CHAPTER I

A CAPSULE HISTORY OF MODERN ART IN INDIA

Beginnings, be it art or science, have often been a matter of contestation. There is no brief history still that could establish the beginning of time. Same is the case with the beginnings of modernism in art whether it is East or the West. The older text books on art negotiate with the term “modern” referring back to early Renaissance in Europe where Giotto is seen as a revolutionary for breaking with the crude Byzantine style of medieval times. His major break and contribution lies in bringing the technique of drawing accurately from life, which brought the European notion of “modern” close to the classical Greco-Roman concept of imitation. Throughout Renaissance until the advent of Romanticism, (which revolted against the hegemony of classical ideals), the concept of “modern” found its major associations in the classical/realistic tradition. However, with the passage of time the word “modern” assumed different and often contradictory meanings. It meant as much a thing of now as it became a thing of the past. Moreover, it also became possible to perceive art not as a linear and deterministic progress but rather a fluid and circular phenomena, which unlike West, is generally considered very much central to eastern/Asian thought and sensibility. It is interesting, for instance, to bring in the element of contingency and shock while referring to different events of European modern art. The naturalistic realism, which, more or less, guaranteed the modernism of Renaissance to break with the perspective-less traditions of the medieval past was, with more force and explicitness, deconstmcted by the analytical cubism, the most articulate point of 20th century modern art – questioning the forward looking avantgardist stand of modernity. As we know between Renaissance and early 19th century Realism, (both sharing the ideals of truth and accuracy), the nature of art saw many shifting points of discontinuity and contingency, for instance, in the moments of the Mannerist intervention
and Baroque accesses. Similarly, in India we can notice how Rajput painting deviates from Mughal realistic/naturalism and assumes a more idealized and mannered outlook. At a certain point it may also seem a matter of discontinuity to see Rajput painting closer to Safavid (which was the main point of departure for Mughal painting) in its love for pure lines and color. The shifting positions of revivalist and anti-revivalist stands shared by the artists of Bengal School further enhanced the complexity of the evolution of art. In its early phase the urgency of finding an indigenous alternative to the Victorian academic realism assumed a nationalist ‘revivalist’ tempo, which was subject to serious criticism. And later the students of Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951), the founder of Bengal School, in Santinekatan preferred the immediate and empirical over the historicist oriental sense of Indian modern. The story of art as a non-linear and considerably conflicting historical discourse becomes more complex in the failures or myths of modernism deliberated in the postmodern theories.

Comparatively, if the sense of ‘modernity’ is generally attributed to Renaissance Florence (c.1400-1600) for encouraging an impersonal state, urbanism, individualism, and objective approach to nature, then it is Mughal India (1526-1757), roughly of the same time, for anticipating similar values. It is difficult to understand ‘why this burgeoning ‘modernity’ in Mughal India failed to take firm roots.’ Whether it was the Hindu caste system or the monarchy of the Mughal court for restricting the dissemination of ideas borrowed in exchange with other developing civilizations ‘modernity’ in India was subjected to a snail pace as compared to the Europe. However, the open-minded and pluralistic approach of the Mughal painting, especially in history painting and portraiture, shares some of the major concerns identified with the classical/realistic values of Renaissance art. In the same vein later Rajasthani and Pahari paintings strike a deep chord with the western Romanticism for sharing concerns like epic legends of romance, lyricism, a sense of immediacy and individualism. One of the major reality checks for Indian art was during the
colonial era where the direct exchange with western culture replaced the Mughal Rajput naturalism with Victorian illusionistic art. The highly ambitious patronization and strategic policies of dissemination devised by the British Raj was one big thing, (the one thing that Mughal lacked) which prompted the local artists to adapt to the new genres like oil portraits, naturalistic landscape and academic nudes. On the other hand this direct contact and access to the foreign influence gave rise to the construct of nationhood, which anticipated a nationalist movement of resistance and colonialism. “The period is characterized, as the noted art historian Partha Mitter states, “by a dialectic between colonialism and nationalism and the construction of cultural difference in a rapid globalization of culture.” The local artists or ‘native artists’, (as they were initially called to segregate from the elite) on the one hand found sufficient avenues to make a living and on the other hand felt disconnected from their own heritage. With the passage of time the rise of national movement triggered a certain sense of discontent for illusionistic art and artists once again, but this time with a sense of anxiety, turned to the pre-colonial indigenous past. This seesaw between the tastes, genres and influences is characteristic not only of Indian art but, more or less, of the whole global art scene of the nineteenth century – a zeitgeist. At this point of crisis it was Raja Ravi Verma (1848-1906) the most successful academic artist who came to the rescue by providing a different and more articulate perception of ‘modern’.

The recent developments in Indian art criticism anticipate a more complex and open-ended position of modern in India. Ravi Verma’s contribution for assimilating western technique to articulate Indian subjects by means of which he constructed images of gods from the epic mythological text was suddenly perceived as ‘modern’. Verma’s paintings gained a huge national popularity partly because he was able to cater the sentiment of the masses by painting theatrical presentation of Hindu mythological subjects and partly due to his ingenious marketing strategies for starting a printing press in Bombay in 1894,
which made it possible to make as many copies of his paintings as was demanded. And soon mass-produced oleographs got even more multiplied in the form of bazaar prints and calendar art anticipating new methods of cultural dissemination, and the fact anybody could now have access to art, is tantamount to the Industrial urban ambition of modernity. Verma’s major contribution and fame lies in his history paintings of ancient Indian epics and classical literary works. He meticulously learned the Victorian dialect of salon art, especially the skill of oil painting, and articulated Indian subjects, which are both conspicuously different from the western cannon and at the same time convincingly modern. The hybridity of his art was at one point criticized for being ‘kitschy’ and unspiritual but now seems to have come a long way to be addressed as a possible choice in the general paranoia of nationalism and modernism. The position of Amrita Sher-Gil (1913-1941) as the first Indian modern may be claimed on the basis that she returned to India after being groomed in the mainstream western art world in Paris known as the Meca of art. However, it was not her immediate contemporary movements in Paris that she choose, but instead brought the influence of Post-Impressionism and in a certain sense re-enacted Gauguin-Tahiti with the ‘poor, downtrodden’ and ‘silent images of infinite submission’ of India. She identified with the Post-Impressionists not only in terms of formal language but also in their passionately nonconformist lifestyle and destiny making her a fitting example of a modern rebel. Sher-Gil’s position is also of considerable importance in the feminist context of modern for leading an individual and purely professional life in the world of patriarchal chauvinism. In 1934 she returned to India after obtaining training at the famous Ecole-des-Beaux-Arts, Paris. Born to a mixed Sikh-Hungarian parentage she became a living emblem blending East and the West. There was something about her enigmatic personality and the fact she choose Gauguin’s influence, one of the legendary heroes of European modern art, out of the host of mainstream styles and movements like Cubism,
Expressionism and Surrealism. And her sudden death in 1941 has made her the most remembered legend of the Indian modern art history. In her brief career, however, she incorporated post-impressionism idiom with indigenous traditions like Pahari and Ajanta by which she arrived at a pictorial solution to the everyday of life of India marking a considerable difference both from the European influence and the local Bengal School.

