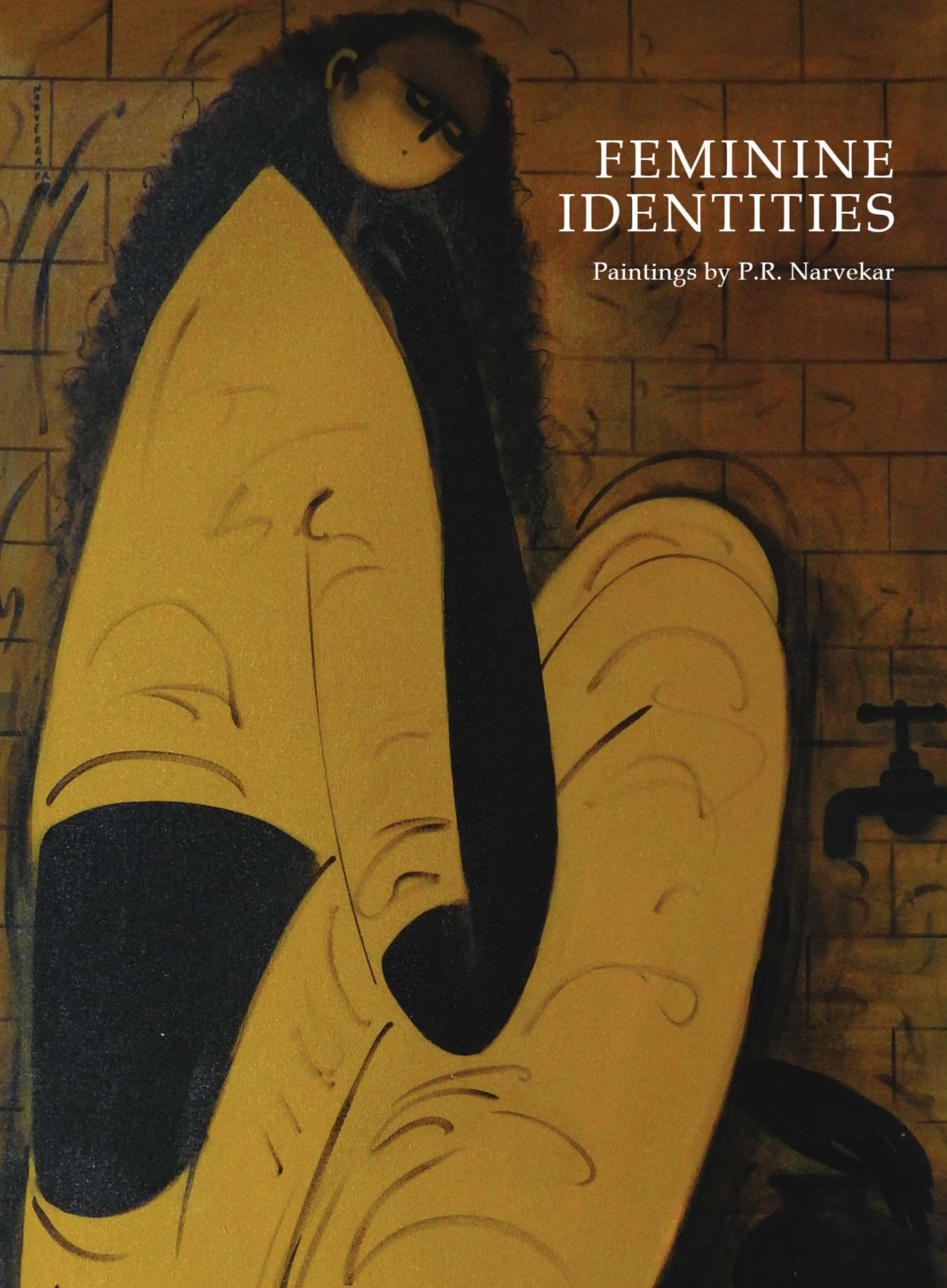




FEMININE IDENTITIES

Paintings by P.R. Narvekar

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Paintings by P.R. Narvekar
(1950-2021)

Aakriti Art Gallery

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INNER AND OUTER PERCEPTIONS

Uma Nair

In the drama of two colours we can find the contour of elegance, the colour of emotion and the evocation of everyday living. Aakriti Art Gallery in Kolkata is one of my favourite places to explore. From collectibles to art and sculpture, every square inch of this atelier is a delight to behold. At the far end of the first wall I glimpsed Narvekar's monochromatic magic in two shades-a deeply reflective mustard and a coffee brown that stirred deeper embers of thought and solitude.

Vikram Bachhawat collector, connoisseur and art gallery founder has been collecting Narvekar's works for more than two decades. In the dim lit notes of twilight zones they capture the harmony of both dawn and dusk. This J.J. School of Art Gold Medallist created paintings that are about harmoniously juxtaposing subtle oppositions within the same frame. These works reveal the voice of an artist who has attained artistic maturity following many years of introspection and exploration mined his project of almost entirely black compositions for more than 50 years. He has delved so deeply into the well of painting that he has emerged with a conceptual purity that elegantly defies the medium's inherent mess.

PICTORIAL POETICS



Ref No. 5447

Oil on Canvas I 42 x 17 in
Signed lower left

Provenance

Acquired from the Artist's Family

The canvasses are a litany of subjects that calm the eye, these paintings contemplate portraits of men and women whom he has known, and provide a rare autobiographical narration that manifests an essential trait of a human's work, or the notion that the most intimate matter of art is individual existence together with its poetic transfiguration.

In the pictorial poetics of twilight shades Narvekar's figures belong to the bliss of solitude, absorbed with contemplative moods, or portrayed in moments of maternal love or devotion. They seem to inhabit a deeply human fragment of both time and space but, withdrawn from the hustle and bustle of the world around them.

This coexistence of familiarity and distance, of observation of appearances and the magic of circumstances, is the space in which these works welcome the viewer, a space in which real and individual features are immersed in the penumbra of moods and conditions indefinable psychological moments such as the moment of the Sandhya or dusk - the passage between day and night. The artist's love for the two shades evokes, in fact, not only a phase of the day perceivable as a threshold, but also as a space of metamorphosis - the one in which light gives way to darkness - as well as the passage between sleep and wakefulness, the condition in which the forms of daily existence progressively transform into symbolic, dreamlike features.

COHESIVE CURVES

The human figure is Narvekar's leitmotif, he is very gestural with, of course, the darkness at the core and goes through a journey, an extremely long journey during which the human is still, all the time reflecting himself / herself through the grid of the emotions between the classic gesture and another type of gesture that is based on solitary / dual conversations within the curves of the human figure.



The long limbed men and women in his oeuvre are born of the rigours of everyday living. He places before us the vulnerability, the quietude, the deeply thought art of the graphic style of human imagery in rectangular frames that demonstrate associations with life and the living. In the long limbed curves and torsos we discover Narvekar as a visionary modernist who contemplated the human condition. Talking of sensibility Narvekar creates curves in the simplicity loose lithe lines. These feminine curves are universal they belong anywhere, everywhere. In India we think of curves and think of mythic associations. But curves can belong to nature's accents, her secrets, as well as to man and woman's emotions and evocations.



Ref No. 5441

Oil on Canvas
35.5 x 72 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from
the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5490

Oil on Canvas
36 x 36 in
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5491

Oil on Canvas
36 x 36 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5483

Oil on Canvas I 70 x 47 in
Signed top left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5436

Oil on Canvas I 17 x 59 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



SHRINGARA OR JUST AT THE BATH WITH BUCKETS

Narvekar is a quietly energetic artist whose solitary studies of the woman at the bath, drying her hair or just loosening it in all its glory command attention. The smoothly textured sinuous shape of her body is moulded into seamlessly curvaceous forms which belie their own weight. We can see that his feminine curves are born of his own inner observations, instincts and deep emotions.

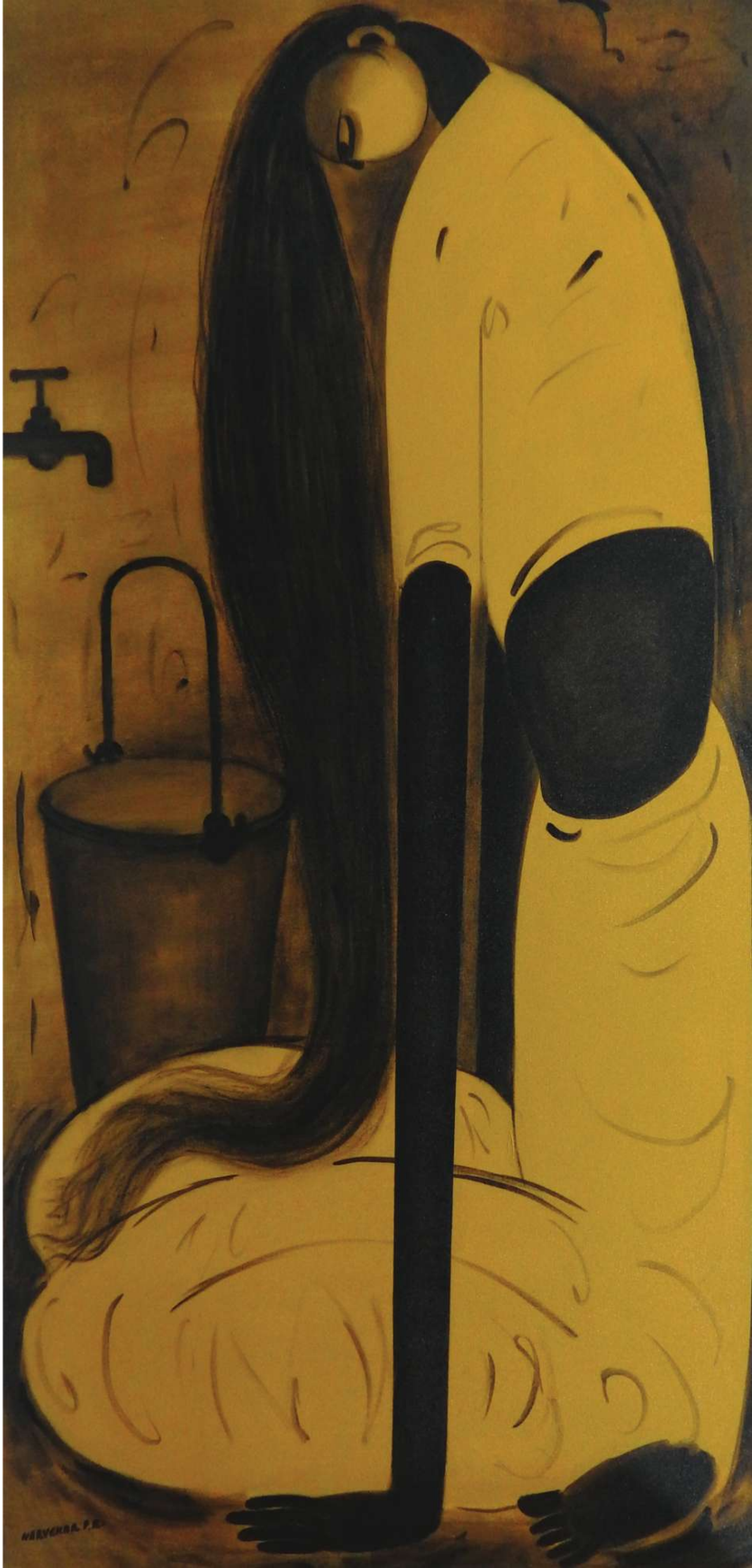
With such creative gestures applied to the canvas, the fact that his works are so alluring as well as intriguing should be no surprise. Interesting fluid flowing curves merge into hypnotic organically morphed – illusions and he employs continuous visual deception to stimulate and challenge the viewer.

The studies of the women with long hair remind us of Old Masters and at the toilet as subject as well as the Indian shringara. The simplicity and banal beauty of the long lustrous hair and the scene both add to the sumptuousness of the subject and the effortless ease of the artist.

Ref No. 5453

Oil on Canvas
72 x 36 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family





Ref No. 5452

Oil on Canvas I 72 x 36 in
Signed top left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5379

Oil on Canvas
42 x 17 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5375

Oil on Canvas
42 x 17 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5480

Oil on Canvas
40 x 20 in
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family

Rendered in volumetric simple curves and set against dark delineations of simple attire and floor, each portrait conveys a sense of melancholic poise and assuredness. The gaze is directed at the viewer, the illuminated half of her visage mirrored and joined by the shaded half – in the characteristic implication of the artist's own presence.

The brilliant plain background against which they pose is exceptional for seated portraits from the period. While the bold primary colour of dark ochre is seen in a few of the reclining studies, Narvekar offers the dramatic backdrop to such a powerful extent, lending the seated studies a sad echo of solitary loneliness.

LIGHT AND ATMOSPHERE

In terms of the incandescent nature of colour tones we see that he paints 'from his head' with something already in mind, but rather responds to the paint in front of him, working directly with its viscosity, translucency and colour to build a 'sign' that can be apprehended in an instant. We think then of his pictures being poetic objects capable of receiving what each person is ready to invest according to the ensemble of forms and colours that is proposed to him.

We can see that he devotedly tries to render the canvas more as a landscape that has been created in the dim lit luminosity of the sunset or sunrise. Such intuitive sensitivity informs all of Narvekar's studies.



NARVEKAR P.R.
08



Ref No. 5443

Oil on Canvas
36 x 72 in
2008

Signed lower middle

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family

THE MOTHER AND CHILD ARC OF HUMAN ATTACHMENTS



Of deep affection and universal essence are his mother and child studies, they at once unveil how binary oppositions associated with sensations such as roughness and asymmetry can function as an integral element in regards to structural form through the identity of human chemistry and symbolism.

The arc of human existence and the repertoire of affection is contemplated in its entirety, from the experience of birth and parenthood to the advent of detachment and pathos passing through the survival of the memory of the past and the present.

Ref No. 5442

Oil on Canvas I 72 x 35.5 in
Signed top right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family

The presence of conversations and simple moments is a natural dimension of human existence - a dimension as organic as it is spiritual and that modern sensibility tends to add the purely distinct dimension to these studies. In many ways the mother and child works gives these paintings the quality of elegies, if we consider the elegy a form of poetry which, from Latin antiquity, has persisted in modern literature as a lyric composition inspired by personal events and with a melancholy tone of celebration.

Within his pictorial language, Narvekar's archaic quality of a pathos filled poetic genre explores the contemporary possibilities of a familial vision of human things and events, where with the term maternal dialogues we contemplate the possibility that there is a glimmer, in the mundane guise, of something that is precious and becomes an album of memories.



Ref No. 5456

Oil on Canvas I 36 x 95.5 in
Signed top left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family





Ref No. 5492

Oil on Canvas
36 x 36 in
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 2006

Oil & Acrylic on Canvas

36 x 36 in

2005

Signed lower right

Provenance

Acquired directly from the Artist

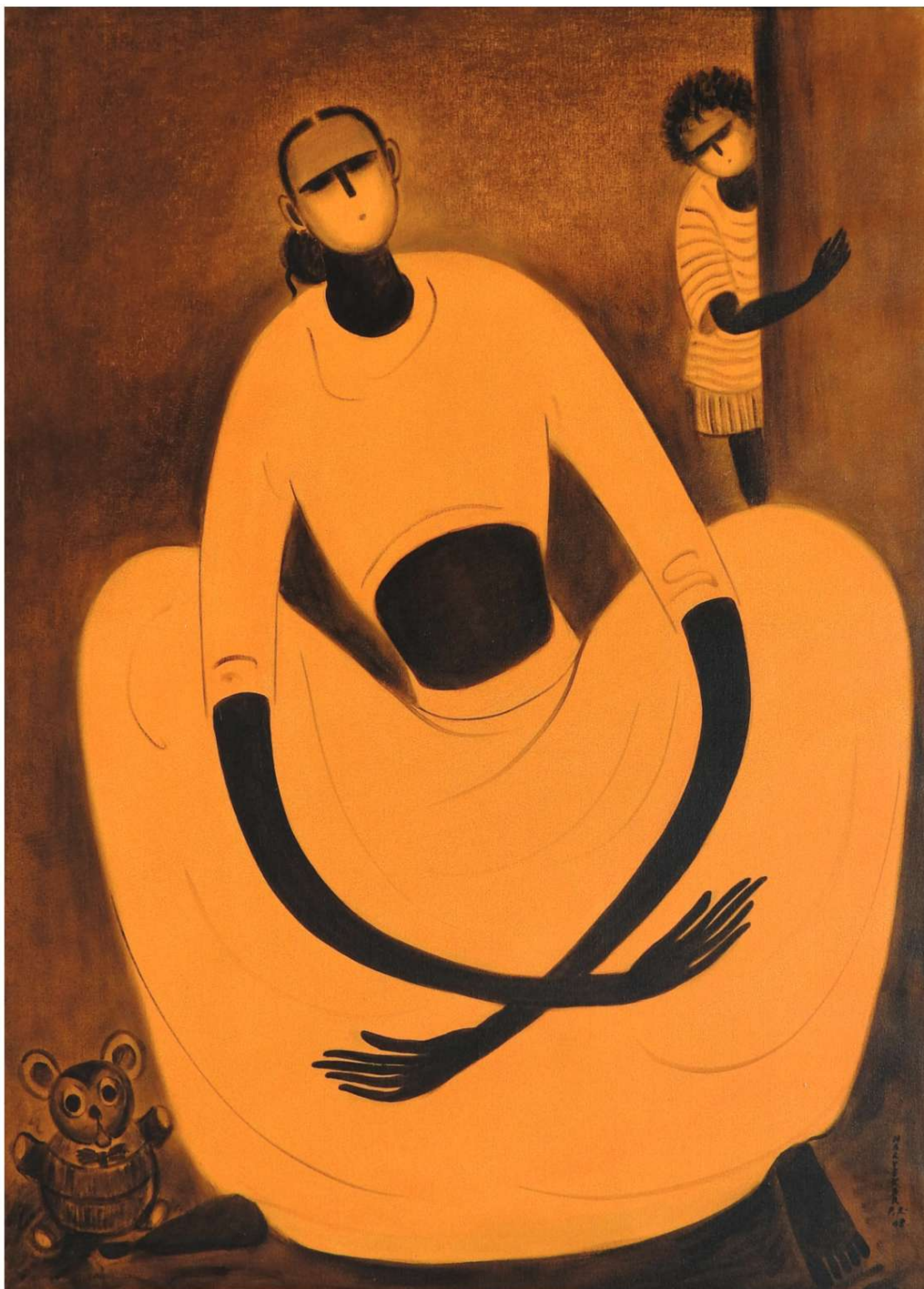


Ref No. 5481

Acrylic on Canvas
95 x 36 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family

