naina insistently demands to put the main character in the centre. It might be a mere attitude to go for those poor delineations of such symmetrical compositions, just to put the protagonist always in the centre. This attitude will not help much. Besides, this is the easiest projection of such artwork at ease. I am sorry to say it is difficult for me to accept the above-mentioned statement by Naina. It is very easy for Naina to select any of these readymade titles, which are more effective and more dramatic and to fetch very quickly any tableau for her projections in order to convey her tragic delineations. This is not an up-to-date attitude. Such projection nowadays is completely out of focus and even pushed out from the margins. Let us look at the new era, which is about to come very quickly. How can we enter the 21st century with such delineation and such frozen ideas - I am talking in general - so this should not concern any particular artist, we have many examples here in contemporary India, but I am optimistic enough to say that the Indian artist has a splendid future. I guess so.

Each one of us has his limitations. I find it better to say I can not do this or that. Only a few of the Indian artists behave according to their real qualifications. The rest are trapped in their narrow surrounding stage, they often boasting, but have only an ordinary talent, they are always looking for great expectations, but never be able to acquire the genuine quality of art. On the other hand, we find the story of Naina is quite different. Naina came across many aspects of life, some beautiful, some ugly, some happy and some sad. For Naina, life being a reality, one can not escape from it even if one wants to, life involves youth and old age, birth and death. “These I try to express on canvas. My approach is emotional rather than intellectual. By exaggerating colour or by distorting the drawing and the form, I try to attain fullest expression of what I wish to say.” In fact, Naina has a long history of consistent efforts, a vast range of respectable experiments, so it is not strange to see her grasping some prominent prizes and winning a good number of awards. However, during the last three decades, Naina received many invitations to participate in the Annual Exhibitions of Graphics organised by the ‘Group-8’ and the Central Lalit Kala Akademi and also the regional centres of Lalit Kala Akademi and other societies, such as Bombay Art Society, 6th Triennale - India, New Delhi, 1986. She also participated in many art exhibitions abroad in London and recently in U.S.A. Let us open some historical pages concerning Nain’s career. In 1964, Naina held joint exhibitions with Ratan Parimoo in Bombay, then in 1966 in Delhi. After that she started her solo exhibitions in Bombay 1973, 1984, 1986, 1990. And in Ahmedabad in 1981,
1988, in New Delhi in 1982 and in Calcutta in 1989, to name a few. However, recently she also held a successful exhibition in Bombay, 1999 and she is planning to hold her retrospective show in the autumn of this year.

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Amazingly Naina has a good number of art lovers (I am one of them), appreciators and also highly intellectual and interested art critics. Anahite Contractor is one of those, who had significant point of views concerning Naina’s artworks. “Naina’s painting ‘Flesh of my Flesh,’ 1990, is one such work, wherein the antiquated mother and child theme is reincarnated into contemporary relevance. It is a characteristic representation of a hardened protagonist, whose motherhood is depicted in rather strident terms. The anti-heroic 20th century stance is dramatized to advantage here, as it is in other works as well. The pink of the child’s skin evokes an eerie foetal quality rather than that of tenderness. The painting portrays a peculiar fierce kinship between the two figures discarding the conventional mother-and-child snugness and overriding it with existential terrors.”

Let us have a little break; then prepare ourselves to know what Sandip Sarkar has to say about Naina’s delineations. I think he has fascinating points of view; he believes that we will never find in Naina’s prints, anything vague as well as nothing that is given to decorative flourishes, and furthermore, everything is done with a decisiveness of a military campaign. “She makes everything appear very easy, but making the complex appear simple is very difficult. There is natural rallying of support, where the going is getting tough, while reinforcement is rushed, where the composition shows a remote sign of structural failure. She does all these complicated things with style, this shows the adequacy of her technique. These qualities and aspects of her lovable personality separate her from her contemporaries, particularly from her peers in Baroda. Her audacious skills are suitable and submerged and attractive; lovely to the discerning.”

This awareness of Naina’s prints enlighten our understanding of some further aspects in our task.

Naina has played a significant role in the Baroda art scene since the mid-60s and whatever she has sincerely presented; both in prints and painting are truly faithful and profoundly expressive. It is just like the waves of the sea, sometimes powerfully welling up high and at other times abating low to a modest performance, yet retaining its innate beauty and grandeur. This eminent printmaker has done very well in her career and her prints are of special and individual quality, as such she should be rightly considered as one of the leading printmakers of contemporary India. However, we may find the
depictions in some of her prints controversial or conventional, but those shortcomings are amply overcome by the magic of her skilful hands and masterly delineation. More importantly from her sincere and spontaneous approach to the medium of printmaking; one can feel that graphic art is in her veins. She fully devoted her life for this art. Some of her prints are quite striking or at least interesting, as some are of ordinary delineation - that is not a problem. In all cases, we find her work coming from her inner faith and noble personality. Once she told me, “I consider myself as any beginner in printmaking.” However, this brave attitude and true modesty are the inherent characteristics of an eminent artist. I should stop here, expressing my admiration of Naina’s work. In spite of all ambivalence, the faithful and humanist Naina has a wonderful printmaking oeuvre.

RINI DHUMAL

Rini Dhumal belongs to the second generation of printmakers of Baroda. She started her career in the 70s, being one of those printmakers who had the efforts and ideals of the pioneering printmakers to support them. She is one of the few printmakers, whose graphic prints are sensitive and expressive. Devoted mainly to printmaking, Rini has made use of all the four graphic mediums with equal ease; with a feeling of relief one realizes that she does not permit her technical excellence to be wasted as perceived by some art critics. The beauty of her prints lies in the tension between the artist’s feeling and responses to the world around and the science and rigour of the art of printmaking. And when this tension is resolved according to the intention of the printmaker, we have authentic prints. This concept is very clear for Rini from the very beginning of her printmaking career; in fact, it is one of her basic doctrines. Another basic doctrine is that, Rini’s prints are an extension of the thought and not the ‘thinking in images’ like others do. Jyoti Bhatt, one of Rini’s teachers, knowing much about her inner motivations, “Rini’s work expounds in colour and modernistic altitude; a poetic sensibility that gravitates on human conditions, both sociological and psychological and psychic with a sharp accent on the internal and external cares and concerns of the human female. Her works transcend into innermost chambers of soul to bring plastic exposure along the pathways of colour and line to such deepest feelings that have a habitation but no name.”

Rini was born in East Bengal in 1948. After her graduation in Painting (M.A. Fine), Baroda 1972, she was awarded a cultural scholarship by the Government of India under K.G. Subramanyan in Baroda 1972-73 and under Somnath Hore, Santiniketan 1973-74, followed by a French Government scholarship under S.W. Hayter and Krishna
Reddy at Atelier 17 Paris, 1975-76. About these activities, Rini has this to say, "I became interested in printmaking while I was still in college. It is only in recent past that artists the world over had become fully aware of the potential and latent possibilities of this technique. Paintings, not just those of greats like Picasso, Hussain, Bendre, Bhupen Khakar, but even those of comparative newcomers, costs the earth today. Therefore, their acquisition is limited to a rich few. This is where the printmaking technique proves beneficial and matches the buying power of middle-class."²

Nostalgia and experience are the ground from which her ideas emanate. Her understanding of numbing routine and ritual and the yearning for self-renewal make Rini a perceptible story-teller. Her works attain a lyricism with a touch of pain and disenchantment. She successfully brings a subtle, painterly quality in her prints, which in turn enrich her technique in other media. Rini’s work reveals an interesting versatility with some of her etchings replete with an amazing amount of energy in them, while others capture stillness so quiet that one could almost feel it. Rini says: “I often use metaphors to convey my message that the woman’s world of flamboyance and sensuous charm is but a remote landscape of a bygone era.”³ Let us go further to grasp more understanding; with great finesse, the artist stops her women short of explosive limits and goes about her task in a more intellectual manner by linking the figures in areas of varied colour through a suggestion of the drama of the mind-act. May be the suffering of woman is at the core of her artwork, but the treatment is far from sentimental. The irregular forms emerge out and fall back into elusive colour-soaked artworks. The artist reveals her strength in the distortions to the human figure; especially the female faces, which are not of the fashionable kind. They arise out of our deep conviction.