It was the emergence of Santinekatan in 1920s that Indian art attained some kind of solemn repose and commensurability. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) being its main architect who devised the educational formula of art practice that was adherent to the laws of nature. He talked about the art manifesting human contact with the nature/environment, which European art of the time was more or less disenchanted with. It was Nandalal Bose (1882-1966) who, especially in his landscapes, realized the dreams of Tagore for bringing art closer to nature and nature closer to art. Tagore’s initiative was remarkable in the sense that the school realized the inevitability of the departure from the revivalist historicist temperament of Abanindranath and the urgency of the relationship with the local and the immediate – the reflexive nexus in which art and its environment can grow into a mutually enriching relationship. In this way, particularly in the works of Benodebehari, art was rescued from the hypothetical idealized space and became as real as the empirical experience. The extensive experimentation of Ramkiner Baij is another aspect of Indian modernism symptomatic of his cubist-expressionist contemporaries in the west and its future in the avant garde of Bombay progressives. The gulf between individualism and institutions is one of the important aspects of modern art in general, which finds its specific examples in the diverse stands taken up by artists like Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari, and Ramkiner Baij the ‘reigning trinity’ of Indian modern. In the midst of the demands of Santinekatan for a definite collective identity the official ‘national’
The position of Nandalal is often contrasted with the more individualistic departure from the cannons of institution towards future. Rabindranath Tagore was more radical in his experimentation than Sher-Gil for paving the way towards higher aims of modernism. Tagore’s painterly intervention in the mid-twenties anticipated the surreal expressionist idiom of free associations where scratches, scribbles, erasures, and doodles transformed into fantastic melancholic primordial forms. At that time no other artist of India enjoyed the serious attention of European intellectuals as Tagore’s art works did, partly due to his legendary reputation. And partly because of his radical imagination for expressing his unconscious obsessions with a sense of awe and mystery, which was strikingly reminiscent of his European contemporaries like Paul Klee and Max Ernst. Tagore’s profoundly personal style is attributed to what came to be defined as ‘erasures’ erupted from the game of creating shapes out of crossed-out texts, which interestingly makes a dialectic link with his discursive scriptural engagement of a prolific poet. In other words, if one feigns to speculate, Tagore’s conscious and prolonged engagement with the production of text suddenly demanded explosion of images – which attained a concrete and plastic presence in the form of human and animal forms. He needed a break from the controlled formal restrain of the writer and seek some kind of refuge in the subjective and spontaneous release offered by the act of painting. His art, however, finds a better license in the European art released in the event of Freud’s discoveries of the subconscious/unconscious, which triggered experimentation in children’s art and automatic drawings.

One of the most exciting moments for modern art movement in India is the December 1922 exhibition in Calcutta. With the help of Tagore, an International art exhibition was organized where the works of some of the very important Bauhaus artists like Paul Klee, Kandinsky, Johannes Itten and others was put on display. It must have been an overwhelming experience for the
Indian artists to get to see the original works of western modern art. However, this event added more to the rising crisis between the disconcerting dichotomy between global and the local. On the one hand the rising national resistance movement was gearing up and on the other hand Indian art was getting more ambitious in realizing global modernism. These seemingly conflicting aspirations, the global modernity and national identity, remained the most inevitable preoccupation of the twentieth century Indian art.

The individualistic stance attributed to Rabindranath Tagore and Amrita Sher-Gil was further discovered in the primitivism of Jamini Roy (1887-1972). Roy’s development came a long way to find a distinctively individual aesthetic. He had to brush shoulders with various styles ranging from academic naturalism, Impressionism, and Chinese wash painting until he rescued himself from the enchanting of European idioms of art and found his raison d’être in the Bengali folk painters. Taking a break from the mainstream influences Roy absorbed and imbibed the unique characteristics of Kalighat painting. The astonishing simplicity and deftness of Roy’s work was initially motivated by the art of Kalighat in its result of the special handling of the pictorial form, the sense of volume evoked by the use of shade and light or the skillful linear treatment of form. Later out of his swadeshi impulse he abandoned foreign art materials, like oil painting, and turned to indigenous earth colors and organic pigments. And due to the rising anxiety and the ambition to identify with the national/modern he renounced Kalighat painting for being liberal, urban and colonial and turned to village scroll painting instead. His long journey of art with consistent discontent is suggestive of the modernist aspirations for individuality and distinctiveness. It shows that his interest in folk art had a bigger reason and deeper implications than merely stylistic. As Sanjoy Mallik writes about Roy’s position in relation to his efforts to work in the manner of craft guild of folk artists and yet reflect his work is quite distant.
Although his [Jamini Roy’s] pictorial style does remind us of the folk conventions, his urban self proclaimed itself over and above it, in the way in which he remodeled and restructured his sources. The vivacity of his references often turned into disciplined and highly refined schema that stands at a remote extreme from its source.  

1940s is marked with the significant upsurge in the radical experimentation in Indian modern art. With the exemplary and extraordinary individualism of Sher-Gil, Rabindranath and Jamini Roy as progenitors, Indian modernism geared up in full swing to move along the global forces of art. The Calcutta Group was formed in 1943 in the midst of the catastrophic trauma of Famine and pestilence. The main members of the group were Prodosh Das Gupta, Gopal Ghosh, Nirodh Majumdar, Rathin Moitra, Prankrishna Pal, and Paritosh Sen. The Group’s ideological stand emphasized an ambitious yearning to seek their formal and stylistic solutions in the western art. Instead of looking backwards for indigenous sources they sought inspiration from European artists like Van Gogh, Matisse, Picasso, Braque and Brancusi. The Group’s anthropocentric stand abandoned the old gods and goddesses of epic classical literature and replaced it with the ‘supreme man’ as the protagonist of their aesthetic expression. As far as the Calcutta Group’s general approach towards the west is concerned, they were not unlike other Indian modernists for aiming at a modern aesthetic, but their art could not negotiate beyond formal and stylistic concerns. Nirodh Majumdar was the first artist to receive a scholarship by the French government to visit Paris in 1946 and Paritosh Sen is the only Indian artist to have met Picasso.  

1940s/50s is also significant for locating the earliest events of modern art activities in Kashmir. Such was the influence of these Groups that even a place like Kashmir, so remotely far from the Indian metropolis, its force could be felt, which inspired local artists to join the movement. The possible justification for their claim lies in the very ideology of the ‘progressives, for their uninhibited advocacy of European examples of
modem art 'an opening up to a heritage unrestricted by national/geographic limits.'