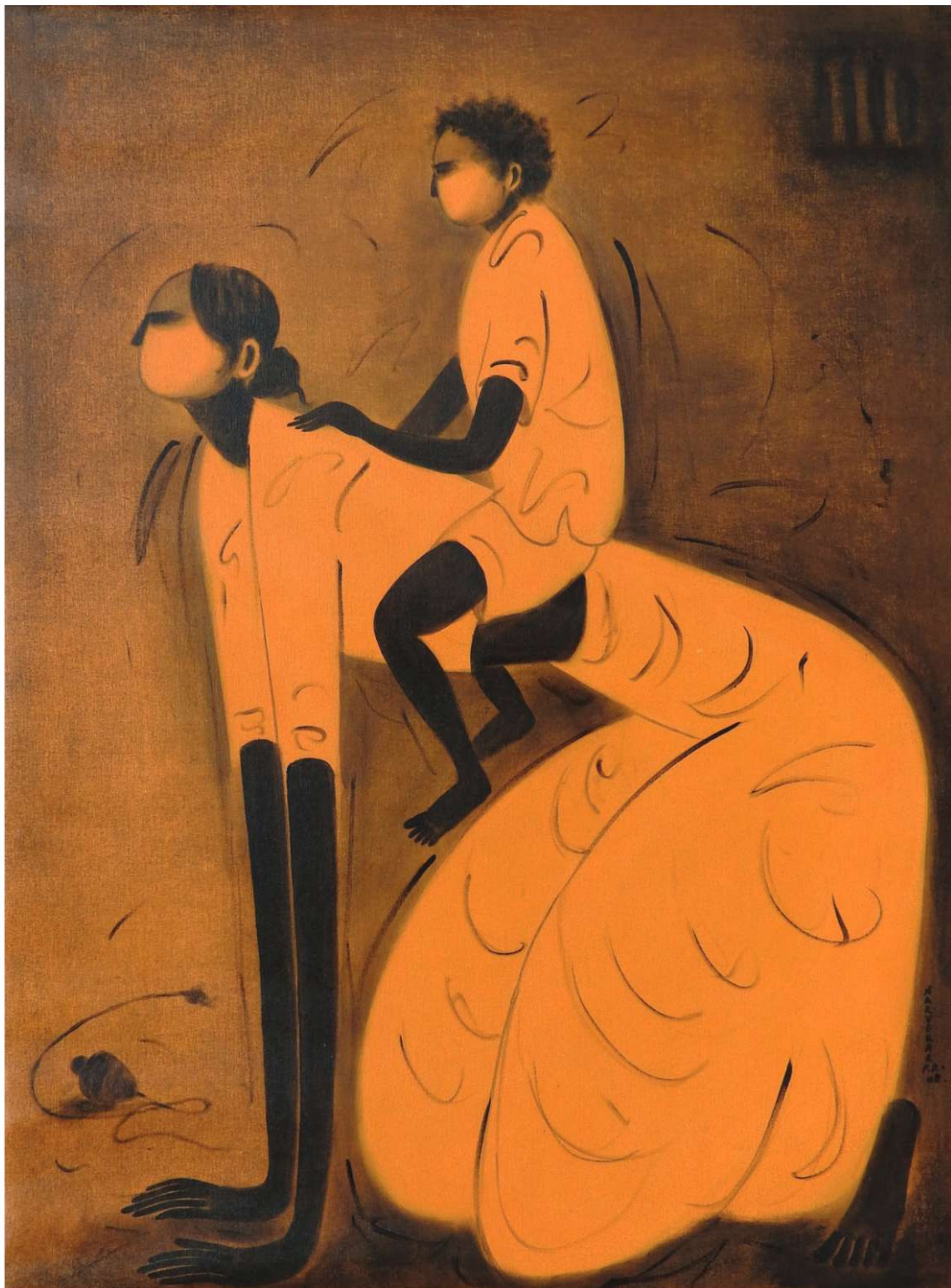




Ref No. 5371

Oil on Canvas I 48 x 36 in I 2008
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5377

Mother & Child
Oil on Canvas I 48 x 36 in I 2008
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5455

Oil on Canvas

95.5 x 36 in

2009

Signed lower right

Provenance

Acquired from the Artist's Family





Ref No. 5484

Oil on Canvas
96 x 36 in
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family





Ref No. 2863

Desolate Mother with Child Oil on Canvas
48 x 36 in I 2008
Signed lower left

Provenance

Acquired directly from the Artist



Ref No. 5438

Oil on Canvas
59.5 x 17 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5451

Oil on Canvas
59.5 x 17 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5439

Oil on Canvas
59.5 x 17 in
2008
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5459

Oil on Canvas
95.5 x 36 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family





Ref No. 5457

Oil on Canvas
95.5 x 36 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



DANCER AND MUSICIANS

The masculine and the feminine also coexist with each other, in a choreography of mutual simultaneity, if we look at the subtle quality of works such as the dancer and musicians in which the features reveal an osmosis of different identities that open and reveal the very notion of the portrait. But to coexist, in the art of Narvekar it is not only the different dimensions of time and the forms of feeling but also, and above all, the dimensions of human existence, which in its course contemplates the silence of both music and dance alongside spirituality, similarity alongside mystery and devotion to the fabric of performance.

The solo dancer sits in perfect grace, allows her face to assume its most physical aspects, so that the cheeks, lips, and forehead are shaped by the play of light and shadow as they are in everyday life. The gaze in this image resembles that of the mesmerising, otherworldly eyes of the kathak dancers, and you feel as if her eyes devoured the world.

The hands, the neck, with its still stateliness and the hands all, possesses that look of slender grace combined with strength which is so moving in real life.

The long veiled odhini worn loose, eyes alert and expectant, withholds her gaze in graceful poise, the dancer projects much of the youthful charm caught in earlier works of the artist.



Ref No. 5479

Oil on Canvas
48 x 48 in
2009

Signed lower left

Provenance

Acquired from the Artist's Family

In the second dance position with the percussionist sitting in the far end we see the moment of abhinaya pregnant with so many possibilities.



Ref No. 5445

Oil on Canvas

36 x 72 in

2008

Signed lower middle

Provenance

Acquired from the Artist's Family





Ref No. 5476

Oil on Canvas
48 x 36 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family

The three musicians playing the wind instrument again reflect a pedantic rhythmic accuracy and attentiveness. The shading of their faces and the ebony blackness of their necks all create a symphony. The next image of three musicians has a wind instrument the stringed ek tara as well as the mridangam. The triple toned tenor has its own beauty of swara and laya.



Ref No. 2897

Oil on Canvas

72 x 36 in

2008

Signed lower right

Provenance

Acquired from the Artist's Family

SOLITUDE AS SUBJECT

In many works we can glimpse solitude as a subject. This is because Narvekar was able to absorb and translate the discussions on identity, place and belonging into a transnational language that could address each individual's concern with migration, memory and alienation. It is the rustic rhythms of resonance that fill the frame the minimal accents created to give us a maximal impact of mood and reverie.

The women in most canvasses show that Narvekar shared a unique Modernist language that derived much from his own observations of life around him. We see that he showed a remarkable ability to distil time - honoured forms into an abstracted expressiveness of their own, and to refine and develop his own ideas, about materiality and evolving shapes, over years and decades of his work. Whether we are looking at his evolution, say, of the reclining figure or his love for the physical and metaphorical significance of the women as subjects, what is clear is that he was a student and seeker of the everyday idioms of life from which he learned so much about the expressive power of the archaic and the archetypal.

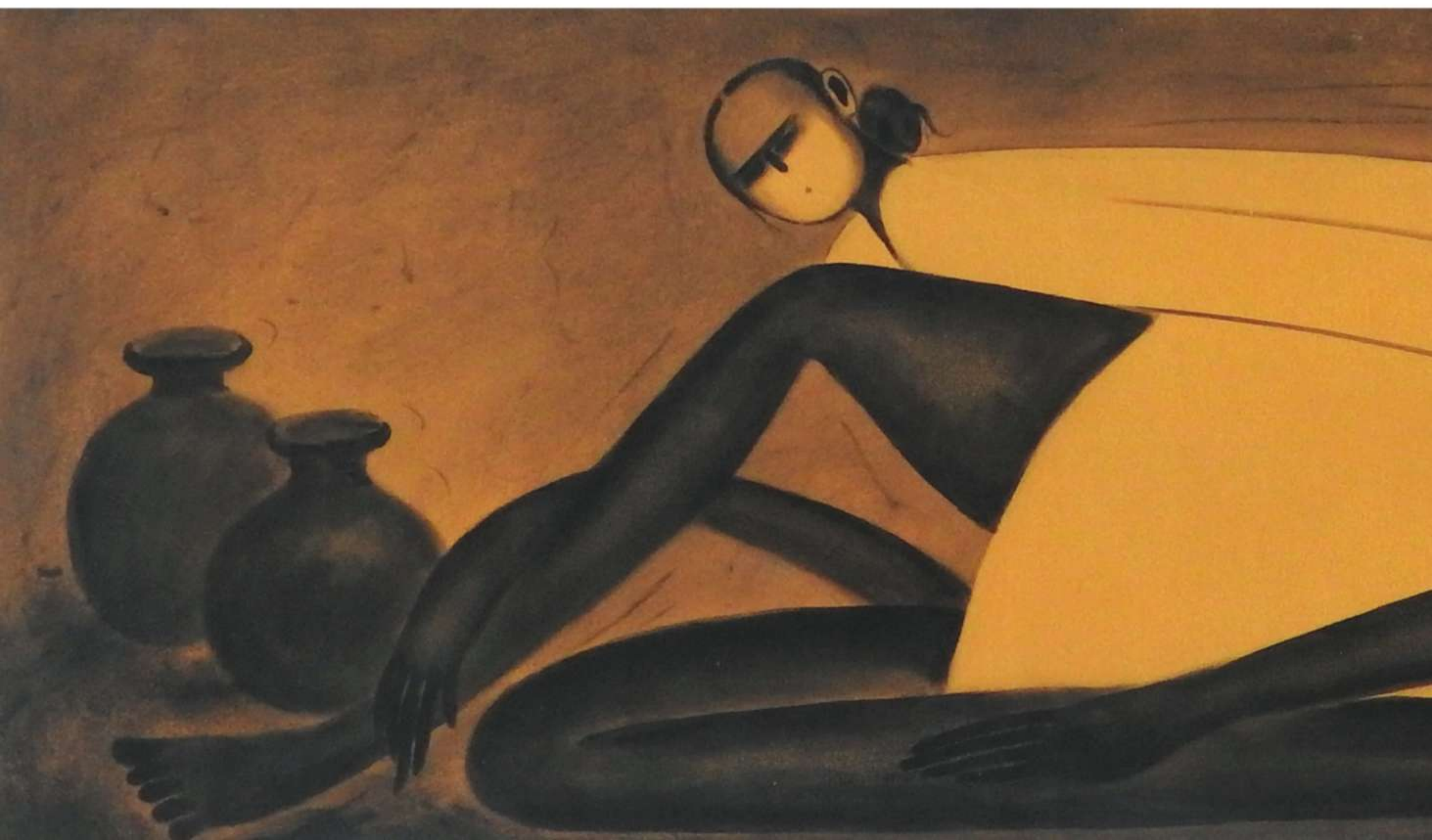
Ref No. 5444

Oil on Canvas
72 x 36 in

Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family





Ref No. 5440

Oil on Canvas
17 x 59.5 in
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family





Ref No. 5448

Oil on Canvas
42 x 17 in
Signed lower right

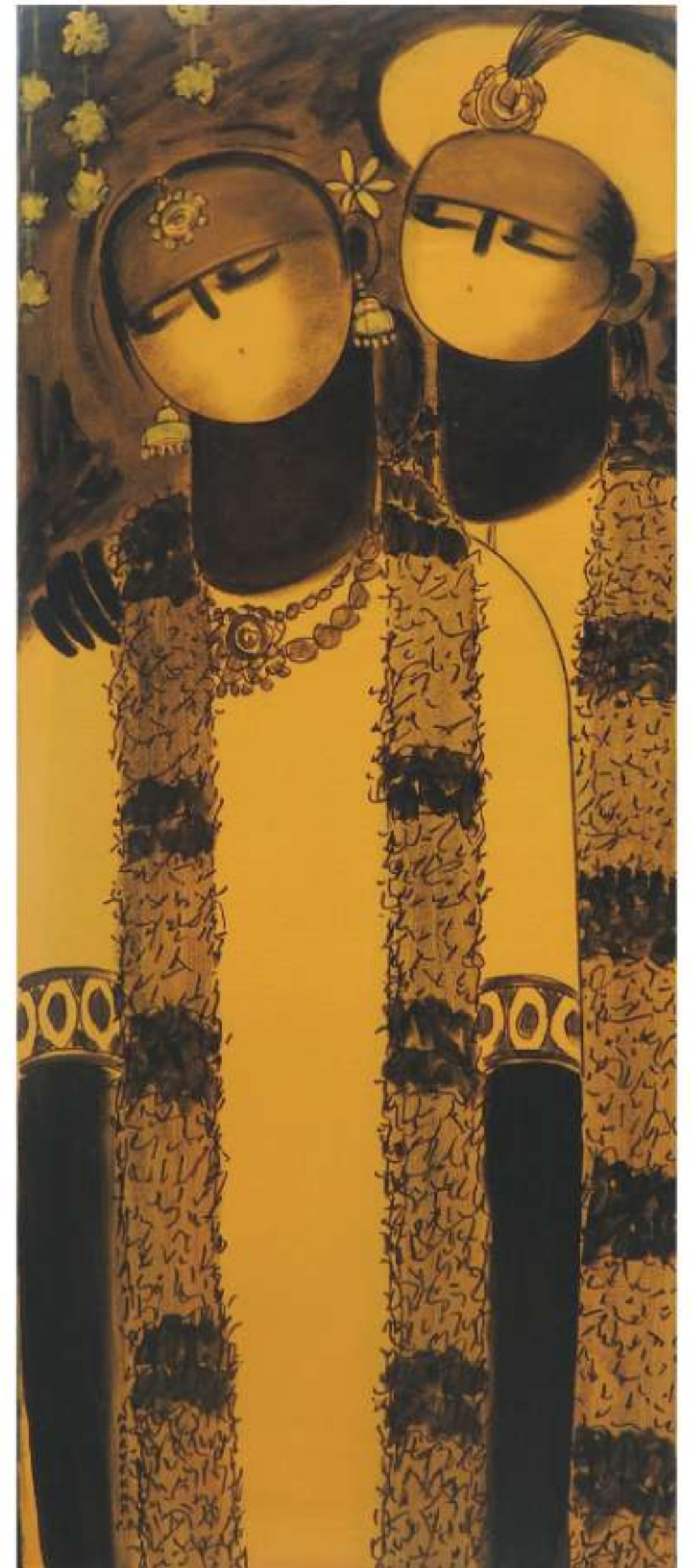
Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5449

Oil on Canvas
42 x 17 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5450

Oil on Canvas
42 x 17 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5493

Oil on Canvas
47.5 x 17 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5494

Oil on Canvas
47.5 x 17 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5495

Oil on Canvas
47.5 x 17 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family

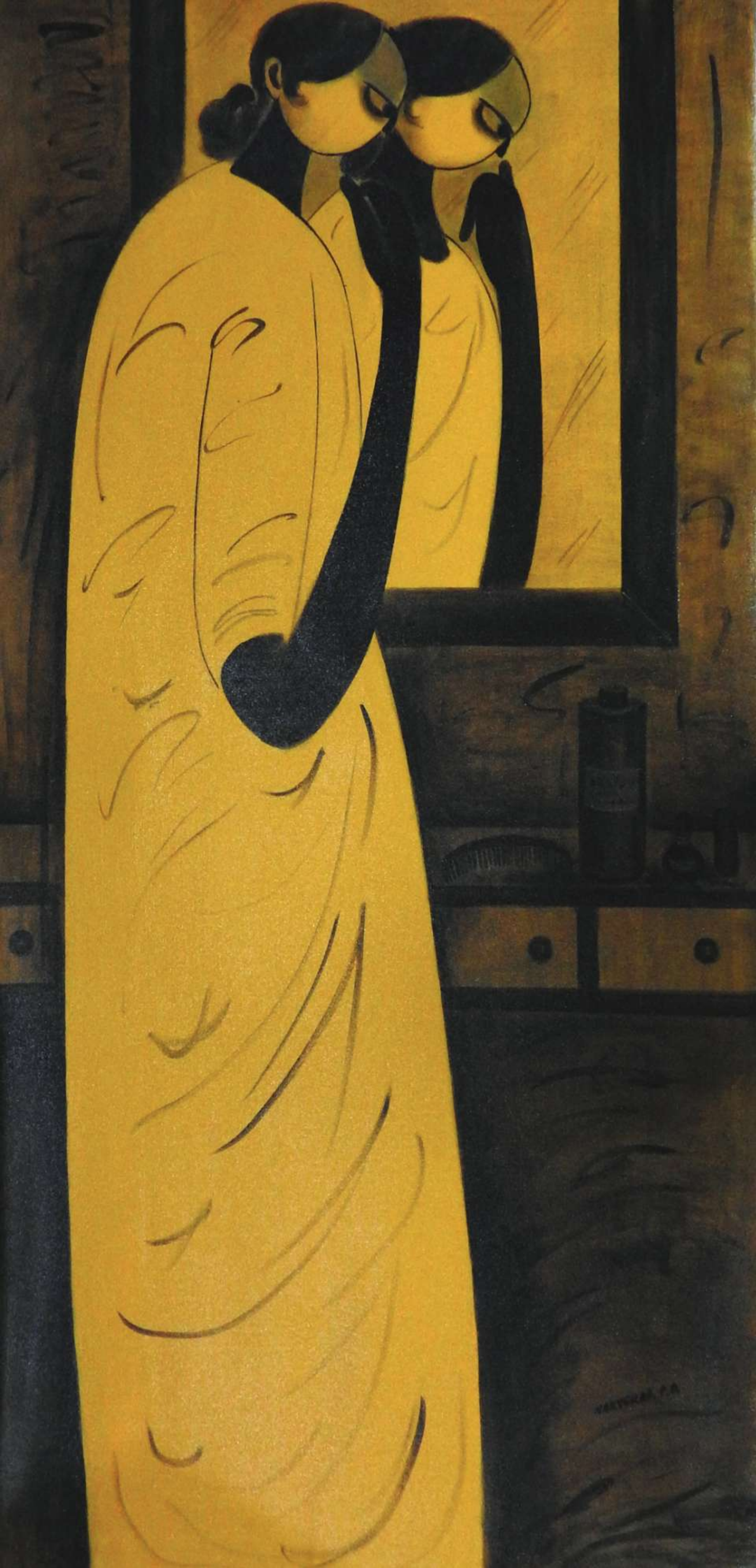


Ref No. 5446

Oil on Canvas
35.5 x 72 in
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family