To reveal some aspects about the structural quality inherent in her works, Rini asserts, “The midnight children were very privileged indeed. And also because I came from a very liberal Bengali household, my parents did not have any objection to my idea of joining art courses. But many women in my age were not able to make it to the art school because the stigma was still there. Being a woman, I do not resent the fact that there are biological differences between man and woman; a sensitive female artist will certainly sense this. My past experience, my empathy with women, who are living on the edge of society and marginalised, bring that intensity to the female figures in my pictures.”³

Her Baroda student days under a stalwart like K.G. Subramanyan, Sankho Chaudhary and Jyoti Bhatt shaped her thinking. Subramanyan, for instance, encouraged
her to find her own identity and image. He maintained empathy with each student. He never forced his own philosophy and encouraged individual character. His interdisciplinary coordination encouraged her and her colleagues. They saw him get into so many mediums aplomb with profound conviction. Rini grasped the proper and creative approach to start her image-making. Her early works were organic in the sense that they showed mythical landscapes chaotic in appearance, she generally overlapped them with grids to impose an order and integration on the space. These landscapes slowly evolved into human forms in the environment and in her later works culminated into a single human form in isolation. By the early 70s, Rini did some lively lithographs. There are a few refreshing qualities in these prints, which are characteristic of her works. The onlooker may get a doubt whether it is a painting or a print, as much as she maintains all graphic qualities in her paintings too. She wants to depict the trauma of womanhood in her works like many other artists before her. She has used the woman and bull quite often in her work. The bull stands for dominant male principle symbolizing the masculine, aggressive male bent on squashing female resistance.

In fact, there is something rugged and earthy in her style, which yields a natural evolution of emotions. I am afraid, her style bears a prominent provocation of sensual devices. An example of this aspect is her lithograph 'Disintegrated Figure,' 1974. This print may reveal some of Rini's earlier printmaking qualities; a good example here is the lithograph 'The Landscape Beyond,' depicting a woman symbolically carrying a dead bird, which itself signifies a strange resignation to a sad fate and loss of freedom. Amazingly, we can see this sensitivity and a lot of it hidden in Rini’s heart, to use it whenever she likes; Her works encompass all the important events - be it personal or universal - such as childhood, Indian womanhood, struggle for existence, also the young girls who look so helplessly fragile, none of them beautiful, yet this quality of stillness, or pathetic wide-eyed wonder may reflect a mysterious beauty, if we take into consideration Rini's wonderful colour scheme, colour richness as well as the colours utilized. When we examine all these qualities, we find that Rini has perfect mastery and great awareness of the importance of colour qualities.

Most of her work looks, like movements, snapshot photographs, as if characters have taken time off to pose carefully for that particular picture and will go after the shutter has been clicked. Here, we can see that the human spirit that predominates her work carries the sensitive note of poetic intensity, demurely lyrical and progressively provocative enough to evoke metaphysical equations. Human relationships and
situational ethos are expressed in all their intangible complexity. Anahite Contractor has taken a graphic viewpoint on this issue. "In Rini’s style, one observes consistently, a tangible ruthlessness towards form as in the nonchalant vigour of the neo-expressionist. The female protagonist is almost omnipresent with her myriad sagas: a bereaved one, an existential victim, an unhappy onlooker or simply one who reminisces about the futility of mundane living."4

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Rini considers her paintings as an extension of her prints. Apart from being extensions, her path of self-discovery and her attempt to come out of herself relate to the world beyond. She thus shares the yoke of her subjects. Rini also admits it has taken her many years to understand this medium. She has defied the popular belief that technical excellence is the key to good printmaking. Her curiosity to experiment and her innate self-criticism have got her a long way in freeing herself from any conventional process and the impact of any particular style. Rini works spontaneously rather than working with a preconceived image in mind. She prefers to develop her works as she reaches completion. It is amazing to know that she has a peculiar way of doing her image-making; with enthusiasm she attacks her works and this helps her to obtain an imagery, which is rich, intense and passionate and it is this approach that sets her apart from other established artists. She conceives her subjects by taking inspiration from daily life and happenings around her. She grasps the events and the lively images, these will be kept in her inner faculty; she then projects whatever is suitable to her artwork using the third eye to create her successful prints.

Rini reminisces about the interesting times of her student days: "At Santiniketan, the whole atmosphere was so different from Gujarat; the people, activities, Tagore’s philosophy guided us back to nature and the Indian Fundament. At Santiniketan, I worked under Somnath Hore, who introduced me to lithography. He was a great master. Later on, working at printmaking in Paris gave me a different entry and media to work with. Being away from India and experiencing life on my own was invigorating. Instead of responding to people and conventions around me, I could now find myself. Working at Hayter’s Atelier 17 guided by Krishna Reddy was very important."5 Krishna Reddy had a philosophic attitude towards life, which probably came from his days at Santiniketan. He was full of dynamism and was very fascinating: it was he who said that colour must speak to you In fact, he took this concept from Nandalal Bose that it was one of the dominant factors, it must have a certain lyricism. His colour intaglio with its viscosity,
tonal nuances and surface build-up had much in common with painting. The scope was enormous and quite challenging. Rini has been aware about all this. Rini reveals some further aspects concerning her Paris phase. In Paris, the whole sense of aesthetics and life forces were dynamic. In the seventies there were many artists and studios there. Rini explains, “I was able to see great works of art and shows. Certain undercurrents and influences over-absorbed into my work. Art to me is a universal language and therefore one’s right. Art should have a life of its own - one with a certain degree of permanence, which portrays the feel and flow of life with all its coloured nuances and subtleties - a life lived to the brim. A certain ‘playfulness’ permeates my works and portrays a deep inner psyche of the female, its joys; its traumas. The language is sensual, not merely cerebral. It has to have an instinctual relationship with nature and the world around us. Today one speaks of negating aesthetics - but can aesthetics ever be ignored? Can it be wiped out from this world, which is so varied and beautiful?”

While in Paris, Rini got the chance of a lifetime - to acquire the viscosity technique under her guru Krishna Reddy. Since then she started using the viscosity method of simultaneous colour printing and was particularly interested in the warm-cool juxtaposition of colours through this process. All the same, Rini finds viscosity technique especially suited her temperament as a painter and printmaker. The whole process of expressing one’s idea in a graphic medium is a constant search and discovery. Rini’s passionate interest in printmaking led to interacting with other printmakers all over the continent and under the guidance of masters. Those were the two most memorable and revolutionary years of her life. Some of her enduring friendship with fellow printmakers was also forged during this period. It took her only few years to improve and utilize her powerful faculty of absorption as well as understanding of the potential and distinguished task of printmaking as an evocative language of expression. Rini, yet, was able to attain both the medium and the message of this wide-ranged realm. Here, she shares with us her outlook: “Though printmaking is technique-bound, it does allow for imagination and freedom like any other art form. Each medium demands a different approach and a good artist knows how to be able to speak in the language of the medium. I particularly enjoy printmaking as a group activity for the spirit of camaraderie that it affords. For this very fact, a bunch of artists come together, work and interact, exchange ideas and views.”