However, it was in the Bombay Progressive Artists’ Group that the forces of 40s found its most articulate expression. The Group emerged in the form of a most dynamic artistic force launching a resistance and break from the neo-romantic rural position of the Bengal School and the anaesthetic art taught at the colleges. By 1950s Bombay became the centre of Indian modern art engaging enlightened critics and ambitious patrons. F.N. Souza (1924-2002), the most articulate and the founder member of the group was accompanied by M.F. Husain, S.H. Raza, K.H. Ara, S.K. Bakre, and H.A. Gade. Their rigorous determination to realize the kind of art that was ‘entirely Indian but also modern’ was backed by the association of the radical novelist Mulk Raj Anand, the influential Chemould Gallery owner Kekoo Gandhy; the three refugees from the Nazi: the Expressionist painter Walter Langhammer, who joined art director to Times of India in 1938, became their mentor; Emmanuel Schlesinger, who set up a pharmaceutical concern in Bombay, became their main collector; and Rudy von Leyden, who joined Times of India as art critic.

As is the fate of any such collective art movement, the group did not sustain for a long time. The most of ambitious leading artists left for Europe to confront and engage with the groundbreaking innovations happening in the mainstream western modernism. Souza left for London and Raza to Paris, however, Husain stayed back. Souza as notoriously called the ‘angry young man of Indian art’ demonstrated a true nonconformist by debunking his Catholic upbringing to shock the complacency of the clergy, the rich, and the powerful. His cynic and gnawing temperament injected some kind of wild anarchism in his rugged use of paint and brutal gesture of lines. Souza shares with Picasso the ruthlessness and intimidating robustness, which was as much a matter of fascination as it was a shock to the artists and art connoisseurs. By his deft method of handling pigments, Souza’s ability lies in his dauntless ability to
transform his compulsive erotic-religious feelings in the convulsive discipline of expressionist language, which earned him an international acclaim by 1950s. S. H. Raza’s initial interest in expressionist landscapes (the fascination which brought him to the picturesque Kashmir also plays a vital role for inspiring the Kashmiri artists to engage with the modern, which is the major preoccupation of the next chapter) evolved into a geometric abstraction which eventually culminated into the target-like metaphorical icon of Bindu - (the dot or the epicenter). Unlike Souza, Raza was not really interested in the human figure. Even his landscapes and cityscapes retain a cold distance from the identifiable representation of a figure, rather his art showed more tendencies towards abstraction. By 1970s in France, Raza’s struggle to reconcile the eastern mind with the western dialect brought him close to the esoteric philosophy and abstract symbols of the Neo-Tantric tradition. Raza imbibed European grammar of formalism and sought to express the spiritual-mystic dimensions of Hindu philosophy.

M. F. Husain the most popular modern artist of India has constantly been the subject and the center of media attention incomparable to any other living artist of India. His charismatic and multidimensional personality brought him a long standing fame, which however, is supplemented with the bites of controversy in the recent years. Husain was not privileged enough like his contemporaries to think of settling abroad. His story has quite a romantic ting: Born to a poor family and starting off by painting Bollywood hoardings for living and eventually attaining the position of an undisputed leader in modern Indian art. His phenomenal body of work and tireless experimentation has kept him significantly alive in the minds of critics, connoisseurs, patrons and art lovers. Engaging with as diverse resources as the flamboyance of Basholi, spontaneity and lyricism of Islamic calligraphy, the naivety and innocence of folk art, pop images of Bollywood, and classical Indian sculpture – bridging the gulf between rural and urban, popular and elite, east and west. His
incommensurable output and the range of concerns have left the art scholars bedazzled, as Alkazi would confirm: ‘They have barely been able to categorize one phase of his when he has stormed his way into another.’ Husain’s position as a national/modern is far more articulate than most of the other artists aspiring the same. As Chaitanya Sambrani writes:

Working within the agenda for the development of a secular, socialist, non-aligned economy, Husain emerges as the major allegorist for the nation with his ceaseless endeavor to give plastic expression to the entire gamut of co-existing myths, faiths, conflicts and personae that make up a vision of the nation. His *Zameen* (1955)...the 14-foot-long canvas teems with images culled as though from a primeval memory of the archetypal Indian village, presenting a panorama of persons, animals, objects and activities that stand in as metonyms of national essence.¹²

The similar impulses of 40s/50s are seen in the Delhi Silpi Chakra. The artists associated were B. C. Sanyal, Kanwal Krishna, Dhanraj Bhagat, K. S. Kulkarni, D. N. Mago and others. The group came into existence after the catastrophic Partition where many artists who migrated from Pakistan chose to form an art circle in Delhi where they could exchange ideas and express their experiences with the new reality. Apart from the concerns of colossal human tragedy of the Partition they too addressed the then contemporary issues of Indian modern art. Their main distinctiveness lied in incorporating the skill of handicraft traditions of Lahore. At that moment Delhi was far behind for providing some infrastructure for the promotion of art. This brings the eventful alliance between Silpi Chakra and Dhoomimal, India’s first private art gallery, which has earned a great reputation for promoting some of the very important modern artist of India during their earliest struggle. It is the legacy of Silpi Chakra that today Delhi claims to be one of the most important centers of contemporary Indian art. Artists like Satish Gujral, Ramkumar, K.G. Subramanyam, Bimal Dasgupta, Shanti Dave and Ambadas were beginners
when under the patronage of Delhi Silpi Chakra they embarked on their respective journey of art.\textsuperscript{13}

The modernist/internationalist position upheld by the militant progressive movements intensified the debate and refreshed the questions about western orientation, which increased the skepticism towards the authenticity of Indian national Identity. In the south artists negotiated with this existential flux by the inspiring and intellectually motivated initiatives of K. C. S. Paniker. Paniker’s inspiring personality motivated his students to join his cause for working out different solutions for a nativist language of modern Indian art. It is due to his pedagogic commitment and ingenious methods that made him the protagonist ‘of the large corpus of art activity in Madras in 1940s and 50s, and later, mentor and motivator of his incredible dream-child, the Cholamandal Artists’ Village.’ The prominent figures of Cholamandal included S. Dhanapal, the Reddepa Naidu, P.V. Janakiraman and others. The other notable events in the stream of evolving modernism in India is the Group 1890 (a misnomer), led by Jagdish Swaminathan (1928-1994), came to Delhi with a passionate reactionary manifesto declaring Raja Ravi Verma’s naturalism and the ‘pastoral idealism’ of Bengal School as vulgar. They asserted the rejection of the “memories of a glorious past” and the ambitiousness of “catching up with the times”, but instead emphasized to start right from the scratch. Swaminathan’s numinous ideal in the form of a bird-like thing appears to be in space (reminiscent of Brancusi) in the colorful brightly lit landscape comes to mind. However, partly due to his leftist-orientation, Swaminathan’s writings were instrumental ‘for voicing through his paintings a political resistance of a third-world nation against the imperialist, affluent West.’\textsuperscript{14} The artists who joined him in Delhi included Jeram Patel, Himmat Shah, Rajesh Mehra, S.G. Nikam, Redeppa Naidu, Balkrishna Patel, Jyoti Bhatt, Ambadas, Eric Bowen, Raghav Kanneria and Ghulam Mohammed Sheikh. However, this group was never seen together after their first and only exhibition in 1963.
The other dimension in the quest for the essentially indigenous and spiritually Indian came in the form of Neo-Tantric Art. In 1960s the term Tantric, basically an ancient religio-philosophical cult involving a ritualistic association with symbolic geometric and abstract diagrams came into prominence in 1960s. The influence of Tantra and its concepts of vital force operating in all living beings had a far reaching resonance and fascination, which could be traced in the pioneer abstract painters, particularly the circle of Kasimir Malevich. But its influence was widely felt when in 1960s the art historian Ajit Mukherjee’s besides publishing the book Tantra Art in 1967 brought a historic exhibition of Tantra art in the West. Since abstraction was in the vogue the Tantric abstract imagery became one of the possibilities to seek inspiration from. However, the affinities between traditional Tantric imagery and modern non-figurative abstraction have been subject to doubt and skepticism.