Ref No. 5454

Oil on Canvas
72 x 36 in
Signed lower right

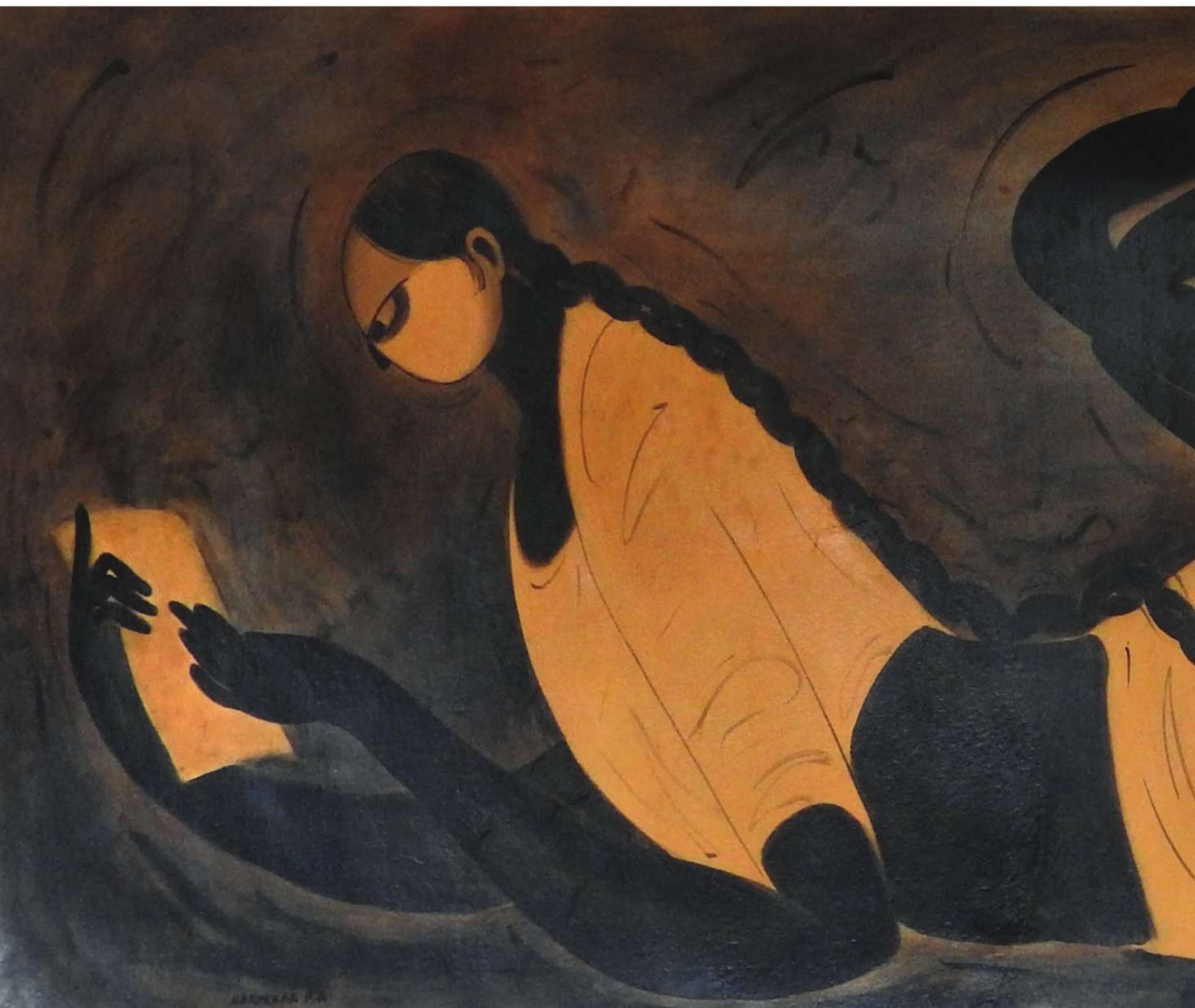
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Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5477

Oil on Canvas
48 x 36 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5482

Oil on Canvas
95 x 36 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family





Ref No. 5437

Oil on Canvas
59.5 x 17 in
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5478

Oil on Canvas
47.5 x 36 in
Signed lower left

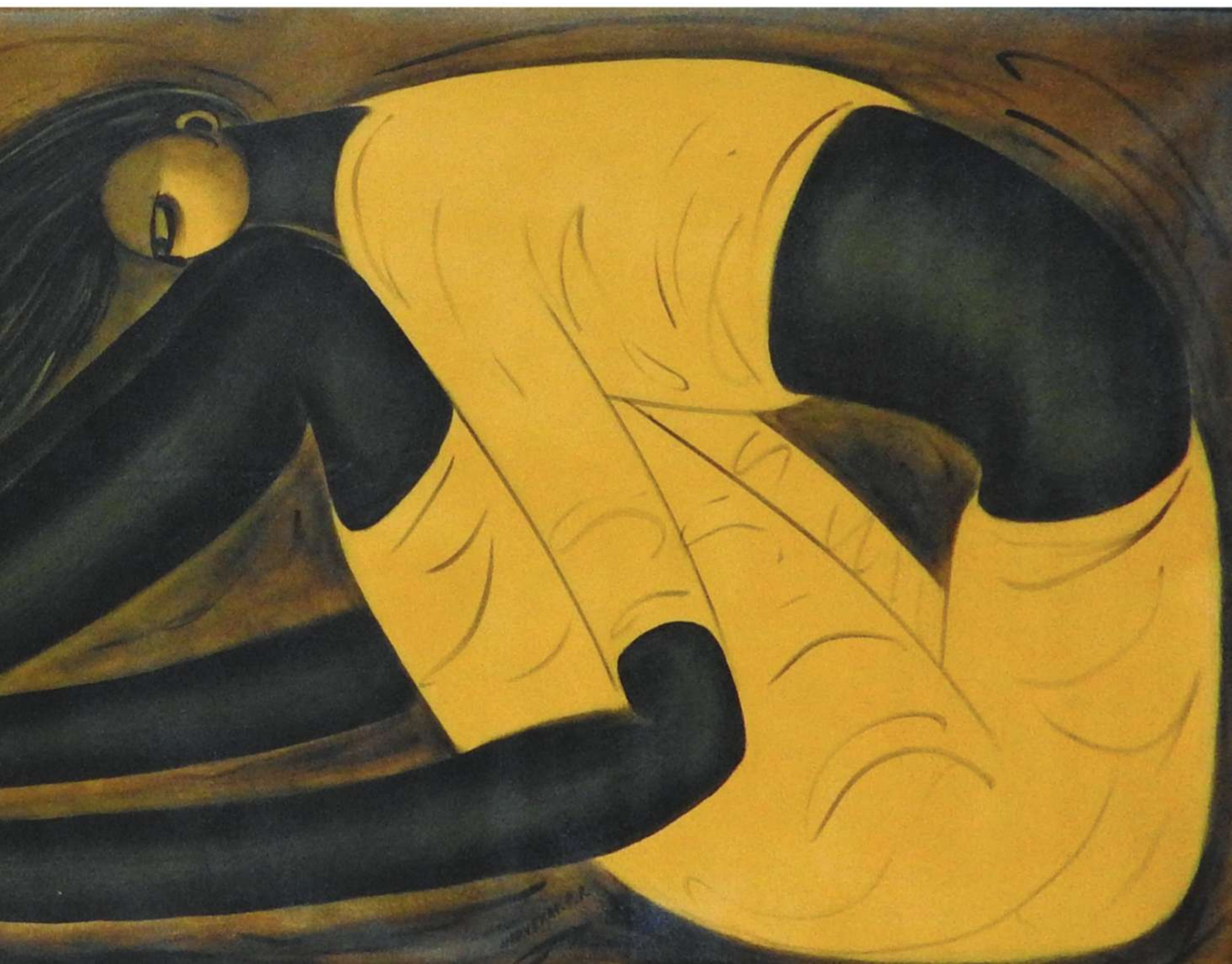
Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5458

Oil on Canvas
95.5 x 36 in
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



HUMAN FIGURES ON PAPER

Fragile paper, other than sturdy canvas, is also another preferred medium for Narvekar and we see that he finds in it a resonance with his thought process. In the most humble of settings with the whiteness of the crumpled, stitched attires Narvekar recreates the predicaments of human existence in charcoal. Due to its fragile nature as well as its amenability to painterly elements, paper and charcoal, is yet another medium that he identifies with and revels in his comfort. Lithe lines and tensile contours all come together to create expressionist endeavours that are at once charming and charismatic. The rural idyll is what is his stage and scenario.

Where the studies are groups of girls or singular solo subjects or musicians, we see he worked on more articulated narrower variations with flatter shoulders and cylindrical sections which he began making.



Ref No. 5473

Charcoal on Paper
19 x 19 in
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5466

Charcoal on Paper
22 x 22 in
2005
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5468

Charcoal on Paper
19 x 19 in
2004
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5469

Charcoal on Paper
19 x 19 in
2004
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5461

Charcoal on Paper
22 x 22 in
2004
Signed lower left

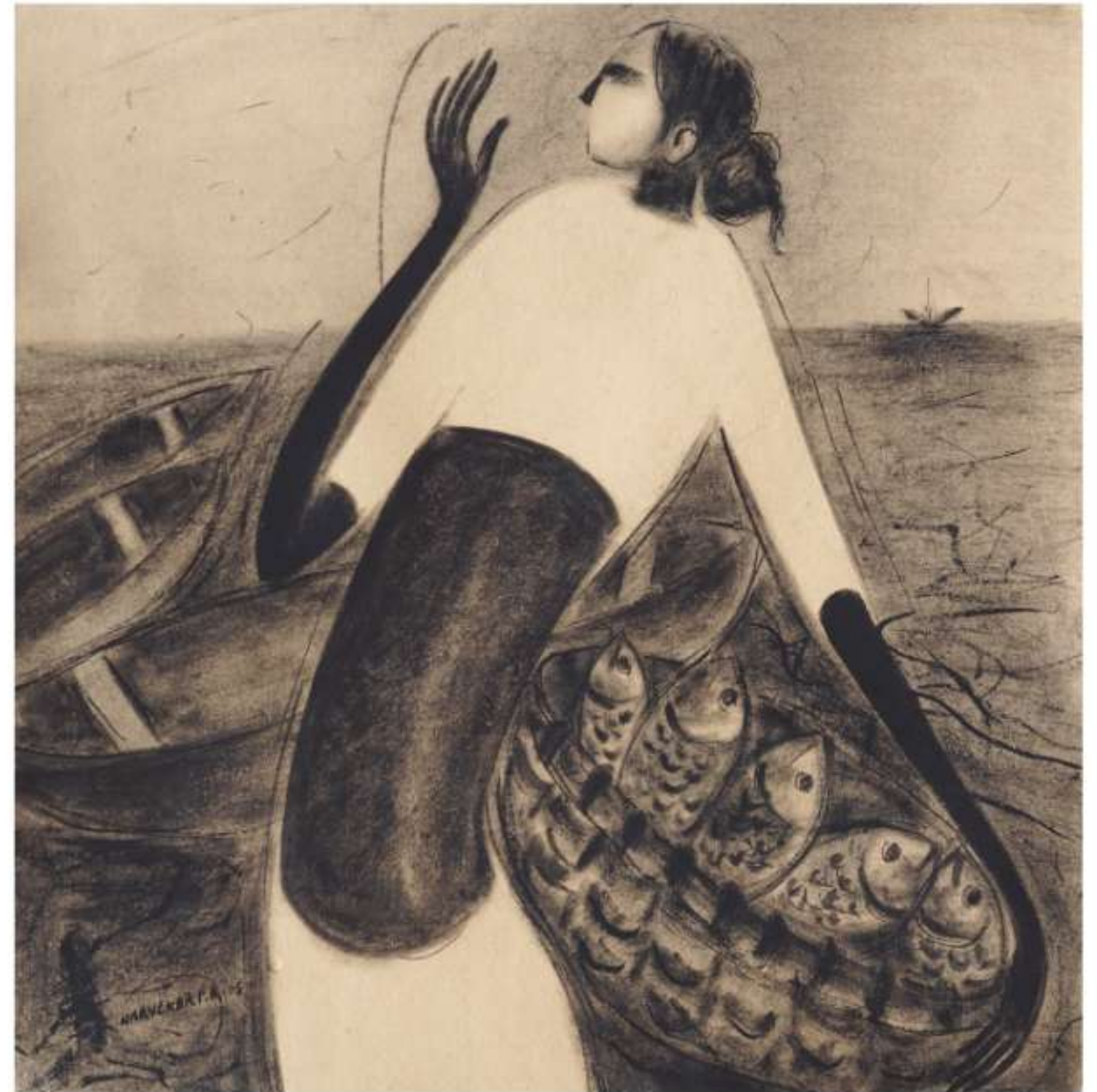
Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5472

Charcoal on Paper
19 x 19 in
2004
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5460

Charcoal on Paper
22 x 22 in
2005
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family

A few more solo studies have women with pots or women at work, which is part of an initial group of more curvaceous forms in just monochrome, worked on through generally architectural in scale, but increased here in size and more assured, less tentative. These are visually very resolved with perhaps more emphasised emotions, sometimes body contours fuller, curved and more pronounced throwing indentations towards the simpler cot or cradles or fishes,. It is clearly the most direct prototype with a number of different structural ideas that would mature in the years ahead. What is enchanting is his experimenting too with various cylindrical waisted forms, including an abstractly decorated fine and unusual series.



Ref No. 5467

Charcoal on Paper
19 x 19 in
2004
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5470

Charcoal on Paper
19 x 19 in
2004
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5464

Charcoal on Paper
22 x 22 in
2006
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5463

Charcoal on Paper
22 x 22 in
2006
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family

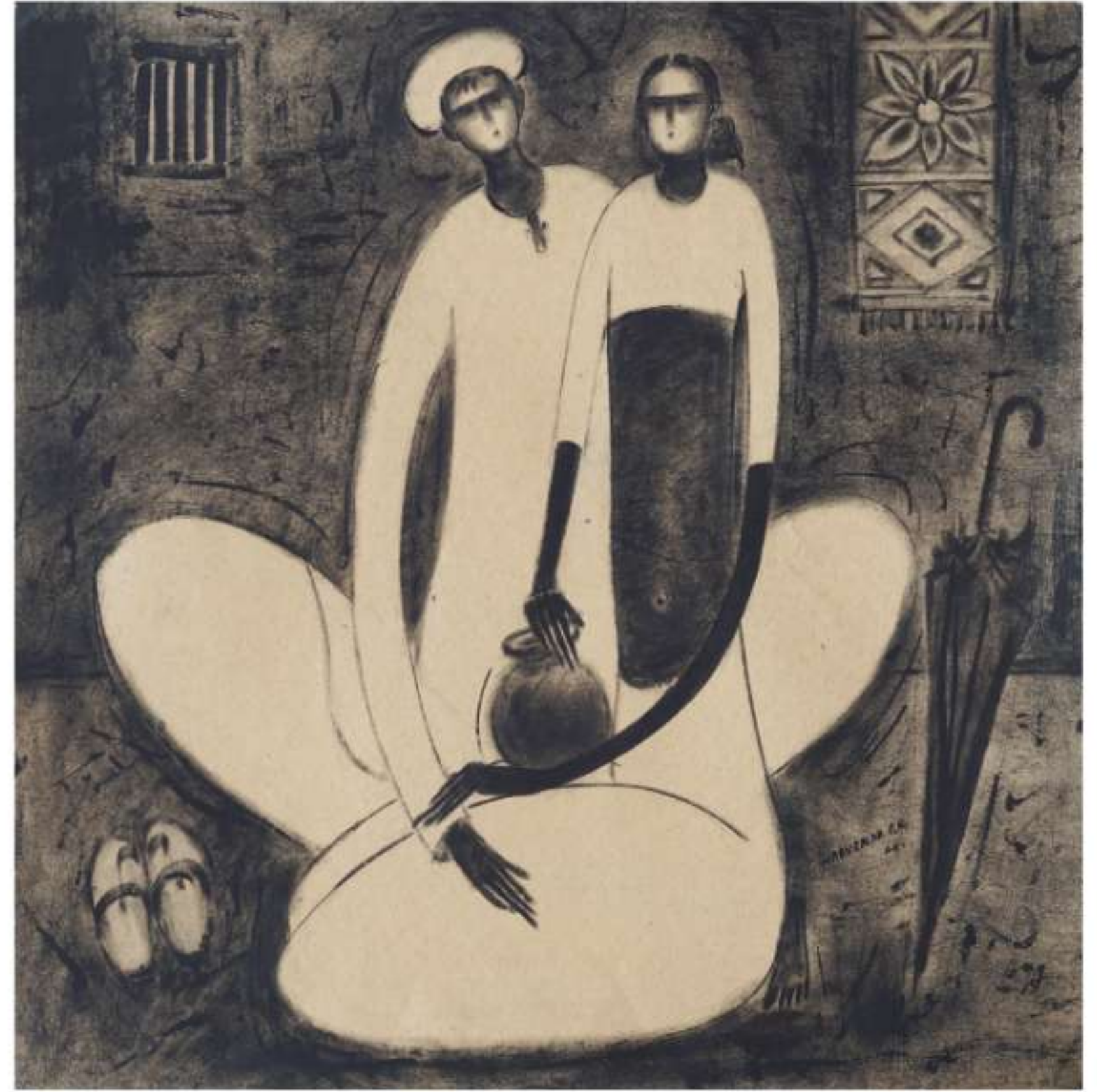


Ref No. 5465

Charcoal on Paper
22 x 22 in
2006
Signed lower left

Provenance

Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5462

Charcoal on Paper
22 x 22 in
2004
Signed lower right

Provenance

Acquired from the Artist's Family

The mother and child works have an iconography of dependance, of definitive domains in the dynamics of human chemistry, but all created in the geometry of human responses.