Though Rini is, at core, a painter, printmaking is always close to her heart and imagination. She wonderfully mixed both in her projections.
Rini works on her plate with painterly and also with masterly gestures and when finally printed in the viscosity process, the harmonious interaction between her spirit of attention to detail, the paper and the process of printing help to build a meaningful image. In fact, the viscosity process allows Rini to maintain the painterliness of the colours, which are important in her work. Through the overlapping of reds, oranges, blues, etc., and textures, she creates prints, which exude energy and are lyrical as well. Her prints in colour are not for mopping out surfaces or serving as decorative embellishments. The colours from the delineation form the motif it contains and carries with it a symbolic connection. There is an attempt to follow the intensity of the moment as well as compulsion to reach an orderly harmony and this medium meets the demands of such polarities. Rini can easily explore her wonderful process and make it possible to reach the threshold where a fusion takes place. Her painterly vision takes on a tactile splendour, which turns into visuals, like musical motifs. Rini always examines her tools and has often gone onto experiment in various printmaking mediums and has always gone onto the possibility of printing in black; especially in her linocuts. But she is more fond of colour viscosity technique. Lithography has also attracted the attention of the artist because of the facility it affords to draw spontaneously and the fresh and rich colours superimposition the medium perfectly.

Rini has an outstanding individual style of colouring and giving life to her surfaces and lines. Sumati Gangopadhyay commends this quality. “Her colours run though Polaroid filters, sometimes they cut through traverse lines, surrounding themselves to ligament knots or traveling through cruciform fibres in digital sheaths. Flowing lines, longitudinally arranged, are seen in a state of flux as they reach for the neutral crests or they fall quietly into descending night shadows, becoming rich colour nodules. The concentric layer emerges luminous. Granular or engraved in mood textures by fragile and arched lines, the surface is precariously held by these shredded colour membranes.” The quality of silence can be discerned in some of Rini’s work - the moment evokes the transformation of earth into a metaphysical entity in the human imagination. Her proficiency and meticulous regard for the textural surface can perhaps be attributed to the training she received in Paris. There she gained an understanding of this painstaking and laborious medium, which demands both precision and ingenuity.

Rini deeply believes in her guru Krishna Reddy’s statement: “Involvement is the key, involvement is rather a quest, about the world, about colour, about people, about space and involvement in the materials, plate, tools, acids, aquatints.” By this time,
Rini came to realize that the technique is secondary to her work. She believes, instead, that every artist just cannot ignore the inherent quality of the material itself. Each printmaking medium demands a certain way of execution and the tools are at the artist’s disposal to pick and choose and create his image so that the outcome can be aesthetically beautiful. As a result, both the printing and the image are equally important. Rini creates her images through her tools and processes. Though she has no preconceived image in her mind, she often uses textures and tools like burin and also applied soft ground to build up the plate ‘the image’ in consecutive layers. She scrapes, burnishes, and at times, even totally wipes out whatever has been done on the plate and starts again. She is always in constant effort and trial and error process.

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Her prints; especially lithographs between 1973 and 1983, are considered to make up the first professional phase in her printmaking career. Particular original aspects characterize these lithographs, for instance, they reveal her handling of colour and texture as well as her ability to depict the human form in the context of their emotion, moral and social elements. In ‘Adolescence’ c.1975, Rini has perhaps reached a rare level of simplicity and freedom. She has always drawn her inspiration from suffering woman - that does not make her a feminist but a woman; she is naturally aware of the inner trauma of the female psyche. She also does not confine herself to one single subject, but transcends to include a view of humanity in general, both of which she renders with a sense of compassion as well as wit and humour. Her strength lies in the fact that she does not distort the human face fashionably, but rather with a deep conviction in mind.

Rini’s colour lithographs can be rightly considered as a fine example of this medium, which has the capacity to produce brilliant results, if used effectively. Rini explores this medium to its farthest extent using her wonderful process of colours, which overlap, juxtapose and slash each other; creating textures and colours in addition to a tremendous variety of tonality and movement. Her lithoprint ‘Disintegrated Figure,’ 1974 is one of her early significant examples done in this medium. This powerful, semi-abstract, black and white composition shows the powerful rendering of expressive patches of black and gray brush strokes to create a contrast through the architectural figures and constructive indications. The semi-human figure in the middle of the foreground has an important position because of its boldness and its strong communication with its surrounding.
Rini rightly describes the pictorial language in her works; “My images deal with myths and dreams' images from the real world and the subconscious with symbolic references, e.g., flying females, which to me are associated with sexual desire, trees, fruits, birds, etc. The female is not dormant but vibrates a latent power....when I start on plate it is rather spontaneous, just with a general idea like a head and then I let the plate react to what I do. As the plate develops, I begin to think about colour but I do not usually think about that until I have completed the work on the plate.... I pull proofs frequently, when I see that the plate is ready for printing. I try many different colours and only after pulling these proofs, do I decide on the colour for editioning.” Rini successfully utilizes her talent for perfect handling of the pictorial shorthand and abstract and semi-abstract delineation, which are far from mere depiction of reality or nature. Yet it can be an evocatively rhythmic with a nervous sensitivity towards the edge of things whether intrinsic or swift, continuous or broken, selecting and suggesting infinitely more than its tale in actuality. Rini’s lines convey an energy and life of their own; they have a calligraphic quality and are activated. Her abstract expressionist inclination seems to suit the rather nervous, restless rendering of forms moving, turning, growing and disintegrating by themselves.

All her works have an under-play of mood suggested by colour. The language she employs is essentially lyrical. The variations of her colour scheme with its attractive combination and expressive values flowing through the composition reflect a certain charm and proudly show its originality, talking the supreme heavenly language of fine art. The viewer can be enchanted by the magic of her reds, turquoise, greens, blues, burnt amber and charcoal gray. These combinations of outstanding colour schemes yield their magic formula through these layers. Their textures and tonal modulations are embedded in earth colours. The overriding emphasis in Rini’s prints is technical and formal, unlike most Indian prints that are symbolic or in some way, cultural in origin. While this emphasis would seem to suggest a closer affinity to Western work than to Indian, one does not have to be in India very long to see colours like those Rini uses, pecking out from behind peeling paint, or on worn paint applied to brown mud walls, intense powdered pigments against dark blue-brown skin, or flickering light emerging from the blackness of night.

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In Rini’s etchings, fine black lines go the abstract way instead of being of a concrete form in ‘Reflection’ 308 and ‘L’Orange de Printemps,’ both done in 1976. It is
interesting to note the potential of the abstract in printmaking, which is being explored by artists today. Etchings and lithographs especially have been linked in the mind with landscapes and monuments or with the powerful figurations of Albrecht Durer, Rembrandt and Goya. In this regard, we need to highlight her impressive etching ‘Reflection,’ which depicts interesting rocky landscape. Rini uses the deep etching of the lines and depicts the tremendous beauty of the solid strong surfaces giving them a spiritual quality. We can observe the meaningful reflections showing the roughness, the ancient colouring of huge rocks with some lines to create division and the dark areas revealing the deep weathered cracks, which allow the seeping water to take its trail through the hard rocky paths and harsh surfaces in order to reach its destination seeking to unite with the river nearby. The colour is vibrant, but soft, conveying the stillness of the water and the emerging light blue colour of the river, revealing the charm of the straight line, which divides the two areas, looking towards the narrow passage of water, connecting and yet dividing both the qualities of the watershed and the lofty dominating rocks. This print as well as the other one ‘L’Orange de Printemps’ reveal the core of Rini’s etching qualities of the mid-70s.