Among the artists who came to be identified or referred as or associated with the Neo-Tantric are Nirode Mazumdar, G .R. Santosh, Biren De and K. C. Paniker. Mazumdar, the product of Lhote’s studio, is considered an early neo-Tantric painter, for incorporating the geometric shapes in his semi-figurative experimentation. Biren De’s switchover from figurative to abstraction brought his work closer to the Tantric diagrams. His simplified images of male and female in sexual union with dramatic light and dark effects are suggestive of an esoteric numinous dimension implicit in Tantric designs. As Ratan Parimo points out, ‘The original Tantric diagrams are actually aids to meditation or visual symbolization in geometrical configuration of complex philosophical concepts.’ In this context even S. H. Raza’s Bindu or Ma paintings of the late 1970s incorporate a language based on geometric diagrams to embody the concept of meditation. Among these Santosh (who occupies the third chapter of my thesis for being the pioneer and the most celebrated Kashmiri artist) embodies a sustained and longest engagement with the Neo-Tantric aesthetics. Interestingly, these abstract-oriented initiatives of the Indian artists were,
formalist performance, contemporaneous to American hard-edge abstraction, which lent a certain validation to this specific trend from an international point of view. This aspect of seeking and appropriating the esoteric and transcendental abstract imagery from ancient classical/traditional sources of India with the international conventions of non-objective/abstraction is also of great significance in the context of post-Santosh modern art scene in Kashmir. For instance, the Baroda trained Gayoor Hassan and his student Shuja Sultan who also traverse along the numinous terrain of transcendental and meditative aesthetic formulas.

The indigenist alternative to the modernist/internationalist conventions of art found its most articulate engagement in the fine arts department of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. Its progenitors and academicians included artist-teachers like N.S. Bendre, Sankho Chaudhuri, V. R. Amberkar and K.G. Subramanyam. Baroda plays a vital role for bringing the pictorial and figurative narration back to art - the fact by which Baroda artist established a close link with the Royal College of Art in London. Bendre came to Baroda in 1950 to head the Department of Painting after having attained a wide reputation as an artist and a traveler. He began his journey from painting picturesque landscapes aligning with the nineteenth century British artists. Bendre’s engagement with the conventions of modernism had a stylistic resonance of Post-impressionism, Fauvism and Expressionism. But his real contribution lies in his live demonstrations where his ingenious virtuosity to handle different mediums and the skill to execute a harmonious and well balanced formal design were efficiently imparted to his students. 

Sanko Chaudhuri was a student of Ramkiner Baij. With Ramkiner he shared his interest in portraiture and monumental outdoor sculptures. His early stint with Cubist aesthetics, reminiscent of Archipenko and Arp, gradually evolved into more lyrical formal design. Sanko Chaudhuri, on the one hand, striking a
kind of ideological link with Russian Constructivists, was the first to encourage the use of Industrial materials, which opened up the new possibilities in sculpture, and on the other hand his adherence to Gandhian ideals anticipated new directions in the development of Indian sculpture. This seeming dichotomy about Sanko’s position is best described by his colleague and friend Subramanyan: “Caught between his two contrapoised personality traits of romantic enthusiasm and urban restraint, his work escapes being aggressively analytical or sentimental, melodramatic or quiescent. It ploughs a non-committed furrow between these and at its best combines the qualities of movement and stasis in a kind of congealed elegance.”

Subramanyan joined Santinekatan under the tutelage of Nandalal, Benode Bihari Mukherjee, and Ramkiner Baij who played the role of a mentor during his burgeoning years. They provided the basic inspiration for his significant contribution as a teacher in Baroda. By introducing and implementing the ‘living tradition’ of rural and tribal art into the educational curriculum of Baroda he launched his manifesto of bridging the gulf between the artisan and the modern artist. Subramanyan vigorously re-claimed the importance of Bengal School, which had suffered disavowal in the post-Independent semi-figurative art forces. Subramanyan’s prodigious contribution as an artist is supplemented by his celebrated position as a pedagogue and a writer. As an artist he was able to formulate a conceptual scheme where this multidimensionality finds a cohesive expression. Subramanyan’s art is an embodiment of concerns as varied as craft, language, virtuosity and wit. As Geeta Kapur’s monograph on K. G. Subramanyam elucidates: Language ‘as a system where objects have a workable correlation with pictorial signs, and where these signs in turn transpose a universe of meanings upon the material world.’ Virtuosity by means of which the relationship between perception and skill is perfected to the point where forms spring forth by the mere gesture of the hand. And wit as an artist’s trick to abbreviate, upturn, reanimate the
And it is in the tradition of mural, the legacy of his Santinekatan days, where the technical ingenuity of a craftsman finds its way to integrate art with the social environment. With Subramanyan’s initiatives in particular, and the developments in the fine art department of the Baroda in general, the artist was expected to address the rising postcolonial concerns and negotiate with socio-cultural and environmental issues.

The 1970s and 1980s with the rise of postcolonial/postmodern criticism/theories the Indian art practice went through disparate and diverse phases. This period is also characterized on the one hand with the general decline of the artists’ groups and art institutions and on the other hand the rise of artist as activist. The state sponsored attempt to launch the first Indian modern art event called triennale at the International level by the Lalit Kala Akademi in 1968 was faced with a protest by the Delhi Silpi Chakra. Swaminathan, Tyeb Mehta and Krishen Khanna, in spite of being awarded, strongly criticized the event for its methods of the process of selection. The criticism of the first triennale assumed even more vigorous protest and boycott in the second triennale. Swaminathan, Geeta Kapur, Vivan Sundram, Ghulam Sheikh and Bhupan Khakhar took a single stand to reject the cult of internationalism. In *Vrishchik* (scorpion), (the magazine published in Baroda, which was very instrumental for voicing and disseminating the ideological development of art), Geeta Kapur writes: “My point of view is that internationalism as a cult imposes upon the individual artist and especially outside the western metropolis, a set of false imperatives that must be examined”. And the continued resistance led the third triennale on the verge of cancellation in 1975 when Ghulam Sheikh wrote that “if the Akademi does not change its policy… all practising artists and writers artists should do it (boycott) and if we decide to boycott the Akademi a counter-exhibition should be planned as an answer”. To everybody’s surprise, in a certain sense like the French Salon des Refusés, the protest exhibition titled *Six Who Declined to Show at the Triennale* did actually take place.
From the iconoclastic pop art to the confessional position Bhupan Khakhar was actually addressing the politics of the marginal, which along with feminism remains to be one of most serious concerns defended in the liberal ethics of postmodernism. Bhupen’s breakthrough in 1960s came after his departure from the design-oriented aestheticism of Baroda and vigorous fascination for the vulgar, subversive and iconoclastic anti-aestheticism of American Pop art – establishing him as, conspicuously, the first Indian pop artist. 