Narvekar also produced work with a pronounced totemic quality, art that was figurative or alluded to the figure. But in the black and white works his references are more oblique, he was clearly as indebted to the upright human form, and the sentinel, and the presence of the water pots, are just as haunting, particularly when seen in the atmospheric groups.

We see that he was essentially, in his great reclining figures, the exponent of resting horizontality, so his preoccupation was with a more taut verticality, reflects how as an artist he was deeply indebted to archetypes from early history.

Narvekar has a sculptural approach and acute sense of colour and scale was ideal for his human studies. These works are closely connected in shape and conception, sometimes narrowed sometimes deepened.

What alludes is his added texture and character to the coarse face of the surface of paper, an almost stone-like effect which emphasises a sense, not of decoration, but of bold sculptural mass, demonstrating skill in making work as an integral part of a larger structure.



Ref No. 5474

Charcoal on Paper
19 x 19 in
2002
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family



Ref No. 5471

Charcoal on Paper
19 x 19 in
2004
Signed lower right

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family

The vessels on the kitchen floor exemplify Narvekar's ability to produce charcoal studies for a more intimate modern space and environment too, and here, there is that architectural quality of ritual, enduring in its apparent simplicity. This very significant piece unites him as master of two mediums, both of which he understood sculptural essence, and just how humanely a made composition can extend our sensory experience.

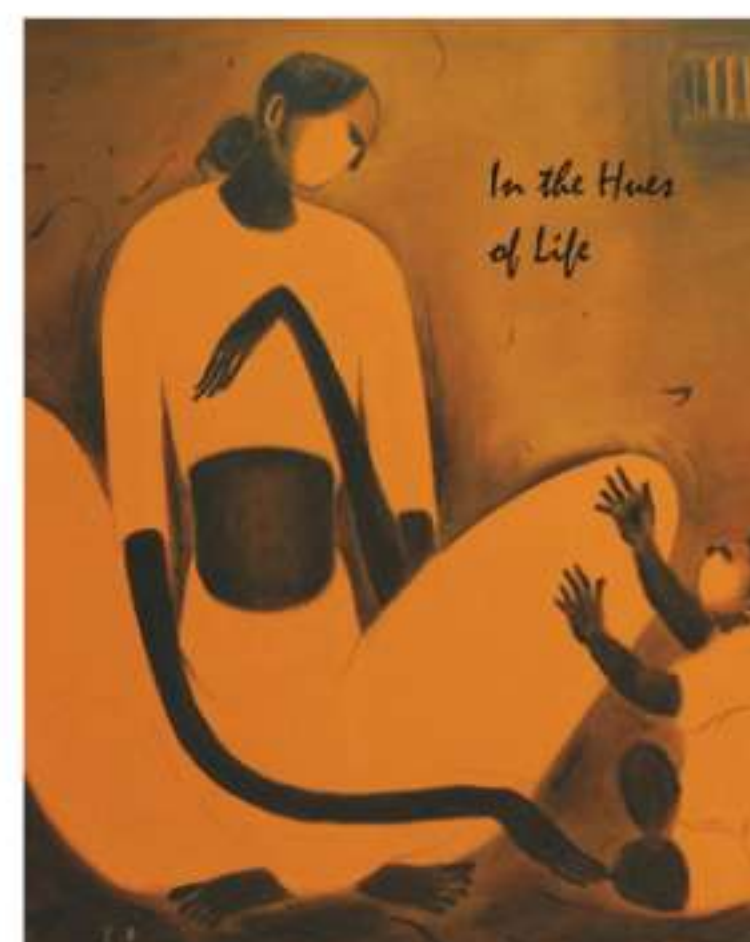
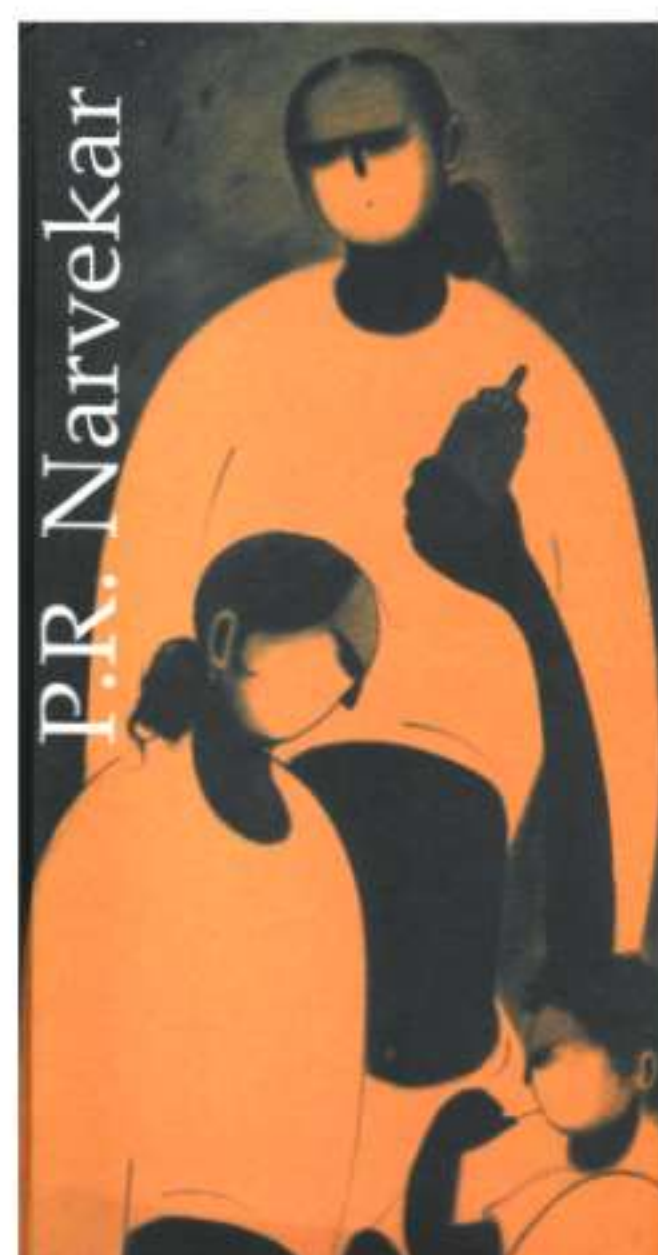
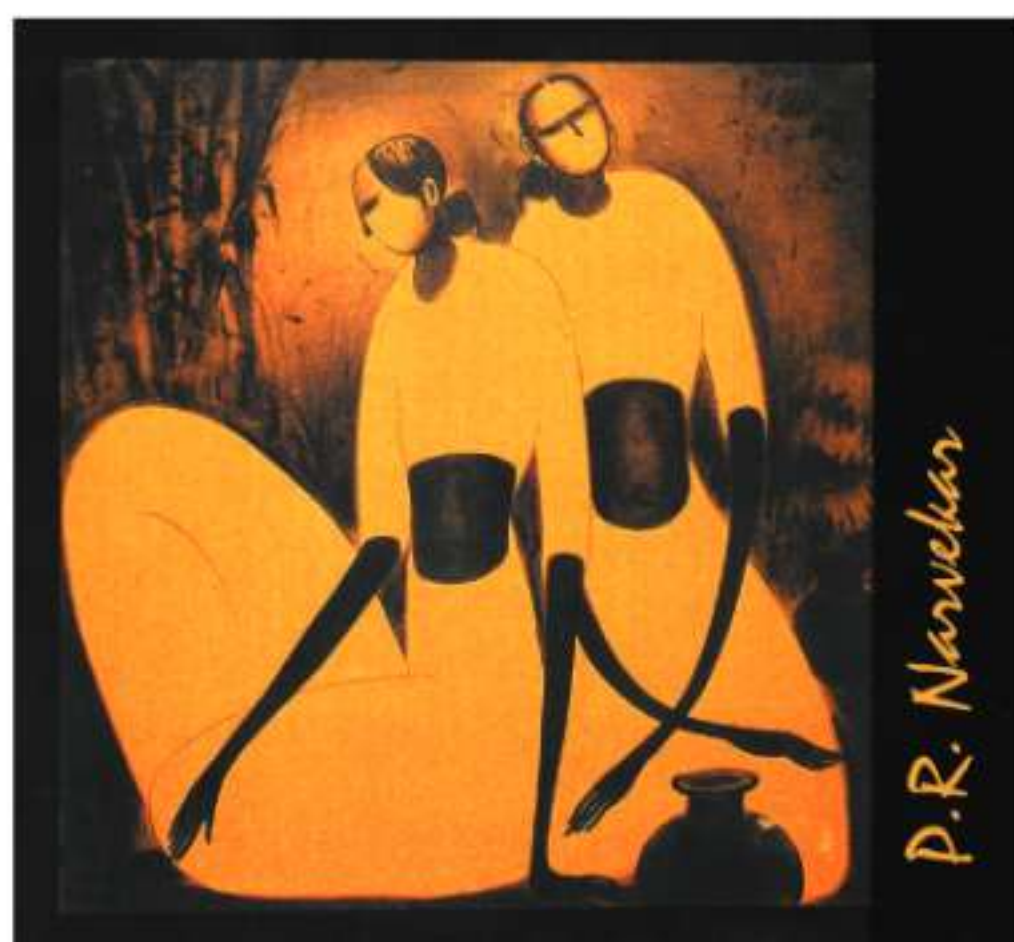


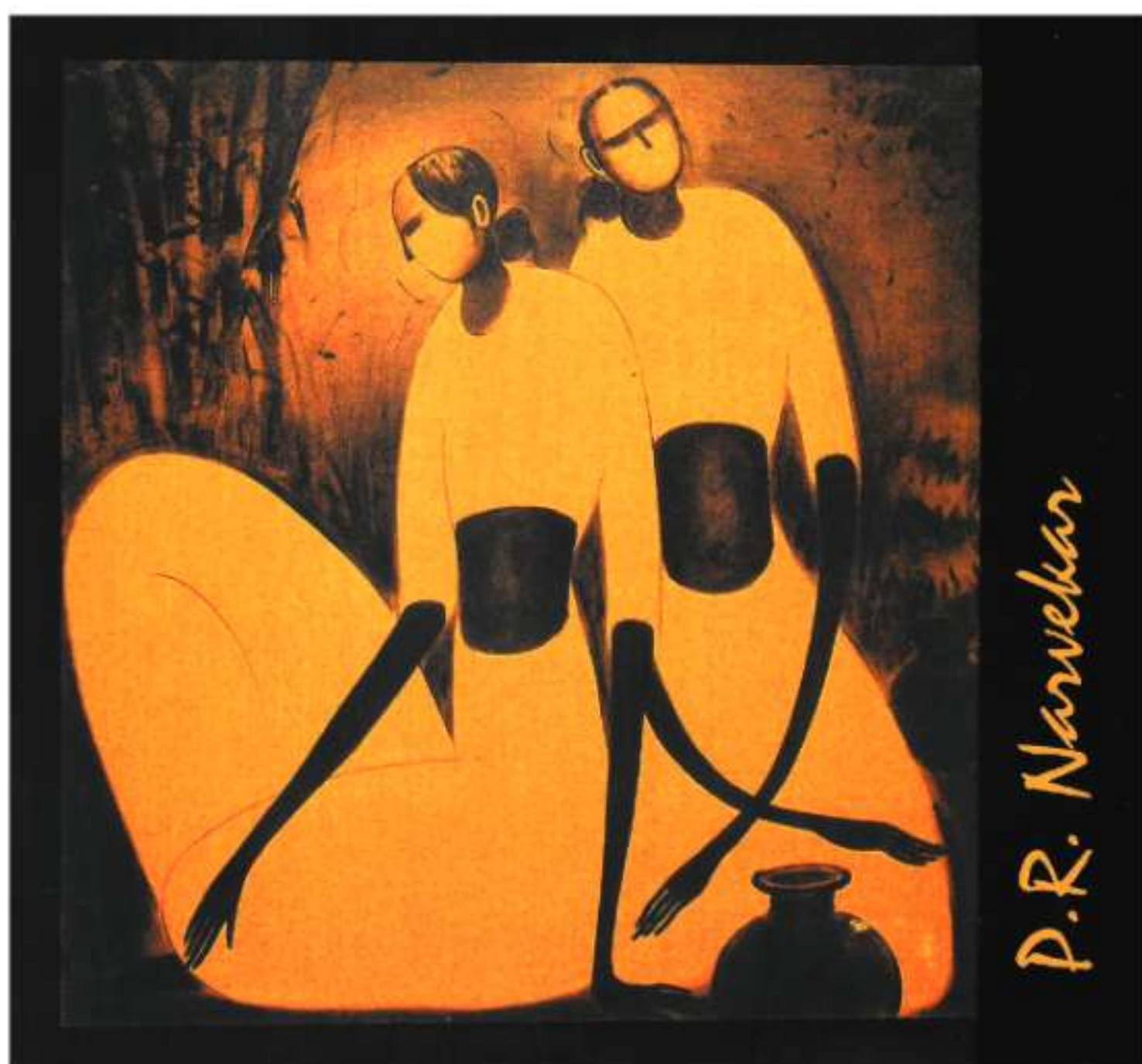
Ref No. 5475

Musician
Charcoal on Paper
23 x 19 in
2003
Signed lower left

Provenance
Acquired from the Artist's Family

FROM THE ARCHIVE





THE PRELUDE

25th February - 5th March, 2006

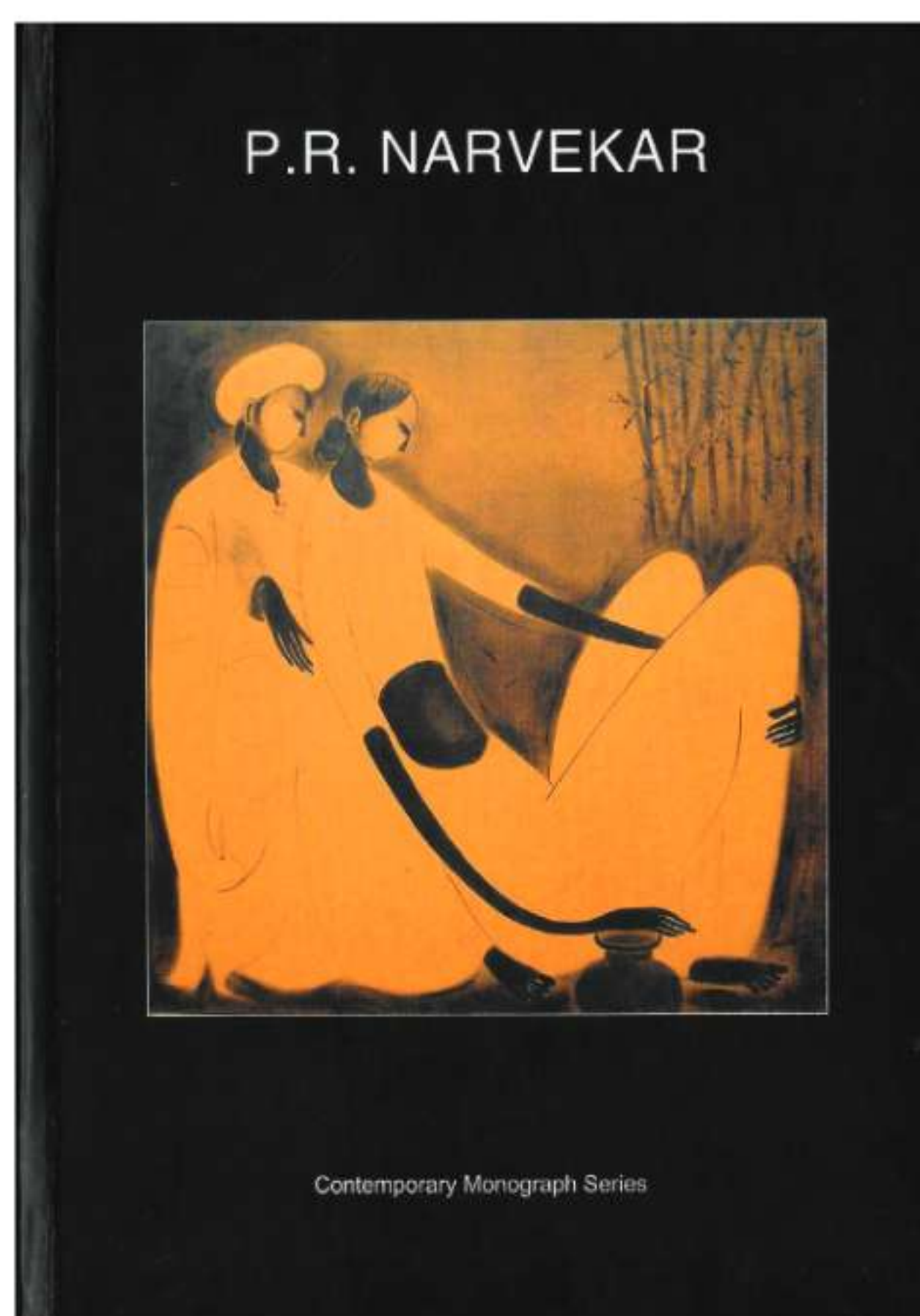


Nature is full of essence, so is life in the midst of nature. The sensitive artist is possessed by this essence and not merely by the visual appearance of the objects in the world. As a result the process of creation emerges through his medium of expression. Where the recognition of the object may diminish to the extent of essence.