Rini’s sensitivity as an artist is portrayed in her etchings that either convey the energy and life of a movement or stillness. The ‘Silver Bird,’ 1980, is one of her well-known prints - catches the bird at the moment of take off, expressing its potential power and strength through the outstretched wings and rapt attention. It is worthwhile here to go through the quite relevant comments by Sandhya Bordawekar, who points out at some important aspects regarding Rini’s prints in the early 80s: “Rini is fond of depicting rocks, but in a style vastly different from that of Dakoji Devraj. Works like ‘Between the Rocks,’ ‘Rocks and Figures’ and ‘Under the Rocks,’ have a quality of timelessness about them - the muteness of centuries. The ‘Stillness of Hunt for Prey amongst the Rocks,’ which won the third prize at the All India Exhibition of Drawing and Graphics at Ahmedabad in 1981, is of a different kind, portraying the breathless moment just before the predator pounces on the prey.” Going further through her intaglio prints to examine her ‘Two-faced Head’ 1983, ‘Coal Miner’ 1983 as well as ‘Lady with a Bird’ 1984 - all of them are colour etchings done in a similar mood and comparable rendering. By this time, Rini starts to put oranges against blues with a slight reddish-violet touch. This colour emerges from areas of overlap. This emphasis would seem to suggest a closer affinity to Western work than to Indian. However, Rini is influenced by the impressionist’s colours and those of Kokoschka, Jawlensky, Matisse, Krichner and Dufy.
Thus, her colours are always fresh and rich. As an advanced step in her etchings, Rini uses the viscosity in order to create a kind of painterly, rich and vibrant outlook. A good example of this process is her colour viscosity 'The Man' 1983. Rini gradually got a proper understanding of the core of printmaking as well as she seems to tenderly and serenely absorb the surrounding stimuli into her emotive mind and into her body.

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By this time, Rini acquired her proper place as one of the leading artists of India today. Hereafter, being awarded with gold medals became a routine and several such awards made a modest collection. She was the recipient of gold medals awarded on behalf of the Chancellor of the M.S. University, as well as the Governor of Gujarat. That is an honour for her excellent prints. Later, when she had just completed her French scholarship in 1977, she won the 'Group 8' award. About this time, her artwork had been already selected for the four International Biennials, viz., Madrid 1976, France 1979, England 1979 and 1980. 'India in Prints,' was yet another international competition held at Amsterdam 1983, which has been one of Rini's worthwhile accomplishments as a basic participant. All these selected art activities are a token of her wide-ranged printmaking achievements.

Rini likes the indirect way of expression: she has her secret process and a wonderful recipe for making the borders between her various figures, things and moods blur or vague. She plays in a masterly manner with light and shadow values, density of colours and textures. Her intellectual action coexists in a multi-directional and sensitive way with these figures. When Rini comes to depict something from nature, say, flowers in vases, we see that these flowers assume a life of their own, while her sky looms with nearly personalized creatures among and within her. When approaching her figures, we can see fragments of her imagination as well as fragments of nature with trees, birds, animals, insects and undulating hillocks participating in an entwined relationship almost on equal terms.

As a powerful painter-printmaker, Rini confidently strode into a new phase, marking a turning point in her fulfilling career between 1984 and 1990. During this period, her prints acquired some kind of magic touch, which effectively made an impression on Rini's creative approach to innovative printmaking. This happened when her talents were spotted by Paul Lingren, professor of art at San Diego: "Lingren came to India – for the next time - in 1984 and organized workshops in Garhi Studios, New Delhi, Madras, Trivendrum, Santiniketan, Calcutta, Hyderabad, Bombay and Baroda, to select
prints executed by Indian artists. He invited her to the workshop in USA. Incidentally, Paul Lingren, who chose Rini for the festival workshop, was in a way responsible for a revival of this art in India. Lingren had organized these printmaking workshops and over a hundred artists joined his workshops to learn and refine their knowledge of printmaking processes of relief, intaglio, viscosity, collograph and embossing. Without exaggeration, one can say that printmaking came of age in India following these workshops.

Rini held some good and significant solo exhibitions between 1985 and 1990 – some in India and the others abroad in Chile, Frankfurt and some other Western country. During this period, Rini was granted or awarded the following. She continued her Research Fellowship till 1985 and won AIFACS Awards in 1985 and in 1988. In 1988, she also won another prestigious award, viz., the National Award from Lalit Kala Akademi. It is rather difficult to enumerate Rini’s activities and accomplishments. As far as her workshops are concerned, she either conducted or participated in many high standard worldwide workshops such as the one conducted at San Diego State University, USA in 1985.

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At this juncture, printmaking medium comes to be her process, which, “offers immense possibilities of methods for artists to choose from: lithography, silkscreen and woodcut or photography. Each medium has its own special attributes and a print lover knows equally well how each print is executed just as a connoisseur appreciates good food. The most important aspect of a print is its originality.” But before going further, it is worthwhile to approach Rini’s own concept of this medium: “Prints are not mere mechanical reproductions; they are the artist’s direct response to the medium and experience. The serial nature of prints permits an artist to see and record the development of ideas, figurative or abstract. The technique is only an instrument to communicate ideas and experiences with an equally convincing visual vocabulary. Its language, form of lines and textures.” In spite the medium, the colouristic variegation and textural variety used in building up the surfaces and exploring the linear graphic possibilities are her concerns. These enable her in bringing printed images at par with painting. Actually Rini thinks her prints acquire the spirit of her paintings. “Graphics is a process, which is as involving as painting. The final result gives me a surprise, even though an image had already been built..... As a printmaker I was so involved with the treatment of surfaces all the time, working with needles, scrapping, viscosity, burnishing. I like to build my paintings too,
layer by layer. I learnt to value surfaces when I worked with Somnath Hore in the graphic department at Santiniketan.”

Rini’s prints of this period, especially her lithographs that dominate her exhibitions of the mid-80s are worked in multi-colour as if they are painted lithographs. The themes are an admixture of human faces and some other tiny creatures like birds, cats, fish or in many cases bulls, angels and also flowers. “These lithographs are very evocative portraits, most of them are studies of angular, worried faces. ‘Caged’ 1985, is a sensitive work, a figure of woman juxtaposed with a bird; the faint lines of squares implying the net-like structure of the cage. The colour strokes are applied as if it is a painting and it gives the portrait a sense of volume and an extra-dimension and painterly gesture. The human figure has also a prominent place in her new work. Earlier the space was shared with other creatures. But till recently birds were a significant feature. Rini’s woodcuts are dramatic in their effect.” The freedom with which Rini handles colour and texture in her lithographs and her effortless interpretation of human forms in the context of their moral, emotional and social beings, show a mature artist’s deep involvement with the art of printmaking. The technical excellence that marks most of her etchings has excelled itself in ‘The Angel’ and the ‘Coal Miner.’ While one is affected by the emotional impact of the re-interpreted forms, she can not help wondering at her cool mastery over the technique.

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Being a female artist, Rini feels that in a way she has to accept that a woman’s progress is a little slower, but in the end, the experience that she goes through is more intense and worth it. Recognition will come in due course. The fears, traumas and elation that she has experienced will eventually come out in the work. Looking at her prints made during this period, especially the years of 1987 and 1988 and particularly in her lithos and etchings, we often find that these works have been executed with rare sensitivity. Perhaps there are only a few printmakers in India who have shown as much skill in polycolour prints. I think it is better here to quote Roshan Shahani’s point of view regarding this matter. “Rini’s rich eye-dazzling prints with her tragic-faced heroines are subtle variations of a type. She suggests the stance of child-brides and waifs, aristocratic witches and stoic shamans. The sense of being encased in ornamental drapery, or enclosed in a protective maze, is strongly evident in her oeuvre that has little or no breathing space. If it is a charmed world of a woman’s private dreams and feelings, it is, simultaneously, a shared universe of fantasy and play. Rini consciously seeks the
participation of every kind of viewer. That is why perhaps, she works so hard on the deep romantic gaze, which catches the eye of the distracted spectator quite will. Emblematic representations do not preach or prescribed the strident morality of feminine independence."