Pan shops, domestic interiors, temples and religious sites and all that glitz and glitter which identifies the middle class taste was his main thematic engagements. He made spoof of high art, not only at ideological but also material level, by incorporating the methods as banal as the sloppiness of popular oleographs, mirrors, plaster of paris and even enamel paint.

Baroda also plays a crucial role in the development of art history as an integral part of fine arts. In India the discipline of art history has somewhat remained aloof from the overall development of modern Indian art. It is in the early twentieth that scholars like Ananda Coomaraswamy and E. B. Havell who emerge in the form of a scholarship with strong nationalistic resistance to the colonial cultural hegemony. However, this counter-movement could not disengage itself from the colonial enterprise, where all the methods of evaluating historical remains were essentially based on European assumptions. It is in this context that Ratan Parimoo’s criticism, what he called the ‘antiquarian search’ of India’s history within which sculpture, manuscripts, coins and inscriptions were gathered and recorded as disembodied objects by a dispassionate cataloguer. His initiatives emphasizing the need of teaching art history in Indian Universities, so that Indian art will be taken up as a serious study with passionate commitment, anticipates a breakthrough in the field of art theory in India.
Parimoo is generally held to be instrumental in bringing art history in the curricula of Baroda’s cultural development. But with the significant intervention of Gulammohammed Sheikh Baroda evolved into a self-reflexive critical/intellectual platform. His major contribution as an academician, art critic and a teacher included initiatives like developing new course in art history, editing the famous art journal *Vrishchik*, organizing workshops, and turning his home into a live open-door forum where artists, poets, critics, and committed students could join for brainstorming. Sheikh as a teacher shares the same reputation as that of Santinekatan teachers and Subramanyan. His charismatic influence as a teacher/guru has groomed Indian students to find their own distinctively original directions. As a painter he traverses along and negotiates the realm of home, city and landscape. Identifying and appropriating the paintings of *Hamza-nama* of Akbar period and simultaneously reflective of Italian Renaissance art Sheikh builds a complex pictorial world of conflicting and converging meanings. Sheikh’s broken and fragmented canvas is reflective of his keen observation of the way life in India is structured – a complex web with all its contradictory and conflicting disjunctures, which at times appears closer to the stream of consciousness experience. He writes:

Living in India means living simultaneously in several cultures and times… The past exists as a living entity alongside the present, each illuminating and sustaining the other. As times and cultures converge, the citadels of purism explode. Traditional and modern, private and public, the inside and outside continually telescope and reunite. The kaleidoscopic flux engages me to construe structures in the process of being created.  

In the more recent series *Kahat Kabir* (1998) Sheikh is slightly at variance with his earlier use of space and imagery in order to negotiate the potentially rich tradition of bhakti. Here he addresses the urgency of social syncretism by referring to the medieval poet Kabir – cherished and claimed both by Hindus and Muslims.
Since 1970s Indian art scene went through a significant change due to the revolutionary events triggered by the emergence of postcolonial/postmodern discourse. Baroda became the mainstream where self-reflexive artists negotiated with the changing world and the paradigm shifts in the cultural discourse. The demands of the time were such where artist were required to break free from the narcissistic ‘enchanting circle’ of artistic engagement and act with more responsibility to respond to the socio-political issues. Among the artist who explicitly demonstrated the spirit of an activist and made conspicuously discreet political statements was Vivan Sundaram. After his return from the Commonwealth scholarship in England in 1970 he vigorously committed himself to political concerns. His initiatives as artist-activist include the exhibition of photographs of the Bangladesh war, which he organized in Delhi in 1971. His sustained commitment with Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT) as a founder-member and trustee kept where he is actively engaged to organize events to protest against communal violence in India. Vivan’s work has shown a sustained commitment to the political upheaval in our time in works like the series of drawings titled The Indian Emergency of 1977; the installation of photographs and sculptures called Memorial in response to the demolition of the Babri masjid and the subsequent riots in Bombay. In spite of the strong leftist temperament he did not abandon the oil painting, (like Mexican artists who rejected oil painting and developed wall painting (mural) as a public, national art form.). But rather he transformed the traditional oil format from a seductive illusionist pictorial device into a ‘public’ art form to serve in his, what he calls Marxist ideological struggle.  

With the rise of self-conscious female artists the 1970s assumes another most significant phase in the development of Indian art. It was also during this time that the wave of feminist revolution in the west was strongly felt in Indian subcontinent. However, until 50s the presence of women artists in India was confined to a very few names who emerged during colonial period among
which Amrita Sher-Gil occupies a highly exceptional position. As Gayatri Sinha writes:

Unlike western women artist of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, there is no documented tradition of Indian women artists before the twentieth century. We have very little by way of names, faces, and histories.”

However, it is Amrita Sher-Gil’s position as the first truly self-conscious artist that the study of Indian women artists finds its beginning. During 1950s and 60s the presence of women, who later made a very significant contribution to Indian Art, became visible in art schools. Meera Mukherjee (1928-98) had her initial training at the Government School of Art in Calcutta and the Delhi Polytechnic. In 1953 she received a scholarship to study in Munich, where she worked under Toni Stadler and Heinrich Kirchner. She remains to be one of the most outstanding Indian sculptors to emerge after Independence. She took Subramanyan’s initiative of bridging the gap between artist and the artisan to its most convincing conclusion by actually living with the Bastars in order to know their life and work intimately. Mukherjee’s heroic position is justified by the monumental scale of her work and sustained courage to realize her ambitious projects. But at the same time she was very sensitive to the cause of the tribal, who in a certain way gave her art a sense of direction.