Mr. Narvekar Pandharinath's paintings depict a pictorial philosophy, expressed through covering the canvas with thin paint, even proper organisation of formal beauty of selected object to render the selected subject such types of painting speak something about our cultural as well as emotional and environmental beauty. In his present series of mixed media paintings Mr. Narvekar has used the human form as the basis of his expression and experimentation. It is only in discovering that which is hidden that one can truly see with an inner eye. His lines are expressive, whether straight or curved, thick or thin, continuous zigzag or broken. Rhythmic lines and moving lines create a sense of volume.

In his painting, black lines on white canvas at even distance create a gray tone and his monochromatic paintings create an environment to express beauty.

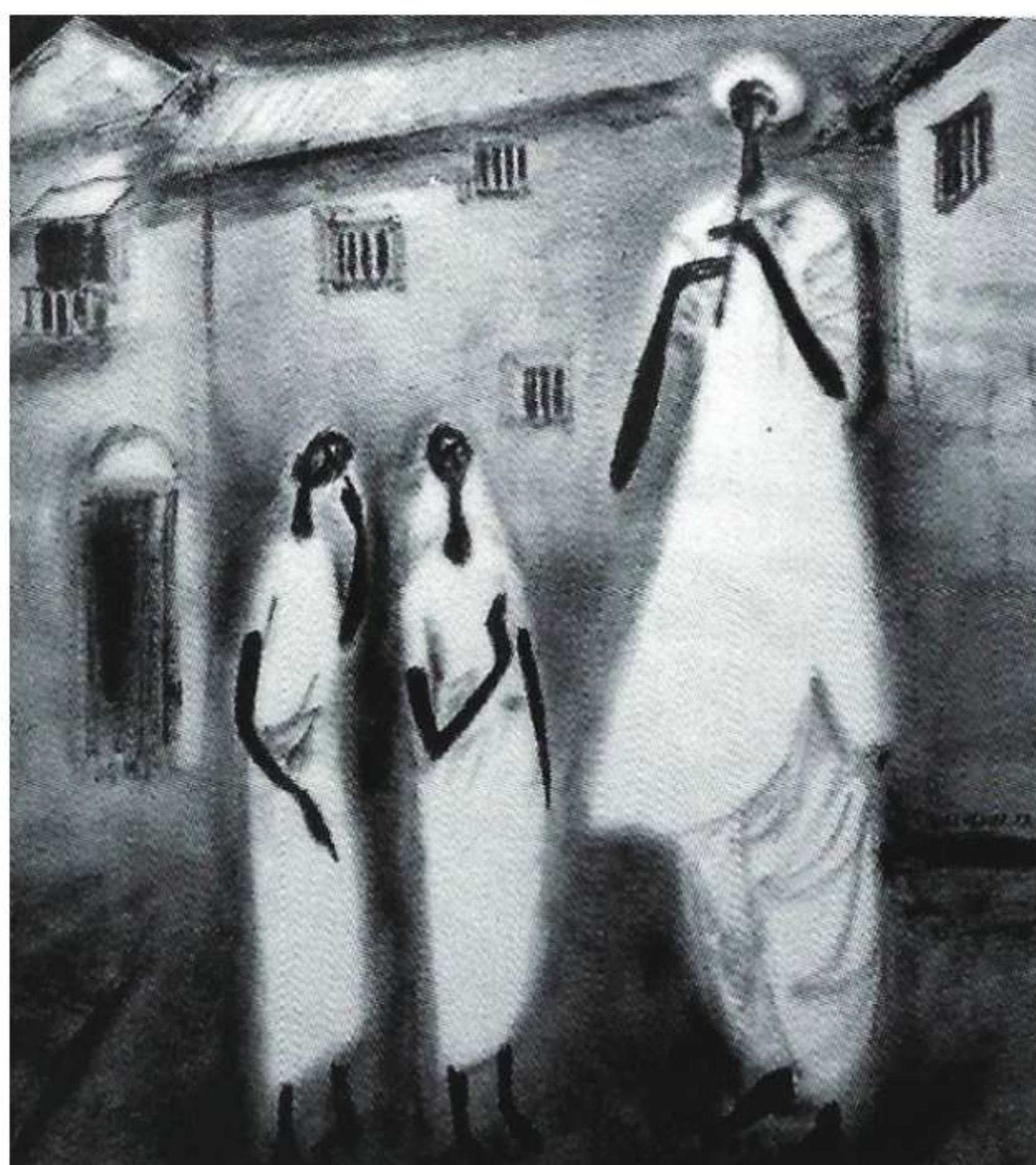
Prof. Prabhakar Patil



P.R. NARVEKAR
Contemporary Monograph Series 6
2009



I don't know whether the mythical phoenix really rose from its ashes, but I know a mere mortal who has. I can say this with conviction because he has earned recognition in the world of fine arts after having been virtually written off by the art fraternity. As an aspiring artist turned- musician-turned-adman myself, I am fortunate to have known him closely since my formative years. I know of a certain internationally renowned artist, an extremely pessimistic one I thought, who went on record telling Mr. Phoenix that there was no way he could stage a comeback into mainstream art. Impossible is what he subtly wanted to convey. Because 23 agonizing years in oblivion is not something everyone can reconcile with.



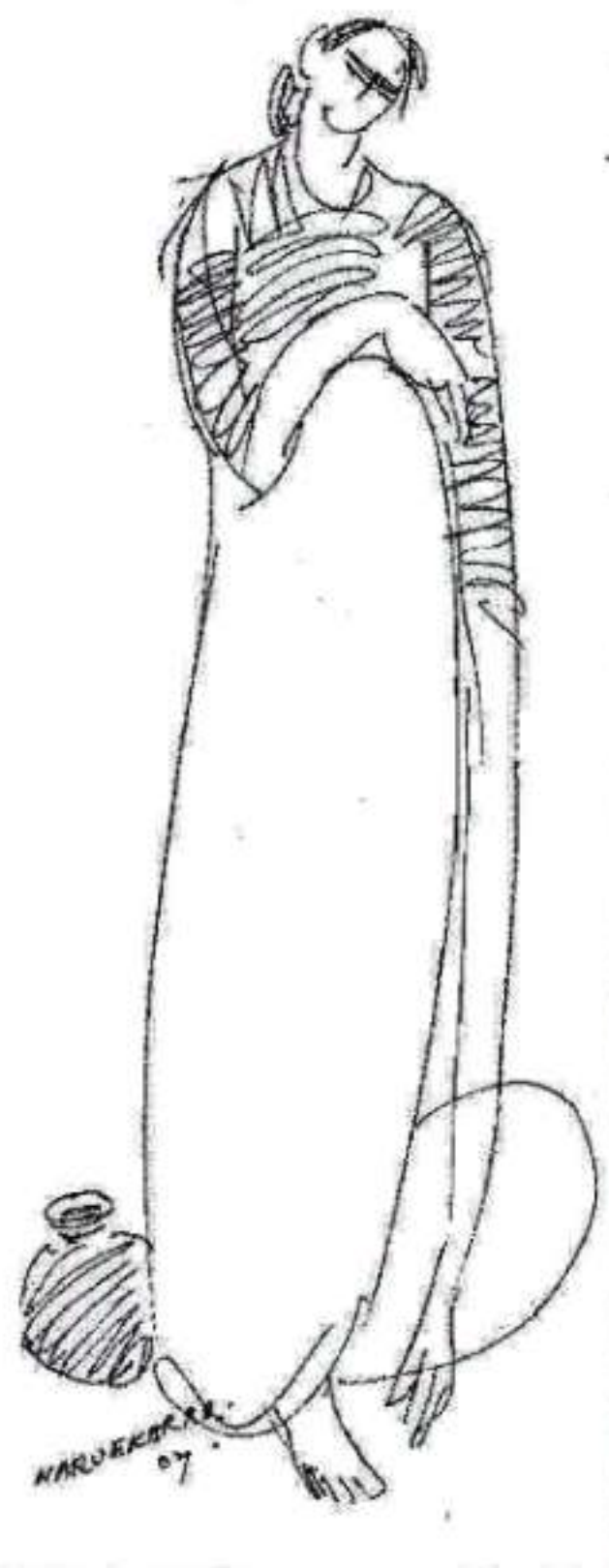
But the rest, like they say, is history one steeped in angst and triumph. Allow me to take you on a journey through this inspiring saga. PR Narvekar's first brush with glory in Fine Arts came with a First Class Diploma from Sir J School of Arts in 1974. In fact he ranked 2nd in Maharashtra state. This was followed by a Gold Medal at JJ School of Arts' Annual exhibition. That's when I thought his ascent had begun. But quite shockingly, it was an abrupt and exasperating halt. Narvekar realised that "making it" as a freelance artist was like finding water in a desert.

A successful career in fine arts was demanding in terms of both time and money. While he had invested liberally in the former, the latter proved to be quite prohibitive. That's when he dejectedly admitted that he needed a job. He got one- as a textile designer! A cruel compromise I thought but, not as bad as feeling unemployed, or worse, worthless. Thank God for small mercies! In 1978 came marriage and life in a 10 x 12 ft cubicle - a confinement of sorts for someone whose mind knew no bounds. The subsequent responsibility of bringing up a family of three circumscribed his world even further. These changing priorities coerced him into a self imposed and indefinite exile from the world of fine arts. I could almost

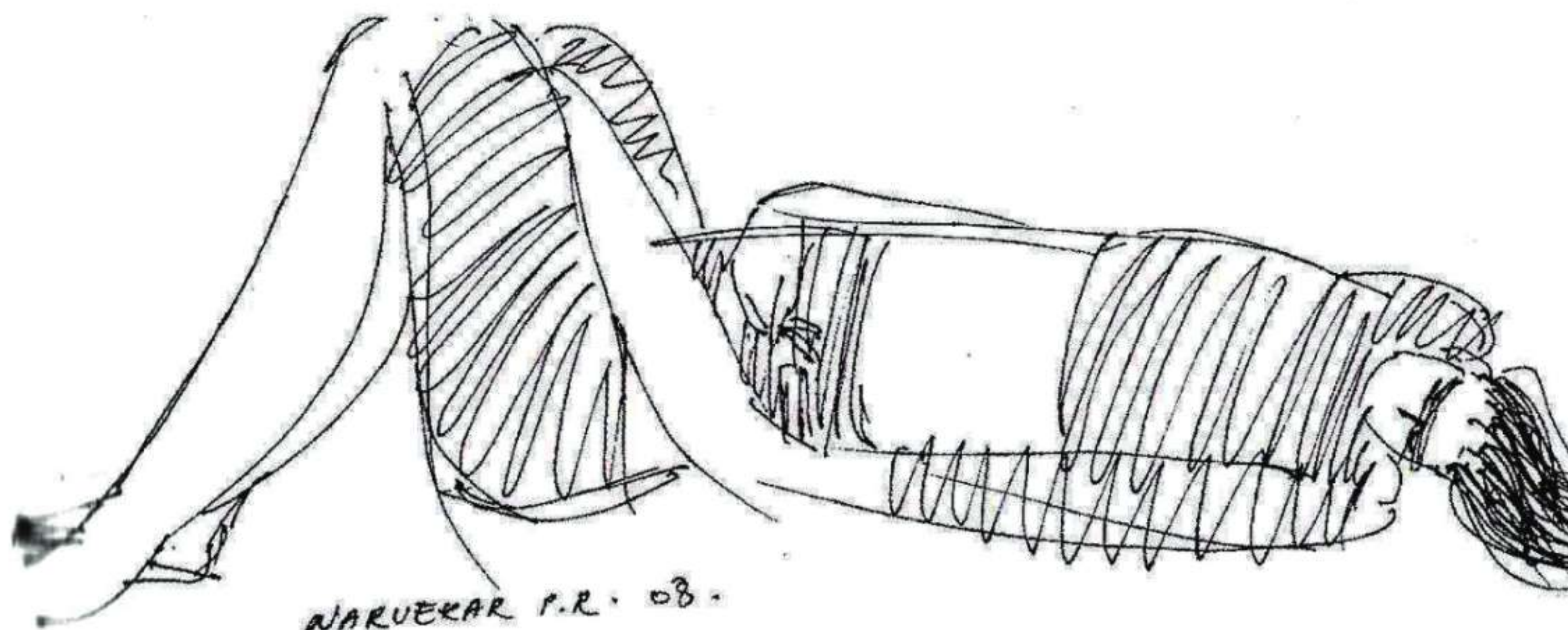
hear his soul cry out when he told me that he would have to embrace the commercial hues of the art world to make both ends meet. As he dabbled with different mediums and styles, he came up with stunning murals and other customized paintings. He took up any form of art that yielded a quick buck. In the late nineties, Narvekar set out to create a series of theme-based works featuring the vibrant hues and glorious facets of Rajasthan. To this repertoire he added the infinite forms of Ganesha and abstracts while sporadically participating in many prestigious competitions. Some of these works also meandered into exhibitions. This earned him a modest income but more deservedly, recognition and credibility as an artist. Soon the 'artist' in him was awakened and he was thirsting for a resurrection. Somewhere in my heart, I knew that this was the spark, which would kindle a raging fire - a fire that was once smothered by the winds of adversity. It was time to come back with a vengeance.

I remember him telling me that he drew inspiration from Thomas Edison's famous quote which goes like this: "I will not say I have failed 1000 times but I have discovered 1000 things that can cause failure." So after discharging a major responsibility of having married off his two daughters into decent families, there was no looking back. He decided to take the plunge again head first, into his lost world. For him it was a do or die situation and mercifully, he opted for the former. Having done so, it emboldened him to hire an independent room; he preferred to call it a studio; where he worked relentlessly for hours sometimes up to 18 hours at a stretch and for days at length.

Between 2001 and 2005, Narvekar virtually cut himself off from the outside world and focused intensely on developing a unique style which would soon become his trademark and impart him with a distinct identity. He experimented with variegated mediums and researched with the figurative. The efforts paid off and he came up with his own brand: elongated monochromes. These works not only won him awards from Maharashtra state, Art Society of India and Bombay Art Society, it earned him a place under the sun.



This 'comeback' also earned him his first major reward. I can still vividly picture the exultation on his face in 2001 when one of his paintings bagged the first prize at a competition held by the Art Society of India. That particular painting was eventually purchased by one of the leading celebrities of those times. Narvekar was now brimming with confidence which had completely vanished not so long ago. Moreover, the satisfaction and the feeling



that his work had acquired both classical as well as commercial value, was immeasurable.

Then the inevitable happened; it was destined. In 2005, Narvekar took one of his life's biggest gambles and booked the prestigious Jehangir Art Gallery, often considered to be the launch pad for upcoming artists. The gamble paid off.

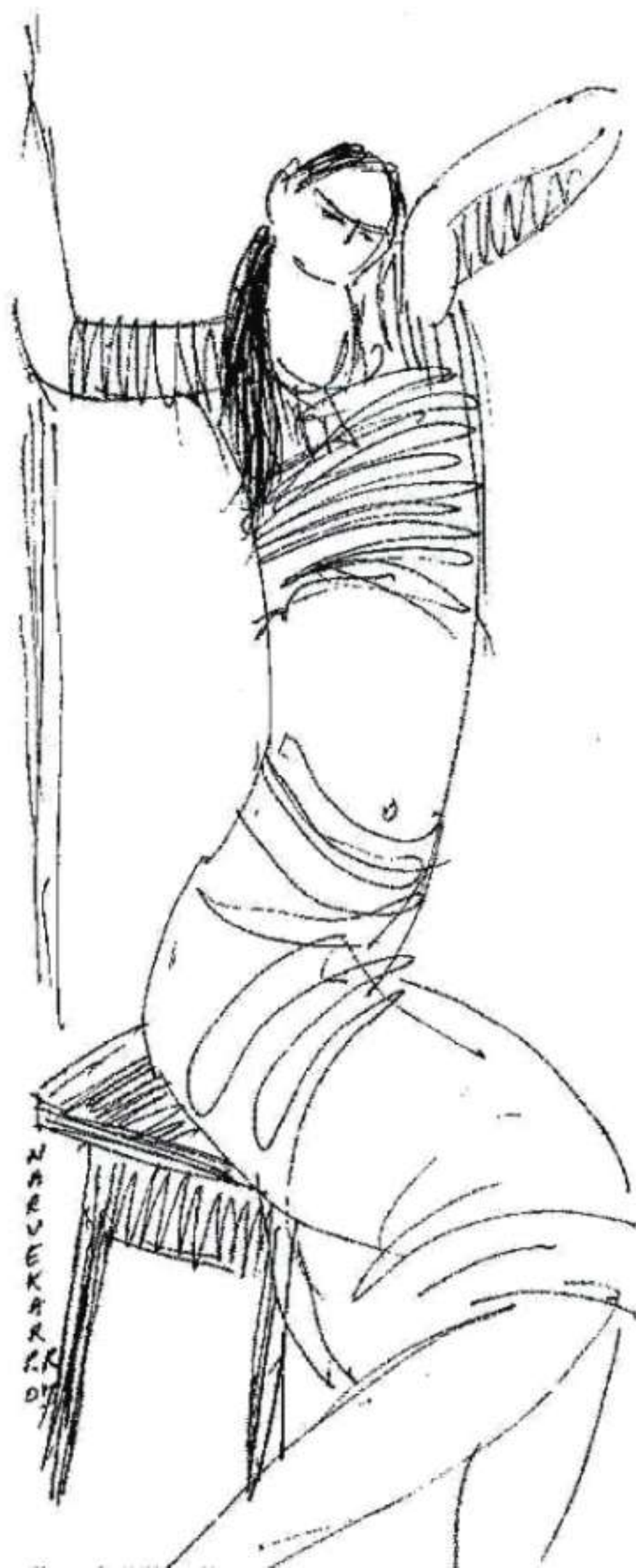
All these years of single-minded focus and self-belief finally yielded rich dividends. The exhibition was a total sell-out. The art world sat up and took notice. Narvekar had finally arrived!