Mentioning some other aspects we can say: the human figure inhabits the print, the dark brooding quality both emerging and heightened by the colour field. Rini’s greatest asset is her draftsmanship that provides the underlying structural strength combined with her powerful composition. Yet Rini attains a free flowing line and form that is almost expressionist in quality and rare in printmaking, which by its very methodology precludes any spontaneity. V. Shaw gives some examples to reveal these potential qualities of Rini’s prints. “In some of the later works, the feeling of darkness and disturbing nuances gives way to very direct statements as in ‘Adolescence’ 1987, where we see a bolder, brighter and confident female; a very rewarding debut. The elongated rendering of the neck and the eyes reminds one of Modigliani’s characteristics. ‘Adolescence’ is made a young woman, showing imprints of Picasso’s portraits of Francoise. And in her print ‘Images’ we see the various colour tones constitute the subject. The lithograph of a ‘Woman’ with inflated bodies is shown. In a way the piece speaks for artistic skill in acquiring the effects. The etched surface in her ‘Pundit’ showing a bald headed man with a lilac on his forehead becomes very charming and effective.”

Rini’s printmaking exhibitions of this period of the late 80s suggest that the hand of the graphicist is very much in evidence in the prints she executed for her shows. Exuberant colours subtly orchestrated, exciting textures and an overall discipline of line and form that can most powerfully be projected in her graphics. This may seem like interpreting her work with hindsight, but that is the impression. Shivaji Panikkar reveals here some further significant aspects of her image making: “Despite the medium, the colouristic variegation and textured variety in building up the surfaces and exploring the linear graphic possibilities are her concerns. These enable her in bringing printed images at par with painting. This prediction of the artist, probably also explains the disinterestedness in a medium like silkscreen printing, as the flat areas of colours do not suit the requirement of the artist’s intentions... The spontaneous linear articulations in Rini’s are invariably subsumed within the viscosity of the activated coloured textures. The overall textural blanket completely envelops the pictorial space, endowing a muted and mellowed effect, dashed occasionally by brighter colour relationships are essentially
functional in terms of expressionistic mood of the print and each particular composition can be observed as having its own special, particularized colour relationship." Shivaji also believes that the case in print is the way the exterior and interior relate with each other in colouristic terms. For him the adequate example of this process is Rini's lithograph titled 'The Darkness Within,' 1989.

Let us acquire a closer approach to Rini's prints. Here, it will be worthwhile to go through some of her creations, we may come to brass-tacks and mention her painting of this period 'Temptress' 1988, which shows an almost classically drafted woman endowed with wings. This image suggests that Rini often goes beyond her general theme and is not inhibited by it, thus her expressive manner is extremely effective. Rini never quit her innovative attitude.

Let us consider the complimentary highlights of Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni who finds Rini's exhibition - Gallery 7 Bombay 1988 - wonderfully Parisian in its charm with an altogether different verve and panache, "Hayter would have been very happy today to look upon the work of his charming Indian student." Nadkarni also interprets Rini's prints and gives examples: 'Portrait-2' is a part of a series of portraits and heads, which show off Rini's talent. Here, it is someone who despite having hair like a girl, looks like an Elizabethan boy - a clown complete with floral collar. That this image should occur to the artist is a tribute to her readiness to flavour life and to the innate poetry of her temperament. Other distinctive works include the lithograph 'Juggling with life,' "Rini likes play and juggling and clowning, I am sure. 'Red Painting with Figures,' and the superb lithograph 'Spirit of Play' shows a girl with a horn 'a phallic symbol?' and a butterfly around. 'The Cat in Between,' 'Woman and Bull' mixed media, 1987, the latter is my favourite. Here is a woman wherein half her profile is shown rather like a Roman goddess; her hair is a sort of ponytail, with a bull charging from behind. Then there are, 'Antique Dealer' and 'Living with the Past.'' Rini often uses masks, particularly in her latter prints. Here a largish canvas is successfully tackled. Rini's images always spring from her preoccupation with the female psyche. She makes clear that she is not conscious feminist. But as a woman, she is naturally aware of the inner trauma of the female psyche; so we see that the great thing about her work is that she is not only gripped with this trauma but also interprets it lucidly and with precision.

Rini strives to portray the whole gamut of human emotions that range from defiant attitudes, sexual passions and frustrations, which betray an inner mortification of tussles within the self. She achieved this attitude with enormous vigour and rectitude,
via a ‘less is more’ pictorial convention that is expressive for precisely this reason. Kamala Kapoor explains this quality of expressive reaction as follows; “Rini could have, for instance, chosen to push the ‘action’ and ‘trauma’ within her work to explosive limits. Instead she chooses to contain it in essentially static pictures that succeed in articulating emotion dilemma and pathos, through seemingly impassive faces and frontally posited figures drawn with a poignant, telling distortion. It is the eyes inward looking, remote and never meeting the viewer’s gaze that give the game away. They look out and yet look within - repositories of infinite pain and sorrow. It is also the tilt of a head, the stump of a shoulder and the occasional pictorial metaphor seen in change satanic apparitions and angelic ones lurking mistily in the background.”

Rini’s metaphors, however, are seen in the human and animal hybrids that impinge oppressively on the figures and in the more familiar ones of birds ‘signifying freedom’ or cats ‘signifying domesticity.’ Her men and women largely devoid of extraneous description look much the same except for the women being endowed with a pair of unattractive breasts.

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Colours are obviously the doors to Rini’s world. They sort out the emotional pitch of each work and underline its resonance. However, before we go further, it is better to mention that she preserved her professional and individual qualities in her colour schemes and processes on the one hand and on the other, she always looks further up to add or explore or discover something new and to grasp further advanced techniques to serve her ambitions creations. By this time of the late 80s, Rini started using soft blues and grays, tinged with pinks and yellows, that surface through stabs and sweeps of black that outline her figures, but sometimes fiery oranges and flamingo pinks flame through as well. In fact her masterly handling of materials, especially colours through a scrim of scratchy cross-hatched lines and slashes that textured her painting with an effect that is reminiscent of her graphic delineations. What is new here is that these processes are extensions and affirmations of her journey of self discovery and her relations with the world outside, Rini shares the human predicament of the subjects.”

Rini, in fact, delights in playing with materials used in her mixed media, particularly in her velvety sensuous pastels and smoky charcoals, which she uses more freely than her acrylic paint, water colour and pen and ink sketchy images. Her mixed media print ‘Peace and Aftermath’ 1990, may be a good example of this tendency.

Rini’s lengthy career in graphics, particularly in colour lithographs has had quite a complete and spontaneous impact on her paintings. Perhaps it is this transition, from
graphic to paintings, that invites a very special attention to her work. However, the most arresting part of her images is the shifting emphasis from the pictorial result to the pictorial process. In other words is on the emphasis achievement of a kind that lifts the figurative content from sheer representation of emotional states, to the presenting of certain auras of suffering, of tenacious, stubborn states of being women, children and groups. Roshan Shahani has some significant observations concerning her artwork of the 90s, he finds out some: “Certain symbolic forms like the angel or Satan, the cat and bird and bull may have been introduced with their full and literal meaning dominating the picture, but Rini manages to jump clear of too much narration and devotes herself to the art of drawing and colouring suggesting boundless possibilities. She used reed pen, crayons, dry pastels and colour pencils in a random mix to forge a sense of measureless depths. Every painting has its own surface texture and colouring. There is little or no context or even yet the figures fill the frame with the ‘sensation of their story.’ Morbid memories, existential fears may happen to be communicated as immediate signals, but the technique makes itself felt forcefully to draw attention to itself.”