Nasreen Mohamedi (1937-89) after studying at St. Martin’s School of Art in London from 1954 to 1957 returned to India and joined the Bhulabhai Institute for the Arts. Nasreen took a very unconventional position by engaging with the pure minimalist paradigm. Partly due to her privileged position for having a firsthand interaction with European art at the age of seventeen her work assumes a solitary engagement among the Indian artists. Minimalism represented a significant attitude of the 1960, especially in America. It emerged out of or in relation with or in opposition to a number of significant tendencies
of the decade. It was in the process of breaking away from the gestural or brush paintings of Abstract Expressionists and seeking new directions, which came to be labeled as Hard-Edge, Post-Painterly Abstraction, Color Field painting and later Minimal Painting. However, the one thing that more or less each label emphasized was on pure, abstract painting, in distinction to figuration, optical illusion, object-making, fantasy, and the like. But it is interesting to notice that among the Minimalists Nasreen identified with Agnes Martin, which also brings to mind Amrita Sher-Gil’s preference of Gauguin’s post-impressionism over the host of other more radical styles. Agnes Martin, considered the senior most among the minimalists, often reflected an interest in Eastern philosophy, especially Taoist. Martin’s work involved a rigorous mathematical precision, exquisite economy, nuance, and eventually in a counter-act the whole process is reduced to nothing but a large canvas gridded all over with lines evoking ‘an evanescent image of luminous atmosphere, making visible the artist’s sense of life’s essence as a timeless, shadowy emanation.” Nasreen’s admiration from lyrical abstractionist Kandinsky to the supermatist Kasimir Malevich and then ideological adherence to the late modernist minimalism aligns her to Utopian aspirations of twentieth century formalism. However, in the 1980s she broke free with ethics of the grid. As Geeta Kapur appropriately quotes Roland Krauss: “... the grid announces among other things, modern art’s will to silence, its hostility to literature, to narrative, to discourse.” and Kapur writes:

If Martin would say that in the diagonal the ends hang loose, or that the circle expands too much, Nasreen, on the other hand, would use precisely those forms.”

Anjolie Ela Menon (b. 1940) briefly studied at the Sir J.J. Institute of Applied Art, Mumbai and later got a scholarship to study at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1961-62. Menon’s interaction with the Mexican painter Francesco Toledo plays a very significant role in developing her personal expression. He
introduced her to technical possibilities in the process of working with layered surfaces and textures. Her sustained representation of somewhat iconic female forms, domesticated animals, and a distanced involvement in Window series negotiates the interplay between personal histories with collective social concerns. Her body of work encompasses various influences, ranging from Van Gogh, Expressionists, Modigliani, Husain, Frida Kahlo, and Amrita Sher-Gil. At the same time her work is confronted with the moments of fixity, symptomatic of the modern artist’s anxiety to break free from the self-constructed clichés, that she is driven to seek new solutions to revitalize her visual vocabulary.

Kishori Kaul was born in Srinagar Kashmir in 1939. She joined the Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University, Baroda in 1959. Kaul’s career as an artist has passed the tragic condition of suffering from tuberculosis and how she finds somewhat therapeutic salvation in art. Kaul’s body of work is largely imbued with a passionately romantic engagement with the colorful and invigorating environment of her native place in Kashmir. In her impressionist/expressionist treatment to landscapes, a genre not much in vogue, especially the depiction of autumnal trees, as if on fire, shooting a shocking medley of pink, orange and blooming reds, has earned her work a certain identity quite distinct from her contemporaries. In the late 1989 and early 1990 Kashmiri Pandits, in a state of fear psychosis and paranoia, were driven to vacate the Kashmir valley due to the rise of insurgency. One wonders about the possible changes in her creative outlook and the romantic engagement with the personal and picturesque world of her home. But Kaul’s work refuses to indulge into a dark and morbid state of diasporic condition. However, in a nostalgic mind, she draws largely from her childhood stories and the personal memories of the times she lived in the Valley. The persistence of her memory is still sustained in her landscapes and still lifes, which resonate with the brilliance of color, the vivid gestural brushwork and the deft subtlety of line. For her motifs she always turns to
nature and in a somewhat Cezannesque manner she seeks the formal solution of the pictorial surface not just by perceptual means alone but by her intuitions as well. She writes:

My process of conceiving a work is linked with Nature's inherent structures and their ability to strike a deep resonance within my memory. The downward rush of the crystalline water or a mountain stream, splattered with light streaking through the overhanging branches of trees, determines the structure of a painting...The sudden, swift flight of a bird, the limb of a tree cutting across space, the little world of my garden in the middle of the city-all become starting points for the reconstruction, through color, of fleeting but profound sensations".  

Since 1970s there has been a dramatic rise in the participation of women artists, self-consciously transcending the political frontiers that separate the three nations of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. It is also during this time that the questions of gender, the identity of a woman artist in the male dominated infrastructure, and ‘feminist’ art were gaining currency. The responses to the global impulses of 70s onwards, especially in America, where feminist art grew in accordance with the so-called ‘second wave’ of feminism, were starkly visible in some of the Indian women artists while implicitly subtle in others.

Arpita Singh’s (b.1937) painterly journey is marked by her shifts from figurative to abstraction and then back to figurative. Her paintings are imbued with a strange aura where the living and the inanimate appear to be engrossed in a secret communication. Drawing largely from the day to day domestic space of a woman, Arpita anticipates a feminine condition where her female figures share an enigmatic imaginary world with things like jars, bottles, tablecloths, chairs, apples, a paper boat, picture frames, flowers. The Chagallesque flying figures, the invading objects, and the animated inanimate objects are somewhat counteracted by the women figure who usually appears still or absentminded. Arpita’s work is not existentially morbid, but her
distinctiveness lies in the subtle use of wit and humor to illuminates the complex and distraught. Her response to feminine concerns is not confined to the domestic space. The notable references are the stories of Kidwai family and the aftermath of the Sikh 1984 riots in Delhi, which anticipated the potentially protective image of the woman in acts of nurturing the girl child. And in a recent series of her works called Feminine Fable, (1997) Arpita is addressing the ageing woman’s sexual self, a conspicuously feminine condition. As Gayatri Sinha writes: “Perhaps even among her world contemporaries, no single artist has produced a body of works on feminine acts of reparation, love and the deeply tragic vicissitudes of domesticity as Arpita Singh.”

Anupam Sud (b. 1944) excelled in the medium of printmaking and remains to be one of the finest printmakers among her contemporaries. Her most sustained concerns are, conspicuously, in elucidating the psychological tension between the body and its other. Her figurative-orientation involves a persistent delineation of the nude form, especially female, by means of which her figures enter into some kind of interrogative confrontation with the multiple identities of the self. In this way her figurative art goes beyond the narrative and the epic and ventures the existential aesthetics of the pure human figure. Anupam’s work is potentially mediated by John Burger’s viewpoint where he discusses the distinction between the nude and the naked, the different in their psychological positions where men look at women and women watch themselves being looked at. However, Sud’s body of work encompasses a varied range of complex responses, which considerably depart from Berger’s viewpoint. As Geeti Sen writes:

Anupam’s body of work possesses its own intrinsic logic. 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 titled Windows, to the faceless, undisclosed mysteries
Arpana Caur’s (b. 1954) feminist viewpoint remains to be the most conspicuously articulate as compared to other women artists of India. She eloquently contested the universal male chauvinistic identity of the art by sharing her personal self in the creation of a female protagonist. Caur adopted and preferred the strong feminine figures of Basohli and reinterpreted them by somewhat de-eroticizing the nayika in order to protect their feminine force from the male gaze. On the other hand with the expanding proportions of her female figures, the male figure is considerably shrinking and diminishing. Besides her politically charged feminist concerns, Arpita engages with the variety of concerns like the existential themes of alienation and claustrophobia, bhakti, and the political violence. For having had difficult early years and a passionate empathy for social concerns, her work mediates across the autobiographical, the communal, and the humanitarian.