It was not long before an art collector with a discerning eye spotted this powerhouse of talent and potential. Vikram Bachhawat, a reputed art collector and owner of the renowned Aakriti art gallery in Kolkata, provided Narvekar the kind of exposure which served as the perfect platform for his works. In 2006, Vikram organized a solo show in Kolkata which would mark Narvekar's foray into the international art circuit. Gradually, Narvekar's work shared the lime-

light at numerous prestigious auctions with internationally acclaimed artists. The ascent had begun and the zenith was within sight. Vikram and Narvekar have forged an impressive alliance and are a winning combination. An invisible bond binds them, and together they have proved to be a formidable force in the world of art. Vikram has every reason to be elated with his 'find' because he knows, deep within his heart, that he has unearthed a gem whose real value is yet to be determined. In spite of having done so, he is lavish in his praise for Narvekar and is in awe of his art.

If art is about communication, Narvekar's works achieve the highest objective. At the centre of his works is the human form and so is Nature. Together they infuse his art with bracing minimalism. Perhaps it's a reflection of his own entity. There is a method though. A method that's typical of Narvekar. He has attempted to preserve the contemporary arts. He manages to captivate the art enthusiast without complicating matters or arousing undue curiosity as is sometimes the case when one contemplates an abstract. He also believes in maintaining the purity of the subject - nudes are a strict no-no.

In his own radical approach, Narvekar has endeavoured to show women in different roles: women practicing music, cleaning fish before cooking, going about their daily chores, playing with children and socializing. Men are



depicted as being engaged in conversation. The expressions are based on extreme simplicity, but beyond the easy-flowing lines - thick or thin, straight or curved, continuous or broken there is the uncomplicated rhythm of everyday routine. A remarkable aesthetic sense seeks out beauty in postures and actions without which life is incomplete. If one were to capture the true spirit of Narvekar's paintings, three words suffice: form, lines and rhythm.

His portrayal of a range of emotions without features except the eyes, simply highlight the exquisite mastery which he possesses. Personally, I am of the opinion that if one can paint the eyes well, one can express anything. Interestingly, the subject is not as realistic; the bodies are flat and one-dimensional as compared to the surroundings. For instance the background and settings have more depth and are three-dimensional. What is peculiar is the absence of demarcations and features. So in spite of actions being evoked through different settings, the people look similar. One can't make a distinction between two women or two men.

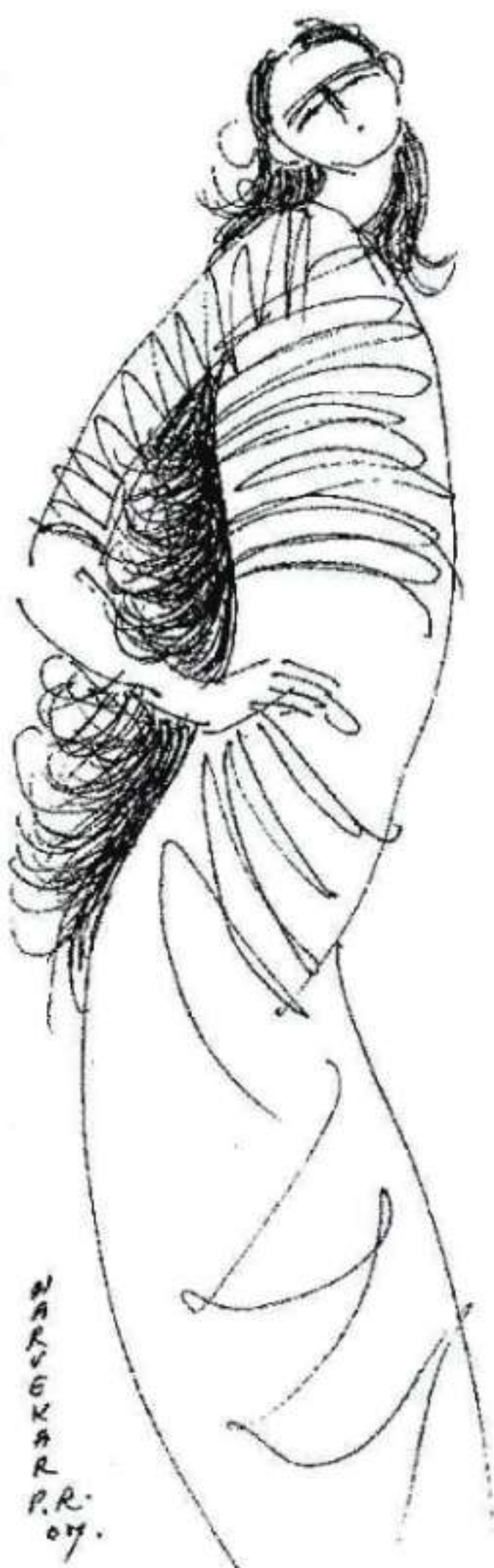


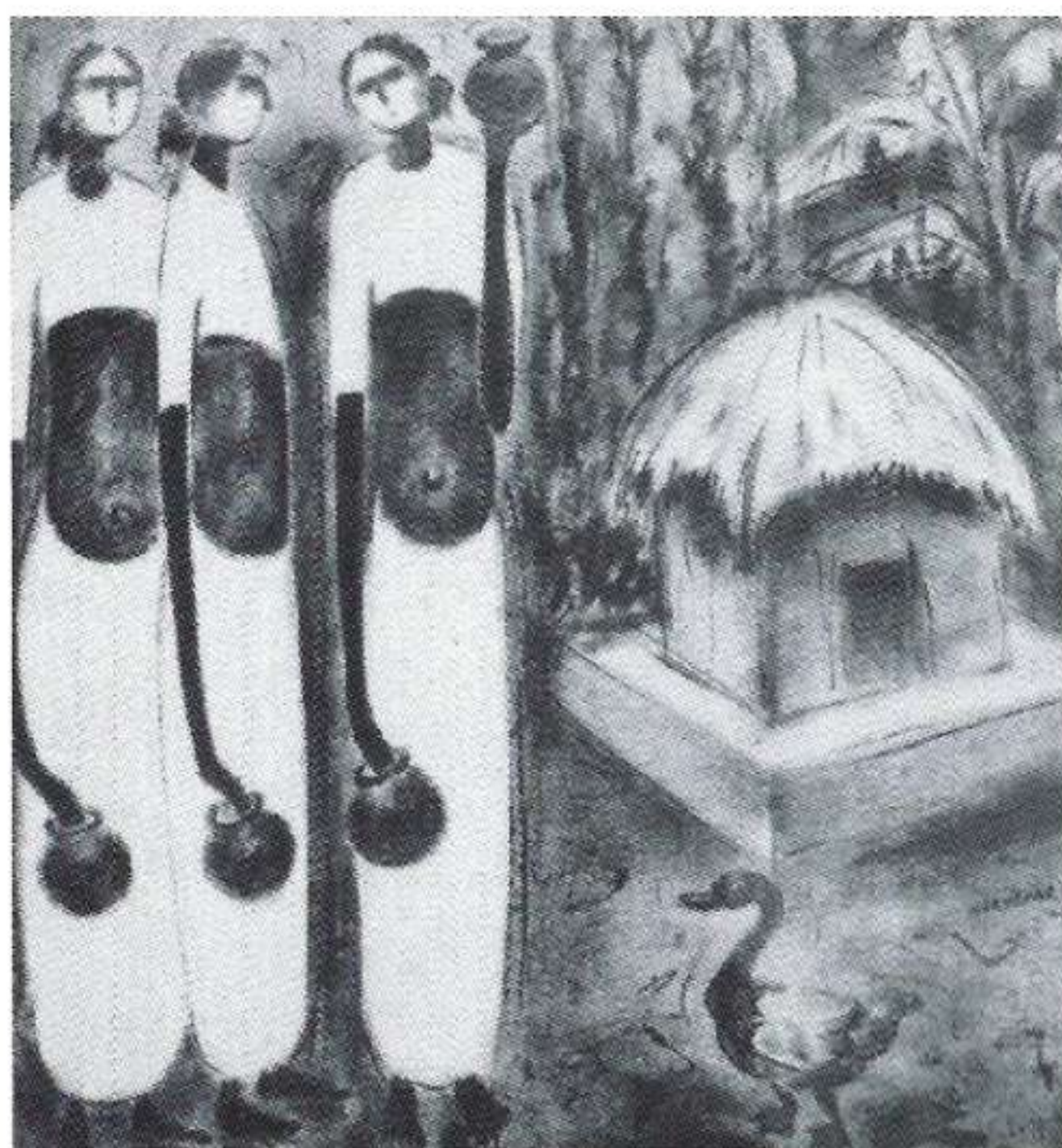
Exaggeration is Narvekar's USP. The elongated subjects take you by surprise and one wonders at their enormity. They seem to remind one of the shadows that are cast by the human form during the passage of the day. Yet there is a definite and certain rhythm. Another striking fea-

ture of his paintings is the hands of the subject: thin and delicate. They bring an element of sensuousness into the painting. The reason why he doesn't define features in elaborate detail is to bring depth. He shows dimension more through lines than colours. Narvekar's dexterity at bold, flowing and rhythmic lines reflects sheer confidence. Giving dimension is only an extension of his whim for simplicity. The effect, at the end of it all, he feels is simple yet attractive. I fully endorse that!

His use of rectangles of all sizes and proportions proves his impartiality towards modular or quintessential canvases. Then of course, the way he uses just two colours chrome yellow and black to bring out depth, emotion, realism, and sheer imagination, is simply awe-inspiring. The monochrome adds to the incandescent Imagery of his compositions and that the use of colour may have a profound meaning. According to Narvekar, he uses only two colours to prove that a palette of diverse hues is not necessary to make a great painting.

He told me that he paints whenever he feels like it. Colours speak





to him a language he cannot express or interpret in conventional jargon. Colours never fall him. In fact, they are intrinsic to his being. His style exudes power-the raw power of colours; the freshness is obvious and emphasizes his imaginative approach which adds a small element of intrigue to his compositions and leaves behind a sense of stark reality.

In spite of the adulation and recognition, Narvekar is composed and unassuming. However, he prides in his accomplishments; he doesn't overtly say so; simply because he has managed to stun the cynics and silence his critics, and not because of the magnitude of his success. He is modest enough to credit his wife and children for the support he garnered from them in his tumultuous phase.

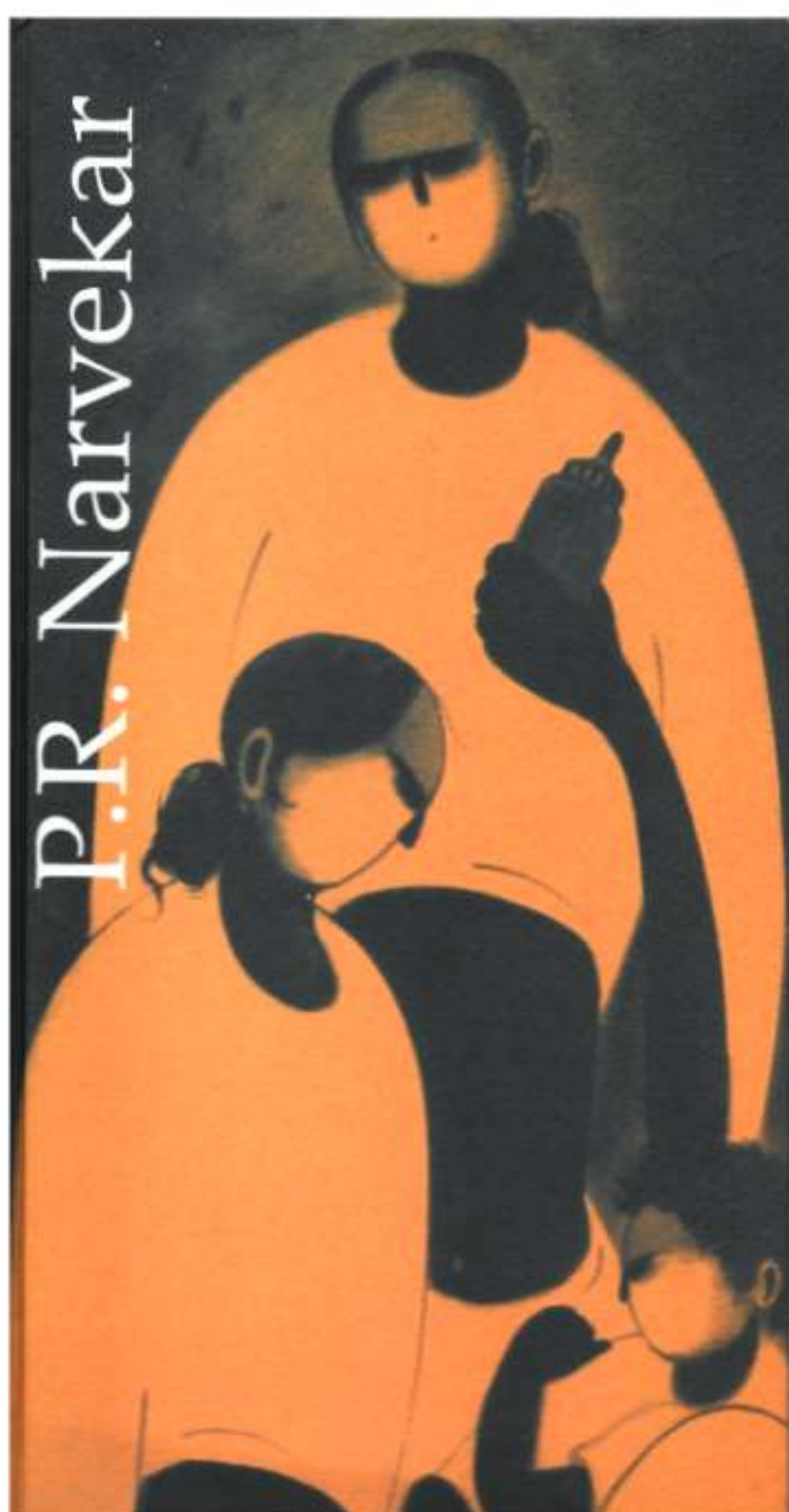
He considers that the prolonged phase of failure and struggle has helped him emerge stronger in resolve. It's something he feels he would never have been able to discover had he achieved success earlier. According to Narvekar, success may inhibit learning and make one complacent. That's why failure is necessary in life since one can always introspect, learn from it and use it to evaluate one's own strengths and weaknesses.

He philosophizes that it is more gratifying to savour success than to cope with failure, at a later stage in one's life. That's because, when age is on your side, you have the energy and zeal to put in years of hard work, to endure stress and are generally better equipped to handle failure. On the other hand, those who taste success quite early on in life find it extremely difficult - sometimes impossible - to come to terms with failure when they cross over to the 'other side' of their prime.

In my association with Narvekar for well over 35 years, I have always been impressed with the artist in him. However it is his never-say-die attitude that has left a lasting impression and influenced my mind positively. Earlier, the cliché "nothing is impossible" was something I found quite impossible to imbibe until I saw a resurgent Narvekar. It took me 23 long years of watching his steely resilience to finally learn the truth behind the proverb.

As a result, I am a different person today. I am undeterred by failure, because I firmly believe that behind every successful person there is failure.





P.R. NARVEKAR

Transcending Popular Paintings of P.R. Narvekar

5th - 28th August, 2010



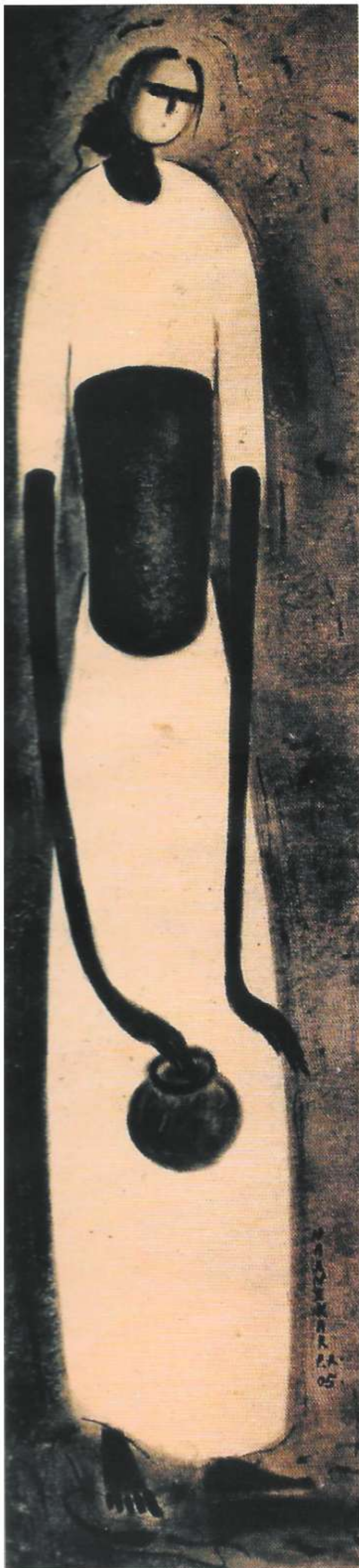
Modernity, it is said, knows no nation. It is universal. It was generated from the so-called Western horizon and gradually spread over the globe in western vehicle. Developing country like us had no choice but to accept it and to abide by the dictates of the originators. But within this apparently quiet flow, we now forget to notice, how the tumultuous extortion and exploitation has devastated the world. Like colonial era this is true in today's post-colonial environment also. Pioneers of our modernity realized, sudden onrush of colonial western wind cannot erase out the pattern of inner stream of our life, culture and creativity generated through thousand years of meditative sojourn, nor can make it irrelevant. To stand unperturbed in the wind of globalization we need a strong footing. That we can have from the essence of our tradition, which is diverse in nature, yet has some common feature. Concept of this building up of identity changes with time and reality. It has changed from Abanindranath Tagore to Rabindranath Tagore to Jamini Roy, from Binodebehari Mukherjee to K.G.Subramanyan, from M. F. Husain to Arpita Singh, Ganesh Pyne and Jogen Chowdhury. But the search has never been turned irrelevant.