Rini’s prints comprise lithographs and etchings highlighting human relationships. Most of her figures of man and woman are symbolized through an amalgam of human and animal forms, ‘Woman and Bull’ etching, 1987 is one of these good examples. The sensitivity of a figure is revealed through sinuous lines. It is the bold lines that heighten the effects in her work. Let us take the example of Rini’s lithoprint ‘The Devil on My Head’ 1988. Here, the strange composition of the beast and the woman’s face, is the expression of the heavy impact of the Indian social norms over the working women. Rini is one of those Indian artists who know what they are doing and do it well. Her concerns seem to stem from a resolute feminist stand. Expounding on the diverse roles of women in society, her psycho-sociological evaluations and occasionally ‘Invisible Wings,’ reveal a deep empathy for dialectics concerning her own sex; interestingly the seductiveness of vision notwithstanding. She maintains her direction whereby even the fantastic or the spectacular might be flushed out in terms of economy.

It was 1988, when Rini was compelled to go back to painting, because the possibilities in printmaking were endless, with exciting options like silkscreen etching, lithography, intaglio, viscosity and woodcuts. She believes that the printmaker should stop somewhere. In fact, she worked at printmaking for such a long time that there seems to be, now, a real distance between her and the person that really influenced her long time ago. Rini reveals something about these early influences “Krishna Reddy used to literally
sculpt his plates while making a print. I like to do that too, though my style is separate. But I had to go back to brushed. In fact, I prefer painting on board rather than canvas because, I can really give a hard surface and also the depth of texture I want.\textsuperscript{150} Interestingly, such depth is best achieved in her treatment of background and in the dense, black criss-cross or scrim of the eyes of her figures. She depicts women in various situations and attitudes of pain, melancholy or introspection. The women’s figures in Rini’s painting, though they are sad and anxious, express an unbent, willful sense of determination. They dream, contemplate, fight and watch silently, but they do not give up. In this regard, Sumati Gangopadhyay points out, “Moreover human relationships and situational ethos are expressed in all their intangible complexity. Rini is always concerned with the inner journey of the mind, the wrench and the suffering of those with lost worlds. ‘Faded Landscapes’ draw her attention and motivate her to paint moving images of the human situation. Something in the synthetization and fantasy seen in Gauguin’s vision after the sermon and Van Gogh’s spirit of tragic consciousness might have inspired Rini’s artistic cues, even though her themes remain most quintessentially drawn from the reality around her. While Rini does not believe in messages or intellectual analysis of the world around her, she believes that art can undoubtedly become a means for ‘personal salvation’.... In her paintings Rini succeeded eminently in tracking man’s journey ‘From here to Eternity.’\textsuperscript{21}

Now let us go back just a little in time, before the 90s. During this period she was experimenting with various methods and multimedia, modifying her style to fasten her ambitious strides to enter a new glorious phase with her innovative attitude. For two years Rini was preparing for her significant exhibition ‘From Here to Eternity,’ New Delhi, 1990. It is worthwhile to know that her high spirit of the early 90s is devoted for gaining the secret wisdom of its subtle, tactile nuances, which she uses with tremendous inventive energy as can be seen in the following works executed in 1990. ‘Peace and Aftermath’ as well as ‘Looking on at the Angelic Landscape’ both are mixed media on board and the wonderful acrylic on canvas paintings ‘Fantasy-2’ as well as ‘And the Goddess Appears.’ In these paintings, we see a deeper understanding of the languages of painting by using different kinds of mediums and the rendering of the figures and other elements through the canvas areas projecting her powerful individual compositions, creating something special, splendid and captivating. Most of her figures are dramatically poised and distanced from each other despite the close physical proximity. By this time,
Rini has witnessed tragic death in her own family and had watched the shifting light of the changing circumstances. She has stood through this crisis and now reflected afresh on the changed reality of the world around her this resulted in a lithoprint, which is the most deeply personal and troubled depiction. The scene shows a deathbed, which expresses her feelings at the time of her mother's death. The title of the mentioned print is 'The Darkness Within.' It is a universal experience summed up in essence by the glowing, golden figure that the dying person looks at. This expressive artwork will be with her for good; it is a part of her intimate history.

"When I saw Rini's group of paintings and graphics 'From Here to Eternity', 1990," says Sumati Gangopadhyay, "I remembered the great novel 'Pather Panchali,' out of which was born Ray's famous trilogy, a poignantly narrated story of 'Man's journey through life.' It encompasses all the important events such as childhood, Indian womanhood, struggle for existence, family, joy, intimacy, love, sudden and tragic death. Even though Rini's work has no conscious and direct link with Ray's trilogy, the human spirit that dominates her work carries the same sensitive note of poetic intensity, demurely lyrical and progressively provocative enough to evoke metaphysical questions. Moods are built in Ray's films, often with music and environmental symbols. The poetry of torrential rains, wild reeds on desolate moonlit river banks and swaying tree shadows in the dead of the night are all part of his cinematic vocabulary." Though Rini has been deeply impressed by such moods and environmental symbols, yet her paintings stand independently to express human moods through the complex labyrinths of colour, light, as well as figures, gestures and shadows. However, a private mythology is woven around Rini's forms that are familiar but are decontextualized. A work in itself might not always seem credibly important, but has to be viewed in terms of continuity, the continuity, that is of one form of expression to another; from one level of feeling to another. In this regard, let us refer to her lovely colour lithoprint executed in 1990, titled 'Winter Turns to Spring.' This print is one of Rini's depictions in the workshop at Udaipur, under the American professor Charls Stroh.

Approaching further aspects of Rini's prints require going through some particular concepts since art will remain not merely a dazzling geometry of forms or even an involuted pattern of images. Each artist has his own lingo; one may wonder what is to the uninitiated eye, lingo of the artist. Impressioned, furious or tormented, however imperceptibly felt.... Formal values have been part of Rini's painting perception since a long time. Essentials are sought after; so is a fierce outlet for well-constituted inwards.
The female face is a metaphoric scope for emotions, experiences and the ongoing process of the every act of existing. Through the years, she has come to obtain further substance, originality and also some specific characteristics in her artworks. In the following statements we will try to point out some of them “Rini’s prints recall the powerful graphics of Kathe Kallwitz. But although they stir us in some strange way, one of the angels may be the angel of death or of the madness with which the goods visit men in the moments of their fateful folly.” Art for Rini is an ascetic conglomeration of weight, density, light, colour, besides form, image and content of course. Anahite Contractor, points out to fairly new characteristics and highlights some special moments of Rini’s career. “Rini has renounced the exalted regions of emotion and excess. For her, the nourishment of a painting is enhanced through an escape from the magnificent and a return to passive subjectivity. That is to say, images are manifested through a complex metamorphosis of actually existing through shades and fantasia. In Rini’s expressions, figures are seldom proliferated on a singular plane; rather, they are made to relate to others on different types of art making in a multiple continuum. Together, they form an abstracted nexus, a relationship of parts, vibrant and open to interpretations.”

The third phase of Rini’s career started around the year 1992, when she started participating in a number of social societies that held exhibitions, such as a ‘Wounds’ in Calcutta and Delhi, 1992, Arts Acre, Calcutta and ‘Nest for Sparrow,’ Bombay, 1992 and ‘Helpage Auction’ Bombay 1993. In this particular year of 1993, she participated in five more exhibitions: ‘Indian Painting, Germany,’ ‘Clays Painting, Madras’ and three more exhibitions at Bombay, New Delhi and Calcutta, the significant ‘All-India Exhibitions,’ ‘Art for Cry’ at Bombay and New Delhi, 1994. During this phase of the 90s, Rini held some important solo exhibitions such as at Gallery 7, Bombay and Sakshi Gallery, Madras, Bangalore, 1992, Galerie Brita Printa, Madrid, 1993 and two exhibitions in 1995, in Gallery 7 Bombay and ‘Art Today’ at New Delhi. Rini also participated in more than seven significant workshops of painting and printmaking here in India.