The legacy of the radical artists and the pedagogy of Binode Bihari Mukherjee and Ramkiner Baij, the tutelage under Subramanyan, and the close association with Ghulam Sheikh provide the essential impetus to Nilima Sheikh (b. 1945). Her work draws from a panorama of sources like the everyday life, the socio-political issues, the drama of the home, the ambiguities of interpersonal relationships, the children at play, animals, and the popular legends and ballads. Her pictorial language is imbued with the ingenuity of a combined aesthetic by incorporating the poetic idioms in the multi-planal perspective of Indian miniatures and the compositional efficiency of seventeenth-century Japanese woodcut. Her stylistic empathy with the ‘living tradition’ becomes more pronounced and intimate by perfecting herself in the Wasli technique of tempera of the medieval Indian miniatures. The laborious and meticulous care
involved in laminating of several sheets or handmade paper which are coated and covered with whiting in several layers before being painted on with soft and brilliant cake colors with the use of fixer. ^' Nilima’s epic series *When Champa Grew Up*, which addresses the menacing phenomenon of ‘bride burning’, is a very powerful socio-political statement. It is in the significant exchange of technical and stylistic idioms between the urban and the traditional artist, which serves as her ideological position in line with her Santinekatan/Baroda legacy, that her use of *Wasli* technique makes the effect even more intense.

Recently, after a gap of six years the Gallery Espace in New Delhi hosted an exhibition of Nilima’s work called ‘Drawing Trails’. The new works reflect a sustained engagement with the socio-political concerns where the trauma of Kashmir occupies most of the space. In her characteristic aesthetic paradigm, which engages through a careful positioning of diverse techniques and histories with the contemporary, Nilima’s work takes account of the pain and suffering of the people living in conflict zones. She quotes directly from literary sources like the very famous fifteenth century Kashmiri saint and poet Sheikh Noor-ud-din, also known as Nund Rishi, Kashmiri-American poet Agha Shahid Ali, Salman Rushdie and others, where this mediation of the written-word works as a supplementary to enhance the emotive identity of the images. ^a

With Nalini Malani, the autobiographical, the psychological and the political finds references in the everyday urban reality. Her convictions are deeply informed by her intellectual experience during her stay in Paris in 1970s where she was in a certain close proximity with the stimulating cross-section of thinkers, writers and artists. The highly charged period of the May 1968 student’s revolt instigated intellectual restlessness and vigorous self-questioning for Malani, which kept surfacing in her works. Her 1980s works like *Old Arguments about Indigenism, Of Monsters and Angels*, and *Flux of
Experience, engage with the urgent questions of globalization, nationalism, and the Third World poverty. Due to her sustained engagement with the contemporary socio-political concerns, her committed adherence, like Subramanyan, Meera Mukherjee, Nilima Sheikh, to smudge the gap between traditional art practice and the avant-garde, and her use of radically new mediums like installation, video art, and performance, that she can safely be positioned as a postmodern artist – the claim which is as much controversial as it is the zeitgeist. However, by using new mediums she does not lose the grasp of the basic structure of narrative, ideas and images but rather transgresses the limits of the picture frame by incorporating the space, light, and three-dimensionality of the installation/performance to provide a direct and living space for the viewer to enter her work. Her site-specific project City of Desires (1992) where she first painted the entire wall at the Chemould Gallery in Bombay and later whitewashed the whole wall was meant to be a protest against the neglect of the rapidly disintegrating nineteenth-century frescos of Nathdvara in Rajasthan. At the same time, however, somewhat paradoxically, the performance was a lucid and moving statement on the non-capitalist impulse, quite visible in the recent projects of Vivan Sundram, where art is rescued from the burden of capitalist commodity by the symbolic gesture of whitewashing or the impermanent nature of such projects – aligning to the “dematerialization of the art object”, which anticipated the Postmodern/Conceptual Art of 70s in the West.

Mirinalini Mukherjee (b.1949) emerges as one of the innovative and powerful sculptor in the 1980s. Her distinctively individual vocabulary is a result of her discovery of an unconventional material, a species of vegetable fibre resembling hemp. Her process involves dying of the material in deep colors, such as purple or carmine, and then knots and weaves it. In Mirinalini’s case the feminist or the feminine enters via the very intimate and time consuming domestic engagement of the act or the process of the work. However, as she
slowly kneads the material into some identifiable human form they assume a mysterious aura of primordial or the sexually ambiguous beings. Among the important women artists whose ideologically motivated art practice dominated the 1990s was Navjot (b. 1949). Her enormous multi-media installation called *Links Destroyed and Rediscovered*, (occupying the entire space of the auditorium at the Jehangir Art Gallery), a collaborative project with a musician and two filmmakers, addresses both the explicit tragedy of the 1993 Bombay riots and the implicit faith to recover the loss. This twofold, somewhat akin to the process of destruction and reconstruction, recurs as one of the significant commitment throughout her career. For example the painted wood sculpture I Have no Fate Lines – Thank God is a parody suggesting both power and resistance.

Geeta Kapur’s critical stand positioning postmodern proposes to revise the Theodor Adorno’s stand, which foreground the ‘negative commitment’ or the notion of aesthetic as subversive and work out a new strategy of interference associated with Gramsci. Kapur finds the most potent example in the Indian Radical Painters’ and Sculptors’ Association (1987-89), which came to be called as the Kerala Radical group. This short-lived collective was formed on the lines of ultra-left political activism, claiming alternate art practices where narratives are condensed into political gestures, the humanitarian and the social. Their intervention came as a rejection to the international, commercial and Western. The group included Krishnakumar, Alex Mathew, C K Rajan and Anita Dube. Geeta Kapur aligns with the argument where the understanding of postmodernism anticipated the possibilities for black ideologies and feminists to conceptualize greater degree of freedom. However, it is in the cinematic space that Kapur finds the most conspicuous clues for situating postmodern in India. Moreover, it is also evident in her advice for the
politically inclined artists, while quoting Hal Foster, to make the most out of this conjectural moment (modernism-postmodernism).