The paintings of the eminent artist from Mumbai P.R.Narvekar, exhibited at Aakriti Art Gallery and his long struggle to build up a form containing his own identity, exemplify how assimilation of tradition with universal values can find an aesthetic resurrection and uplift the local to the level of global. At a certain level of his career he could realize that apart from creating narratives and describing the here and now reality a major function of the artist lies in creating an essential form that quintessentially grows from the inner consciousness and subconscious of the artist, which is a concentrated darkness containing the subtle light of the prolonged past of the humanity. The uniqueness of such 'form' along with

unveiling of the inner being of the artist enlightens a community- oriented identity that acts as a bridge between national and international ideals of beauty, transforms the local into global. This is what the great artists of the world from Matisse to Modigliani, from Abanindranath Tagore to Jamini Roy did and thus enlightens the human civilization by unfolding its inner essence. Narvekar's art has a similar lineage of extracting the sonorous beauty from the darkened reality all around. All his paintings in this show are figurative and human based. He distorts or transforms the figure rhythmically, rather extracts rhythm from the essence of civilization and induces it within the human figures so that these resonate with an inner harmony. The harmonious transformation of human figures is the essence of Narvekar's art.

P.R. Narvekar was born on December 10, 1950. He studied art in J.J. School of Art and completed his diploma in 1974 ranking first class second in Maharashtra. But this success got covered in darkness, when he actually arrived in his own creative field. He realized, as he said in a personal writing "I woke up to the harsh reality that 'making it' as a freelance artist is like finding water in a desert". This barren 'desert' of reality engulfed all his creativity for a long spell. J.J. School of Art had a long tradition of emanating art education in western academic style and gradually shifted to western modernistic modes. Narvekar in his early academic training made himself proficient in both these styles. Coming out of the art-institution he was trying mainly with expressionist forms expressing the inner anguish of human being generated out of tumultuous reality of the time. But through these forms he could not create his own footing in the field of art. For financial support he looked for a job and got one as a textile designer. Incidentally he married in 1978 and had two daughters. The responsibility of his job and family engulfed all his time and left him barren in artistic creativity for a long spell of about 23 years. This made him totally dejected. He was "forced into an indefinite 'exile' from fine arts". During this period he tried with commercial art, "dabbled with different mediums and style that resulted in a series of murals and customized paintings". He also tried with sculptures. Some of these works could find ways in different exhibitions and fetched for him a modest income. But the basic problem of finding his personal Idiom remained unsolved.

During the beginning of the new century he could overcome some of his problems and plunged with new energy towards creativity. Between 2002 and 2005 he worked relentlessly to develop his own style. He searched in various sources of our Tradition. The popular art forms of Rajasthan and Maharashtra, their linearity, sobriety, tranquillity, distortion towards elongated exaggeration of body helped him to find his own form. But his art is never naive like folk and popular art. He takes the cue from the popular gets inspired by their world outlook, by their conceiving of reality as a reflection of the ideal beauty, their way of distorting human body or other elements of nature by extending or shortening them and inducing a sonorous rhythm in them, by extracting or moving away from the detailed description of the natural element and presenting its minimal feature in a harmonious way. He absorbs all these elements of the primitive or folk and presents it



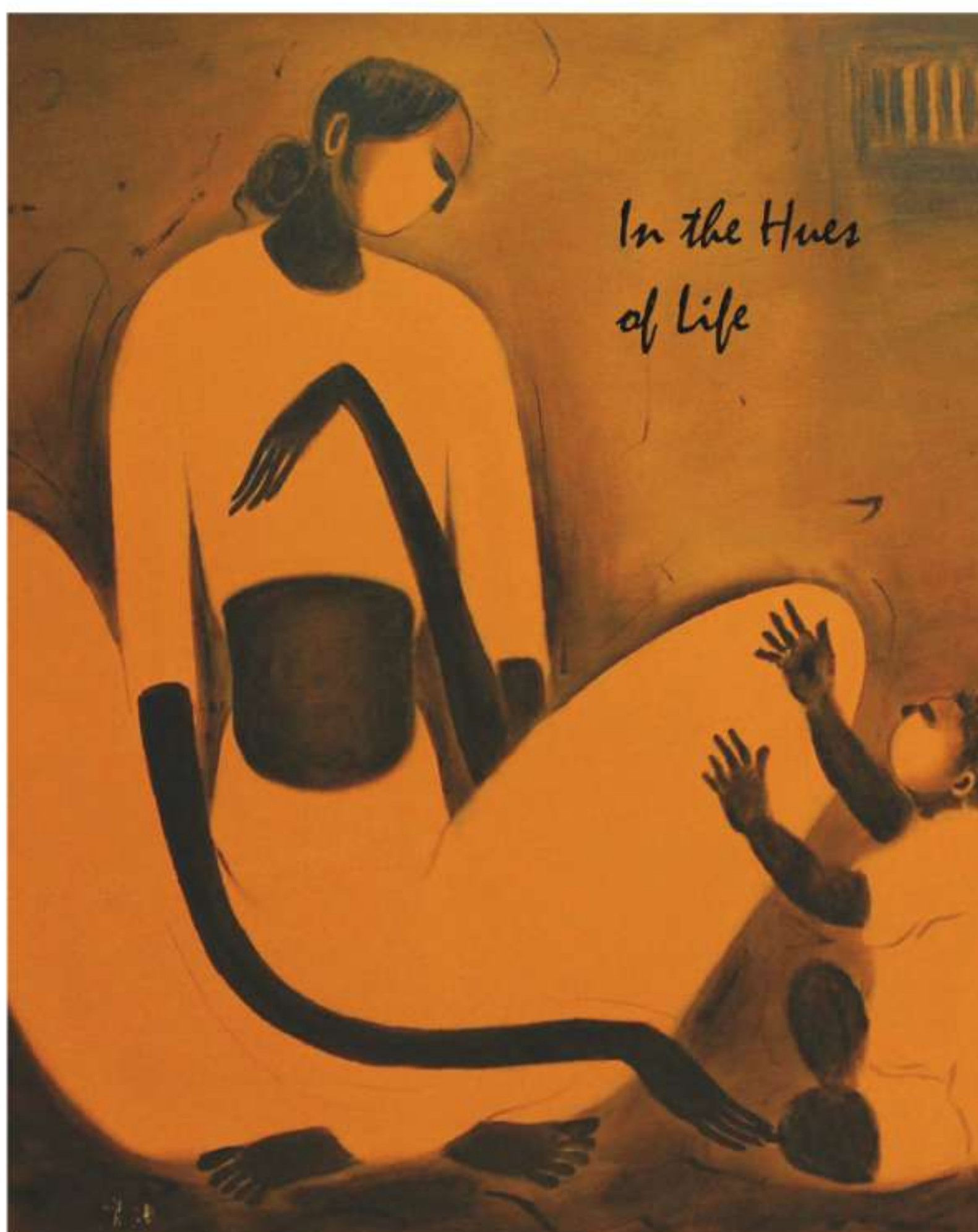
in a sophisticated way, the sophistry that he earned through his rigorous academic training and experience of working in modernistic modes. The principle is something like what the world-renowned artists like Modigliani or Jamini Roy did in developing their own forms, or how the South Indian artist K. Srinivasulu or others developed their modernistic modes. Assimilation of the minimal harmonious elements of the folk or popular with sophistry of the urban sensibility made the works of Narvekar what it is now.

Ultimately this form conceived by him clicked. He got acceptance and won few awards. In 2005 he had a large show in Mumbai, which was like a great gamble, and the gamble paid off. The show was entirely sold out. He earned confidence and had no reason to look back since then. At present Narvekar is recognized as an important contemporary painter who has devised a very unique form that has added a new dimension to the indigenous identity of our modernity. It has close link to the popular rural Indian sensibility but has been elevated to the global level. Thus art local and global thus unites.

This was the dream of the pioneers who developed modernity in Indian art in its initial phase. Abanindranath was the first artist to show the way, when he conceived 'Radha-Krishna' series of paintings. Since then he traversed a long way till his 'Krishna Mangal' or 'Kabi Kankan Chandi' series of 1938, where he endorsed folk and popular idioms in his art. The neo-Indian school devised by his disciples had a tendency towards revival of Indian classical art against which a voice was first raised by Rabindranath in 1915-16. Since then search for Indian identity took different route. It took an intensely unique turn in the works of Nandalal Basu and his disciple Binodbehari Mukherjee. During 1930-s along with Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose, Jamini Roy succeeded to take inspiration from popular art and create a new indigenous identity of modernity. The concept developed further in the works of the artists of 1940-s. Husain, Souza, Hebbar, Chittaprasad, Sunil Madhab Sen, Rathin Moitra, Paritosh Sen among many others took various inspiration from the primitive and the folk. The tradition has come down to the works of succeeding generations of 1960-s, 70-s and 80-s.

Narvekar is an artist who arrived at his creativity during 1970-s, but could come to his own during the end of 1990-s. His works, paintings in oil and acrylic on canvas featuring mother and child, rural men and women in various rhythmic poses performing music and dance and engaged in act of affection and love, has an aroma of tranquillity, serenity and harmonious sonority. These are minimal in construction of form, use minimum chromatic device. Various shades of yellow and blue are the only colours he uses. The shades of dark brown create an atmosphere of melancholy, whereas yellow brings a meditative glow of sunrise and sunset. But the environment dusk is a dominant tune in his works. This duality of light and dark, joy and pathos elevates his characters from the level of reality towards an ideal transcendental beauty. He makes no comment on here and now reality but creates an ideal 'form', which connects past with present, where we can feel the pulse of eternal India.

Mrinal Ghosh



IN THE HUES OF LIFE

8th - 30th May, 2015

Life is a like a palette stirred and mixed with different shades of emotions. Even if they are represented as either joy or sorrow, the in-between layers of emotions can be infinite just like the countless hues of colours that blend between the black and the white. PR. Narvekar is one of the pioneer artists of our times in the country who has created an optimum quality of magnetism through his artworks inspired by the very mundane yet universal feelings of life and living, their variable shades, their uncountable emotional layers and their endless tales that lead to the progression of the human civilization. Like a palette of colours, PR Narvekar is the champion in generating the palette of life sewed with the hues of timeless beauty contrasting with the kind of a steepening opposition of invigorating darkness.

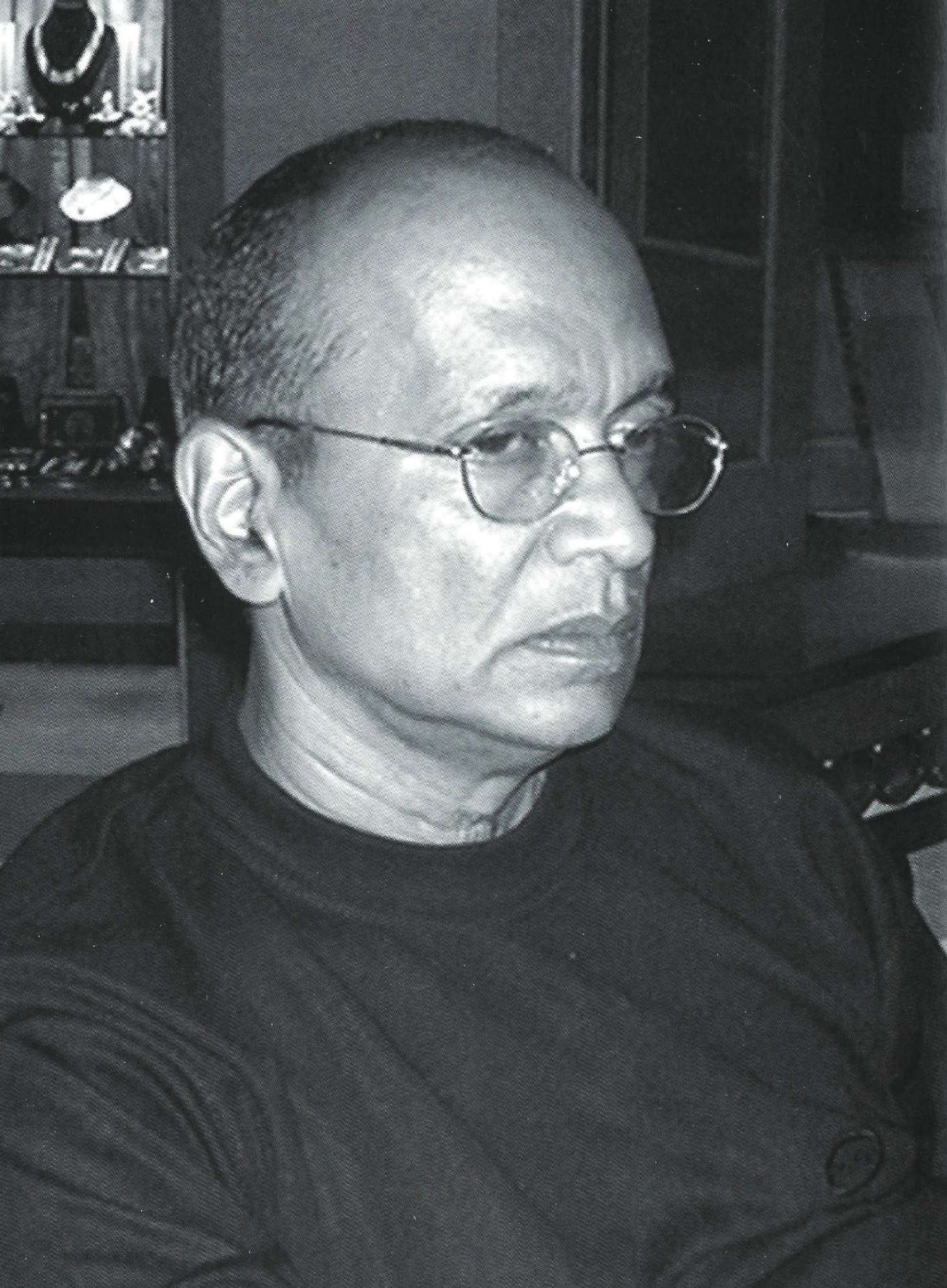
With years of experience and profound potential of execution, Narvekar has developed his own identity following a trail of tradition assimilated with the universal approach to modernity, thereby breathing new life into his local concepts and lifting them up for a global appeal. Through the creation of a particular form in the figurative style, and using two distinctive colours in monochromes, the ochre and the black, Narvekar has majestically given birth artist's innermost feelings that revolve in the subconscious state to an of mind as well as sprout from the unconscious state of our being that is easily perceptible and identifiable by the common viewer and critically appreciated by the intellectuals. The concentrated darkness in the shade of black that form the colour tone of the figures in contrast to the yellow ochre shade of their attire, their face and the eyes can be considered as metaphors for darkness and gloominess and immense hardship that surround us at every moment yet the glistening glow in the eyes and on the faces reflect the power of cutting across all agonies and surpassing every sorrow with the greater hope of being alive and the joy of living.

If the forms of Narvekar's art have been derived from traditional folk forms, the connecting emotions that they communicate are both existing and timeless. As an artist, he is a great procreator of narratives surrounding day-to-day life and their eternal perspectives. The sense of deep longing, craving for union, pangs of loneliness and love for belongingness between a man and a woman and among the human beings are some common notes of sentimentalities that Narvekar has overtly been using yet they don't get exhausted in either case, when watched individually as well as when viewed in a series of works. On one hand each work attempts to portray the immediate urgency of release of emotions and on the other it is an array of emotions that gets transcended to the metaphysical state of one's existence and something truly ethereal. The elongated figures convey a prolonged wait in expectation for a greater union which can be interpreted as a kind of a cosmic feeling both in it's essence of holding the darker and the brighter sides. The Dark Lord and his beloved become a recurring motif and subject in mundane appearances in Narvekar's works. The beauty and enigma in the artist's own choice of proportions not only add meanings to the core subject but also enhances the magnificence of the moments captured on the picture plane which engages a sensible viewer to draw a connectivity and admiration for both art and life.