As Rini was enjoying the potential and challenges offered by various artistic mediums she thought of trying her hands at clay for instance. It did not mean that she wanted to work in ceramics round the clock, she only wanted to extend her pictorial images into this medium and this is a new aspect of her prolific career. Rini entered this revolutionary third phase by going directly for large background black and white linocuts. She returned to print with a new vigour, the most important aspect being the size
and colour. The contents of these works of the early 90s are not in any way a diversification of her paintings. Sumitra Kumar Srinivasan in her article ‘Journey into the Psyche’ points out: “Rini’s recent large black and white linocuts are particularly powerful. Sober figures board in landscape where life thrives in an organic frenzy. Rini breaks free from the stillness that dominated her earlier style. Here the male and female figures radiate a power that is superhuman. Rini continually stretches the potential of printmaking, an art form less valued in India. She successfully brings subtle painterly quality to her prints while they in turn enrich her techniques.”

The above mentioned qualities emerged powerfully from her relatively recent linocuts ‘The Magician’ 1992, part of an ongoing series. Rini later on executed some other powerful black-and-white linocut such as her print the ‘Play’ 1992 and also her poetic print ‘The Visitor’ also in 1992. This angelic and fantasy picture acquired an originality - partly imaginative partly fantasized - besides being interesting. This composition is full of lyrical movements and an example of masterly rendering of the vital figures as well as expert powerful handling of printmaking medium. From then on we can see that the medium belongs to her will. I think, these large size linocut prints are quite exceptional and perhaps matchless.

When talking about Rini’s artworks, one cannot talk about the conventional methods concerning the process of either painting or printmaking and furthermore, those elements, which are required for powerful compositions. She passed her own rules of creating compositions. One can easily smell the high quality of her prints at the very first quick glance of any of her outstanding prints. Between 1990-1995, she strode forward to reach the peak of her printmaking summit. She still reigns there now. Now, let us accept Rini’s invitation to her ‘Play’ and go through it, to see that black, proud and naughty looking cat stretching its body in the foreground, emphasizing its performance in this atmosphere. Now, look at these gestures, as well as these meaningful indications; you will discover certain novel features inherent in Rini’s exquisite printmaking; the human faces reflecting a special kind of suggestive expressions. The background that is made up of tiny houses, creates a very rich atmosphere. However, these are not houses, but a part of the theatrical and expressive scene. In this play we can also see a mask of an old man held up by the black faced girl and the mask of a devil just ready to be used by the white faced woman. The meek black birds are busy searching for some seeds to eat. The superb atmosphere projects charming beauty and unforgettable quality of art appeal to entertain the art lovers. Looking at the feminine appeal of the seated girl with her imposing breasts.
captivates our sight and creates a kind of pantomime performance, holding us spellbound and making us crave for such really creative artwork. Getting just a quick glance at these black and white linocut prints leaves the viewer entranced with a sort of magic mingled with tenderness and pleasant surprise. It might be right to say that it is not easy to cope with such a captivating spell and magnetism. It is not easy to unravel the secrets of Rini’s superior talent and it is almost hard to conceive all her creations. Furthermore, her outstanding artworks - in some cases - exceeded our expectations and are beyond the reach of our sight and insight as well.

I think this is not enough to highlight Rini’s linocuts prints, there are still some significant colour prints in linocuts such as ‘The Red Print’ 1992, ‘Landscape’ 1993, ‘Untitled’ 1993. In all these outstanding prints we can see the special characteristics of Rini’s way of projection through her inner eye with all her sense of originality and her high creative approach towards her work and also with all of her inner faculties. However, it is my opinion that ‘The Red Print’ has lesser artistic value than the other prints mentioned above. Instead of pointing out the reasons, let us move to her wonderful ‘Landscape.’ In this print we enjoy the colour scheme, which reflects the core of the colour combination’s beauty coming through the lady’s figure, elegantly touching her fruits and teasing her bird while flattering her fingers and playing with her hair friskily then jumping to that lyrical background to create a free gift of unique and highly valued colour qualities. We may never have seen such trees, hills and skies through our rather modest normal sight. We should ask for help of our insight combined with our faculty of art appreciation to get the proper perspective on these outstanding innocent yet highly intellectual prints. We hope to be able to grasp or conceive some of its radiant beauty. It is no exaggeration that it is beyond our reach to make an analytical study of each print in Rini’s vast repertoire of wonderful prints. Yet we can mention that the delineation of her other linocut prints ‘Untitled Ones’ are also of great significance and they acquired the same quality of the powerful rendering and that special characteristic quality of her high standard depictions. Let us enjoy looking at her prints and expel all other demands.

“Rini continually stretches the potential of printmaking in India. She successfully brings a subtle painterly quality to her prints while they in turn enrich her techniques in other mediums. Her multi-faceted creativity and aesthetic sensitivity have contributed to the high regard in which Rini is held in the contemporary Indian art scene, she is re-energizing her work with a deeper passion and releasing her female protagonists from their paralysis of will. They are now turning wistful dreams into a potent magic realism
where they are free of their self-imposed letters. Rini's gawky, stiffened figures are somehow soft, vulnerable and static. They seem as if suspended in poses and gestures of listening to and feeling what is in them and what comes from outside. Reality blends through her images as well as with the landscapes of fantasy and mirage. 'Dream' is one of Rini's moving pictures. In 'Haunting Images' mixed media 1990, the women are seen singly and sometimes in pairs and groups accompanied occasionally by a man. She presents this woman as a dual personality as she does in 'Between Darkness and Light,' 1991. Here, the woman is subtle and charming, but beneath the surface is her dominant self, which wants to control the whole world. She is also very much in love with life, its lights and shadows, smiles and tears.

Rini has a critical attitude towards her artworks, Sumati Gangopadhyay keenly reveals some significant aspects concerning this issue: "Each print is a deeply felt experience for her, but after the completion of a series, she likes to look at her own work with objectivity and critical detachment, what a time gap readily provides. She considers this as a very important experience in relation to her work. Her commitment to printmaking as a serious art form is admirable in its concern, for she considers it the only human way out to reach the people who, appreciate art but can not afford the usually exorbitantly priced paintings. Otherwise, 'a large class remains deprived of important aesthetic experiences'..." For Rini, it is a healthy sign when a printmaker takes to sculpting, experimental techniques of painting such as mixed media processes. The interaction between various mediums will make the artist wiser. The old rigidity of only one medium no longer holds up. After all, most outstanding artists of history were multifaceted, e.g., Leonardo, Michaelangelo, Picasso, etc. So there is no harm in comparing artists working in several mediums. Exploring the new mediums is the required goal for Rini. "The variance in medium poses no threat to the innate stylistic strength. In fact, this possesses the original quality and richness of Rini's artworks in painting, printing and ceramics that reveal an austere quality of encompassing both robust and fragile at the same time, it reveals the rugged and earthy in her style, which yields a natural evolution of series of emotions, both personal as well as universal. A palpitating, tremulous spirit dominates the earth-bound."