The significant impulses of the contemporary Indian art scene share a politically motivated collective position with the larger group of South Asian countries. In the wake of postcolonial critique in India, initiated by theorists like Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, engaged in questioning and destabilizing the west/eurocentricism, and therefore dislocate the subaltern in order to claim an alternative discourse ‘to subvert the authority of those who had hegemonic power’. The earliest response to the postcolonial/postmodern concerns was seen in 70s/80s Baroda but it was around 90s that a more vigorous participation involved not only its ideological content but also the radical revolutions and paradigmatic shift in the choice of means, new strategies and the use of new mediums of expression/interaction like installation, performance, video art, multi-media and so on. However, installation art was met with a lot of hostility by a section of the art community and still invites a lot of controversy and discussion in terms of its relevance to the Indian environment and for its non-possessable, impermanent and at times anti-commercial position. But younger generation of artists are showing a great enthusiasm for installation and multi-media as it provides a more varied scope to address varied concerns from formal to personal and socio-political. And at the same time there is a certain anxiety implicit in the ambitious artists’ choice in order to be a part of the international art world, which certainly involves as many dangers as there are adventures. The discussion on installation and the varied viewpoints of different scholars and artists foreground on the one hand the polarities like conservatism and liberalism, the percep and the concept, the local and the global and on the other hand it is celebrated as a new medium allowing a greater freedom and being capable of translating the contemporary experience.
Among the artists who have shown a sustained engagement with the new approaches and new mediums since 1990s are Valsan Koller (b. 1953), whose ecological and environmental concerns takes him to hunt for the ageing discards and re-create a lost space by mean of random and casual display of found objects, which anticipates the urge for a physical intervention in the viewer’s mind. The use of materials like cow dung, straw, ash, charred wood, printed textiles, kumkum, bits of newspaper, show somewhat anti-aesthetic vocabulary of artists like Sheela Gowda (b.19570 and Subodh Gupta (b.1964), who came up with shockingly new ways of incorporating the organic and indigenous materials to address the turbulent social issues. For its scale and scope to incorporate a host of materials and multi-media installation became a potentially efficient strategy for politically motivated artists to negotiate with the India’s political history.

Rummana Hussain, born in Bangalore and educated at the Ravensbourne College of Art and Design, Kent, United Kingdom, 1972-74, lived and worked in Bombay until her death in 1999. In order to sustain her activism she remained engaged with SAHMAT as an active participant. While responding to the politically charged event of Ayodhya tragedy she choose to shift from her allegorical paintings to the conceptual vigor of installation art and therefore, renegotiate her identity in a newly contentious political climate. "Fragments-Multiples," her first exhibition after this transition, was held concurrently at Gallery Chemould and Jehangir Art Gallery in 1994. The domical shape of the shattered mosque became a central motif anticipating a ghostly appearance in her sculptures, drawings, and assemblage works. Her other installation called “Home/Nation" at Gallery Chemould in 1996 states the disconcerting condition where the personal and the national meet, as if on a dissecting table, to reconstruct a new reality. Juxtaposing Islamic architecture in Ayodhya and her photographs with text, personal artifacts, and images of her own body she subverted the distinction between public memorial and private nostalgia.
Rummana demonstrates her conspicuously feminist position in the performance called *Living on the Margins*, which negotiates with the subjective experience of a lower-middle class Indian women.  

Vivan Sundaram’s response to the demolition of Babri masjid comes in the form of his interactive installation called *Memorial* (1993). The work takes the viewer in and kind of hypnotizes to confront and be confronted with the complex metaphorical world alluding to the human experience - the haunting tragedy of loss. Subodh Gupta’s artistic engagement is imbued with a rural sensibility and the deeply ethnic identity justified in his use of materials like cowdung, the potentially village icon, wooden stools, domestic and sacred objects or found objects that are identifiable icons of everyday Indian life, like stainless steel, kitchenware, bicycles, scooters and taxis. His work draws largely from his own experience, especially in context to his native Bihar and its labor class, of cultural dislocation through migration from rural to urban areas.

At least one thing that makes a predominating thread among most of the artists working with installation is their politically motivated position. As Roobina Karode writes:

A shift from the personal to the political also translates into a desire to work in and through public space, which is a real possibility with installation art this is not to suggest that in dealing with contemporary issues, painting has diminished in relevance in India. I would like to record here that Surrendran Nair, Sudhir Patwardhan, Arpita Singh, Atul Dodiya and Rekha Rodwittiya to name a few, paint compelling images of social, political and gender entanglements with the beauty of bright colours and the sensual languorous line, inventing a contemporary vocabulary that if anything, heightens the potency and comprehensibility of the content. Their art does confirm that the two-dimensional format has not expended itself and can be as provocative as other conceptual genres.”
Among the younger artists, the pluralist and fragmentative mood predominates. With the old, archaic bonds loosened, Atul Dodiya's montages will take cognizance of this new place we find ourselves in, while Anandjit Ray will combine his colours as easily as his narratives.

Recent developments shows a rapidly growing scholarship in the study of South Asian art, the vigorous intensity in the art practice to engage with the socio-political and at the same time a dramatic increase in the value of contemporary art. The post 1990s, with a rampant increase in the dissemination of information and the ever-expanding technology of telecommunication, poses new challenges while opening greater opportunities for Indian artists at the same time. With growing international interest in the contemporary Indian art, the new sources of patronage, the advent of transnational gallery, which provides an international forum to exhibit art works, grants, fellowships, residencies and trans-border projects, the Indian artist is enjoying a global experience as never before. Against this backdrop Ranjit Hoskote devises four distinctive approaches, which emerged as the updated internationalism. The first one as the breakdown of a classic painted frame urges the revitalization of painting where artists like Surrendran Nair, Atul Dudiya, Anandajit Ray and Amit Ambalal figure in. the understanding of postmodernism is tested by their use of quotage, appropriation and wit. The second approach comes as a breakdown of the formal sculpture is situated with Vivan Sundaram’s transition from painting to installation, Ravinder Reddy’s large painted terracotta and fiberglass heads spoofing the gap between High Art and bazaar kitsch. The third approach addresses the expansion of human experience in the context of the virtual space of Internet and the new possibilities to negotiate with the Virtual reality. The fourth deals with the post-studio/gallery/museum experience of the public space. Although at its embryonic stage in India artists like Nalini Malani, Anita Dube, Valsan Kolleri and Subodh Gupta engage with the ‘critiques of power asymmetries grappled along differentials of gender,
entitlement and region; they expose the latent pathologies of India’s Collective Life’. 39

Considering the rampantly growing archive of art scholarship this brief account is but a contour of the larger narrative of modern Indian art.
Footnotes

2. Ibid., 171
5. Sinha, Gayatri, Editor, Indian Art: An Overview (Rupa & Co 2003), pp.,81-82, Chapter : Modern Art India
6. Pande, Alka, Contemporary Indian Painting, An article published on Internet (http://www.alkapande.com/acad_mod_painti.htm)
7. Mallik, Sanjoy, Impulses of the 1940s’, Gayatri Sinha, Editor, Indian Art: An Overview (Rupa & Co 2003), 83 – (Chapter Chapter: Modern Art India)
9. Dalmia, Yashodhara, Salima Hashmi-edt, Memory, Metaphor, Mutations – Contemporary Art of India and Pakistan (Oxford University Press 2007), 105 – (Chapter: Modern Art India)
11. Ibid., 206
16. Panikkar, Shivaji K,Indigenism: An Inquiry into the Quest for ‘Indianess” in Contemporary Indian Art, p 119
17. A Post-Independent Initiative in Art – Nilima Sheikh, Contemporary Art in Baroda (Tulika 1997), 64-65
18. Ibid., 92
22. Ibid., 165
23. Ibid., pp. 173-175
26. Ibid., 487
30. Sen, Geeti, Anupam Sud; *The Ceremony of Unmasking, Expressions & Evocations*, pp.112-113
31. Marwah, Mala, Nilima Sheikh: *Human Encounters with the Natural World, Expressions & Evocations*, p 121