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It was in 1993, when Rini started working on very large surfaces. Simultaneously her preoccupation with printmaking continues and much of her paintings are currently done in multi-media or acrylic-on-board as well as glass. Meanwhile, Rini is also
fascinated with painting on glass, noting that they bring a newly found viscosity and unpredictability of the end result. There is some kind of attractiveness in handling painting on glass. We should bear in mind that the luminosity obtained in painting on glass itself made her want to use this medium that is otherwise not familiar to many artists. But Rini has inner motivation to use it. She eagerly, yet spontaneously entered this field and perhaps in certain cases - with an equal ease as in her paintings. In 1993, Rini participated in a group exhibition of Glass Paintings in Madras. However, I do not think that Rini has very great interest in glass painting because she partly stopped this activity by the end of the same year. She only wanted to try her hand at this activity like her veteran guru K.G. Subramanyan, who has achieved quite a success in this field and claimed fame abroad. But it is fair to say that Rini will never quit this activity easily, she may return back with vigorous efforts.

Rini will not give up glass painting without getting its advantages. So she makes the glass painting respond to her requirement and demands. In fact, this particular medium has helped her loosen the 'tenor favour' of her paintings, which enable her to give a new dimension and an advanced quality to the surfaces of her paintings different from those textural qualities that are clearly visible in her earlier paintings, in which subtler sensuousness and eroticism are palpable. One also feels Rini's deeper passions and the sentimental hidden quality, which are revealed only through her powerful configuration of compositional elements. "Her current paintings in general indicate that a quieting of surface texture could lead to a greater painterly depth. There is now tremendous assurance and ease in juxtaposing figures; elements of landscape lush flora and fauna. The organic interplay of energy between figures, subjects and their preoccupation with figures in isolation from highly turbulent, textured surroundings."  

Rini's estranged figures and images ravaged by the excesses meted out by the uptodate, formulate a composite order. There is a recognizable, tangible pattern from her searching vision. Rini's images seem to maintain a common deposit with those of contemporary artists. Searching always for new horizons, she has the love of experimentation and discovery: "Painting with 'glazes' was the easiest way out to translate coloured images onto tiles. This led me to the series of ceramics titled 'Earth Fired' 1994" However, I also wanted to probe into the clay surfaces. This led me into experiences with coloured slips and transparent glazes. The possibilities of incisive lines and textures into the soft clay was quite exciting as I could relate graphically to this
medium. The search is never ending but these experiments might lead me into something else.  

However, Rini’s experiments with multiple mediums have helped each other. They all have the same concern for relationships. For instance, until recently Rini was thinking that with a medium like silkscreen printing, the flat areas of colours do not suit the requirement of the artist’s intentions. But because of her participation in many workshops, she came to realize that she was wrong because her colleagues did wonderful silkscreen of high quality without any flatness or any other handicap. When Rini changed her attitude towards silkscreen prints in the early 90s, she stated of this phase: “There is a misconception that silkscreen can not be a very creative medium of expression but to me any medium is creative if the artist acquires a significant expression within the frame through colour and line and the transparent psyche.” Rini believes that the printmaker should partially take to other mediums and not stop making prints, but make a courageous effort to bring prints into the mainstream of art.

In her exhibition ‘The Image in Print,’ New Delhi, 1995, Rini exhibited some of her successful silkscreen prints executed in 1992. ‘My Room’ is one of her best examples, this picture has some special qualities concerning its rich colour with its lovely and graceful attraction, such as the figure of the handsome woman with her meaningful gesturing hands. Then we can go through the mysterious features of her nice looking face revealing the secrets of her inner feeling and solicit the viewer to probe further and use both his sight and insight to understand such an outstanding work of art. But what about that strange brown-blue colour surrounding the woman’s wide eyes? I think there are many items, which are hidden by a sort of mysterious magic and this is the specialty of Rini’s prints, some of these mysterious projections can not or should not be revealed. May be that is because this is the captivating quality of Rini’s artworks. Rini knows all about these special qualities and this attitude is one of her individual characteristics. However, still we have more to say regarding this beautiful print ‘My Room’- we can feel the loneliness as well as the speechless dialogue between the woman and her flower vase, which may create yet another story. Let us have a look at this round table placed against the large sky-blue window and what can we say about that lonely yellow ochre getting its position against those ranges of violet background. Slashes of medium and attractive green and some dark-red browns here or there, play hide-and-seek, appealing to the eye. The superb rendering of these prints reveals the painterly quality of her prints. Rini always has the proper handling of the both mediums - be it printmaking or painting and
we should realize that Rini blazed a new trail for herself, she is able to execute her prints with the spirit of printing, for this reason we find that her substance is quite unique and her prints are outstanding.

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We are going forward without mentioning the 'other side of the coin.' What about these two poor silkscreen prints of the year 1992? Let us step down to see Rini's odds and to be far away from her odes 'The World at Her Feet'\textsuperscript{14} and 'Of Fishes and Animals.'\textsuperscript{15} The last print is one of Rini's poor rendering of figures - it has rarely happened - the other elements are already executed without passing through her keen and skillful hand. Nothing is extraordinary here, only the mere projection carelessly done without any serious intention or endeavour for attractive outlook. It is as such 'The Black Sheep of the Family.' Just compare this print to the rest of her silkscreens or lithoprints and you will find it unlike that of Rini's quality. 'The World at her Feet' is also another poor print in her printmaking career. 'Of Fishes and Animals' is, in fact, like an undesirable worthless coin. Strangely, we see in this print a poor rendering of the two faces. Such confused combination of disintegrative features are an eyesore, inasmuch as they are hardly related to the other elements in the picture. Here, we can easily discover the poorly built construction and poor delineation, as if Rini bade good-bye to her powerful and steady figures. I think the viewer will suffer physical disturbance when looking at such rendering as that of 'Of Fishes.' There are some confused and ugly elements pushing forward and dominating the foreground position, only to reveal their ugliness in front of the two human figures. This kind of out of focus prints might have been executed hastily and carelessly, with abandon and indiscretion that are not typical of her innate talent and original calibre. Such unpleasant augury could shock the faithful viewer, who may not betray his true feelings, but just a few words of his feigned compliment may pass to satisfy Rini. I will not agree with those that consider this prominent artist as an infallible super-human. Such an attitude is fatal and will lead to regression on the part of the artist. Deceiving the artist with fake compliments and false flattery mixed with hypocrisy is one of the deadly diseases afflicting the contemporary Indian art and even art criticism. Between exaggerated praise of certain artists on one hand and the unfair denial of some particular artists on the other, there is little art appreciation of a serious nature. I will not go further simply because this is not what we are looking for. But I must mention what I have experienced here in India in the field of art criticism, being close to some prominent artists or at least to their intensive artwork.
for many years. This position gave me the chance to put my hand and examine many things that are of great value for me to enhance my research and also enabled me to grasp some of the interesting and rare characteristics and behaviours concerning those prominent artists that are included in my Ph.D. research. We will not expel talking about the unpleasant print 'The World at Her Feet,' wherein unfortunately we may face some of Rini’s ugly looking projections and some uncomfortable and devalued depictions. Here, the organs of the female body as well as her both hands, legs, the left foot are weakly depicted, they shock the eye by their poor rendering, nothing attractive or captivating like the rest of her glorious artworks. However, some peculiar features may be found on the female’s face, but there is nothing left to be said for the poor background to give the viewer some kind of consolation. Look at the mad gesture of the ‘tubercular leper woman.’ She has nothing to do with the prestigious title ‘The World at Her Feet.’ The roguish and undesirable position of the man’s head rudely pushes itself to acquire a silly position in the poorly rendered foreground. Alas, what can be done with such a collapsing piece of a failure print? I will not probe further to search for the reasons, which make artists like Rini rely much on their prestige to exhibit whatever they like without utilizing their intellectual power of self-criticism. I do not think that merely a couple of failed prints should affect her great number of wonderful prints. These two prints will be minimized, then joined together only to be just as an attractive mole on Rini’s acute, polite yet shyly cheek. She has an innate motivity to create an exceptional artwork. She also is an object of envy to many of her colleagues, especially in Baroda, yet she does not care much.