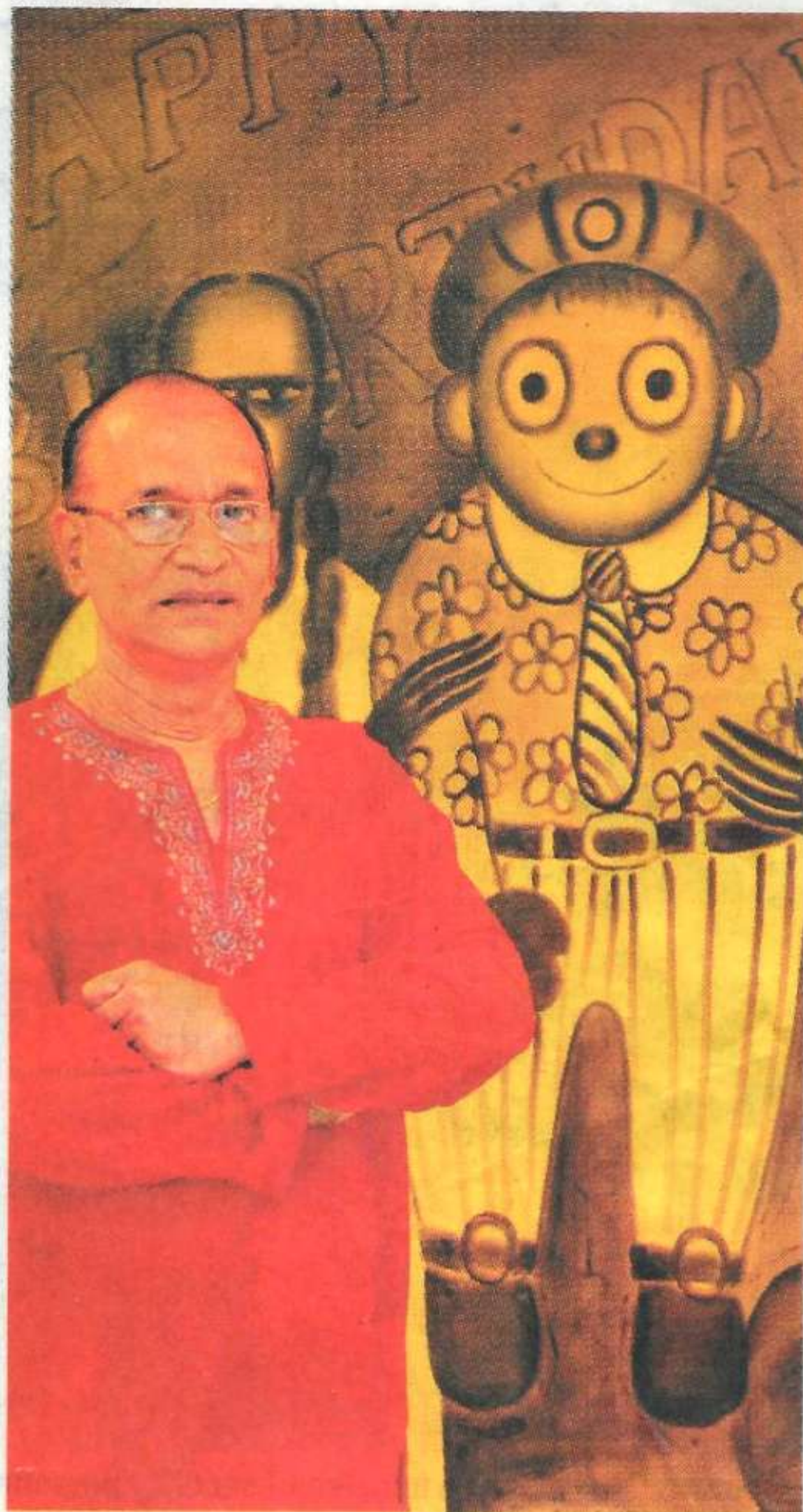


Oil & Acrylic on Canvas I 36 x 36 in I 2005

Purity of thought and efficiency of strokes make Narvekar's artworks a brilliant combination of moments, magic and saga of human trials and triumphs. His works also largely feature mother and child, rural men and women in different musical poses performing and dancing and cherishing different moods of livelihood. Also in his works there is an engaging aspect of acts of affection and love that spread the fragrance of harmony, composure and melodious beats in life. The constructions of forms are minimal as already stated that he has always preferred using minimum chromatic shades and tinges. Different shades of yellow and brown and black predominant each patch or stroke he devises. The atmosphere of melancholy is created by black and darker shades of brown and that is merged in the hues of yellow which brings out a relief in the painful plight like a reflective glow of the rising sun. The dawn and the dusk are the two dominant moments that overtly comes out through Narvekar's works thereby communicating with his viewers that in life if there is light, there will be darkness; if there is joy, there will be pathos and if there is beauty, there will be unpleasantness and life has always been a combination of and both. Narvekar through his unique forms has in fact led to the creation of a kind of an ideal transcendental beauty, which connects the past with the present, the time-bound with the timeless or eternal and one gets the feeling of oneness once and always whenever a Narvekar painting is hung on the wall.



Subir Halder



The human form is at the centre of works by PR Narvekar, which are on display at Aakriti Gallery

Extreme simplicity in monochrome

Kathakali Jana

If art is about communication, artist PR Narvekar, whose works are showing at Aakriti Gallery till March 5, achieves its highest objective. The artist uses the immense possibilities of monochrome, breaking the monotony of the colourless canvas by splashing it with shades of ochre yellow.

At the centre of Narvekar's works is the human form, which stands, sits down, bends or lies prone, interacts with other such forms and carries on with everyday life with gusto.

Nature is also an abiding presence in his works, its essence infusing his art with bracing minimalism.

"I have started using the monochrome in the last four years before which my paintings were full of colours," said Narvekar at the inauguration of the show on February 25.

The Mumbai-based artist who, at 56, has stepped out of his city for the first time with a solo exhibition, was clearly overwhelmed by the adulation

he received. "I have had a long life of struggle but at the end it is all worth it. Besides, I don't believe in getting things without working hard for them," says the artist.

The hard work shows in the spirit of experiment with colour and form. The expression is based on extreme simplicity but beyond the easy-flowing lines — thick or thin, straight or curved, continuous or broken — there is the uncomplicated rhythm of the quotidian.

A remarkable aesthetic sense seeks out beauty in postures and actions that life is incomplete without. Thus we see women practising music, washing fish before cooking, playing with their children, doing their daily chores and socialising, while men are seen talking among themselves.

The artist who had exiled himself for 23 years from art, till a chance event rekindled his desire to get back into the fold, has now made his place in the sun.

The exhibition is on till March 5 between 3 pm and 7 pm

Art goes electronic for overseas buyers

Ashoke Nag
KOLKATA



A painting by PR Narvekar

BUSINESS in Indian art overseas through the online route is visibly rising. A healthy mix of veteran and younger artists is being steadily picked up by foreign clients. The bigger names are, of course, there.

Among the high-end labels are artists like FN Souza, MF Husain, SH Raza, Jogen Chowdhury, Anjolie Ela Menon and Yusuf Arakkal. Senior painters like Thota Vaikuntam and Akkitham Narayanan are also fancied by international buyers who place their orders online.

Online inquiries for acquiring domestic art are pouring in from places like Germany, Italy, Spain, the US, the UK, Southeast Asia, Australia and France. In recent times, demand for this segment of art has also grown in Dubai and China.

"Inquires are swelling because of the burgeoning popularity of Indian art and the increasing numbers of Indian art exhibits abroad. The list of artists online that the foreign

and Indian diaspora abroad is looking at is constantly expanding," a source said.

"From the standpoint of export turnover, revenues churned out by Indian art via the online network could be in the region of Rs 100-odd crore, which includes retail and auction sales," the source added.

There are a slew of younger generation painters attracting overseas buyers in the online slot, too. These include artists like Paresh Maity, TV Santosh, Sudhir Patwardhan, Jagannath Panda, Anjum Singh, Asim Purokayastha, Soumen Das, Sandip Daptari, Mithu Sen, Samindranath Majumdar, Baiju Parthan and PR Narvekar.

In step are artists like Nupur Kundu, Veer Munshi, Apurva Desai and Ravi Kumar Kashi. Radhakrishnan's sculptures are also greatly in demand online among overseas buyers.

"In the online format, Kartick Chandra Pyne is in demand in European countries. Together with Husain and Raza, two other artists universally sought after are FN Souza and KG Subramanyan. Of late, there are strong inquiries for Paritosh Sen coming in from Singapore, while Husain and Ganesh Pyne are experiencing a growing market in Dubai," an art market source told ET.

"The young lot of artists are enjoying maximum popularity in the US. Names like Amitabha Dhar and Partha Pratim Deb are drawing a fair deal of notice in the US. Inquiries are flowing in via the online avenue from both NRIs and mainstream foreigners," the source added.

While mainline foreigners form around 30% of the buyers, NRIs make 70%. The quantum of foreigners has significantly shot up from just 2-5% around a year ago. By a ballpark figure, the number of inquiries maturing into real deals have also risen to about 20%, from a mere 5% sometime ago.

"From the point of view of preferences for brands of paintings, a study shows European buyers focus on classical, folksy and ethnic kind of works. In the same breath, US art collectors very often look for contemporary paintings including abstract creations. Southeast Asian customers are usually seen to be more keen on figurative works," the source said.

ashoke.nag@timesgroup.com

कला कोलकाता

सम्मुख



प्रयाग शुक्ल

कलाकार जयश्री चक्रवर्ती की प्रदर्शनी 'गैलरी ८८' में लगी थी और उसने पर्याप्त प्रशंसा बटोरी है। प्रदर्शनी तो समाप्त हो चुकी थी, सो जयश्री के साल्ट लेक स्थित घर-स्टूडियो में उनसे मिलने गया और प्रदर्शनी का कैटलॉग प्राप्त कर लिया।

प्रायः हर कोलकाता यात्रा में जयश्री के यहां जाना होता ही है, उनके काम को देखना भी। पर इस बार उनकी प्रदर्शनी के कारण स्टूडियो में काम न थे। बातचीत थोड़ी देर के लिए ही सही, हुई। कुछ भागते-दौड़ते ही। हां, 'आकार प्रकार' नाम की गैलरी में भी गया, जहां पुराने मित्र सनत कर की प्रदर्शनी लगी हुई है। 'आकार प्रकार' दक्षिण कोलकाता में हिंदुस्तान पार्क में है। इसे मुकुंद लाट के बेटे अभिजीत चलाते हैं। गैलरी, पुरखों के मकान के निचले हिस्से में है। आंगन और गलियारों समेत पर्याप्त जगह है। ऊपर अभिजीत रहते हैं। यह गैलरी सुरुचिपूर्वक बनाई गई है। मुकुंद जी से तो पुराना परिचय है, पर वयस्क यानी युवा अभिजीत से बातचीत पहली बार हुई। और यह देख कर अच्छा लगा कि सनत कर की प्रदर्शनी के अवसर पर 'आकार प्रकार' ने भी उन पर एक पुस्तक प्रकाशित की है।

सनत कर कोलकाता-शांतिनिकेतन के बीच आते-जाते रहते हैं। १९९३ में एक बार उनसे शांतिनिकेतन में भी मिलना हुआ था, और अभी कोई दो बरस पहले साल्ट लेक स्थित उनके फ्लैट में भी गया था। काम तो बरसों से देखता आ रहा हूं। वह हमारे कुशल ग्राफिक कलाकारों (प्रिंटेमकर) में गिने जाते हैं, जिन्होंने विविध ग्राफिक विधियों में काम किया है। इस बार की बड़ी प्रदर्शनी में उनके रेखांकन, ग्राफिक्स, चित्र- सभी हैं। चेहरों वाले। बगैर चेहरों के भी। कुछ केवल रेखा-संपन्न भी। सरल-सहज और संक्षिप्त ढंग से, सनत कर हमेशा कोई मर्म की बात कहते हैं- कभी मुख-मुद्राओं से, कभी किन्हीं भंगिमाओं से, और कभी आकृति और वस्तुओं से रचित रंगों-रंगतों-रेखाओं के सुमेल से। आत्मीयता और सौंदर्यमयता उनकी कला के गुण हैं। 'आकार प्रकार' में जाकर, हर तरह से अच्छा लगा। सनत कर से भेंट इस बार जरूर नहीं हो पाई।

पुराने मित्रों में जोगेन भी हैं, जिनका काम पिछले दशकों में निरंतर चर्चा में रहा है और उनकी निजी और कई सामूहिक प्रदर्शनियों में खूब प्रदर्शित भी हुआ है। प्रदर्शनी में जोगेन के चित्र और रेखांकन हैं। कुछ लीथोग्राफ-सेटीग्राफ भी। चित्र सभी पेस्टल रंगों और स्याही में कागज पर हैं, आकार प्रकार में प्रायः मंझोले। स्वप्नशील लेटी-पसरी आकृतियां और कुछ कुली या अर्धनिमीलित आंखों वाली मुखाकृतियां और उनके वस्त्रों की सलवटे-डिजाइनें आदि ही जोगेन के चित्रों-रेखांकनों में एक अरसे से उभरती रही हैं। कुछ पुरुष आकृतियां भी थीं, पर अधिकतर में स्त्री-छवि की ही प्रमुखता थी। जोगेन की रेखाओं की बुनावट, काट-पीट और उनका आड़ा-तिरछा होकर एक-दूसरी के बीच से गुजरना, कहीं मोटाई और पैनापन भी धारण कर लेना, और कुल मिलाकर 'कथन' को मर्मभरे ढंग से घेरना- हमेशा ही आकर्षित करने वाले होते हैं।

इस बार के कुछ रेखांकनों-चित्रों में हमारी मूर्तिशिल्पीय धरोहर की कुछ स्मृतियां भी थीं, समकालीन बोध के साथ और जैसी कि स्वयं चित्रकार और कलामर्मी जवाहर गोयल ने टिप्पणी की, 'जोगेन की रेखाएं इस बार 'वाल्गूम' की ओर भी उन्मुख हैं।' देह और मन की सब तरह की स्थितियों को अपनी कला का विषय बनाने वाले जोगेन की सूक्ष्म दृष्टि हमेशा की

तरह सक्रिय थी, पर कहीं-कहीं अब भी दोहराव के लक्षण प्रकट होते हैं। अधिकतर काम २००५ और २००६ के ही हैं। कुछ पंद्रह एक साल पुराने भी। कुल मिला कर इस प्रदर्शनी को देखना जोगेन के कला-संसार में कई तरह से झांकने का एक नया अवसर तो था ही।

जयश्री पिछले कई वर्षों से मानो 'पथ और पथिक' को लेकर काम करती रही हैं। सुपरिचित कला समीक्षक प्रणब रंजन राय ने कैटलॉग में यह टिप्पणी ठीक ही की है कि 'जयश्री के चित्र प्रचलित अर्थों में यात्रा-वृत्तांत वाले चित्रों जैसे न होकर यात्राओं की गहरी स्मृतियां हैं, जो विभिन्न छवियों के रूप में प्रकट होती हैं।' जयश्री किसी यात्रा-छवि को पूरा करके नहीं आंकती हैं, और अर्धनिर्मित छवियों को एक-दूसरी के ऊपर बिछाती जाती हैं। सो, कहीं किसी कोने में घर-मकान दिखते हैं, कहीं वनस्पतियां, पेड़-पौधे, खंडहर, मुड़ती पगडंडियां और इन्हीं के बीच कहीं उभर आती है कोई शांत-धीर मुखाकृति।

छवियों के इस उलझे-सुलझे संजाल के बीच उतरना हमेशा ही रुचिकर और सम्मोहक होता है। जयश्री के चित्र कभी मुद्रण में ठीक-ठीक उतरते नहीं हैं, इसलिए उनके चित्रों को मूल में देखने का एक अलग ही स्वाद और सुख है। वैसे तो मूलकृति, मूलकृति ही होती है। पर, कुछ कलाकारों के काम को हम 'रिप्रोडक्शन' में भी सराह पाते हैं। जयश्री जैसी चित्रकार को, अवश्य ही, हम मूल में ही ठीक से पहचान-परख सकते हैं। स्वयं जयश्री ने इस पर अफसोस प्रकट किया कि मुद्रण में उनकी कृतियों के रंग कई बार बदल जाते हैं और कुछ इमेजिज तो उतर ही नहीं पातीं। पर, हंसकर यह भी कहा, 'कभी-कभी चमत्कार हो जाता है। और मुद्रण में चित्र सही-सही भी उतर आते हैं।'

कोलकाता की बिल्कुल नई गैलरी 'आकृति' है। इसे खुले हुए कुल तीन महीने हुए हैं। यह कविता-कला अनुरागी और स्वयं कवि मानिक बच्छावत के छोटे सुपुत्र विक्रम के उद्यम का प्रतिफल है। मानिक मेरे पुराने मित्रों में हैं। विक्रम को भी उसके लड़कपन से देखता आया हूं। उसका यह उद्यम प्रसन्न करने वाला है। पिकासो वीथी (हंगरफोर्ड स्ट्रीट) में स्थित यह गैलरी



पीआर नरवेकर की एक कृति: कैनवास पर तैल रंग और एंग्रिलिक

कोलकाता के मध्य में सेंट जेवियर कॉलेज के पिछवाड़े में है। इसका परिसर भी उन्मुक्त-सा है। और गैलरी की इमारत के सामने कम से कम छह गाड़ियां खड़ी करने की जगह है। इस बात का उल्लेख यही सोच कर कर रहा हूं कि इससे जगह के खुलेपन का कुछ अंदाजा हो सकेगा।

गैलरी प्रथम मंजिल में है। बड़ी है, और विक्रम का इरादा इसके एक हिस्से में मूर्तिशिल्पी गैलरी विकसित करने का भी है, जिस पर इन दिनों काम चल रहा है। गैलरी के ही हिस्से में भूतल का एक बड़ा हॉल भी है, जो सभा-गोष्ठियों के काम भी आ सकता है और किसी प्रदर्शनी के उद्घाटन अवसर पर रिसेप्शन आदि के काम भी। २५ फरवरी को इस गैलरी में पीआर नरवेकर (जन्म १९५०) की प्रदर्शनी का उद्घाटन हुआ। नरवेकर, जेजे स्कूल ऑफ आर्ट के पढ़े हुए विनम्र व्यक्ति और कलाकार हैं। गोवा के हैं। मुंबई में रहते हैं। पारिवारिक परिस्थितियों के कारण- कई तरह की जिम्मेदारियां निभाने के कारण- वह कोई सत्रह वर्षों तक कुछ विशेष नहीं कर सके थे। इधर कुछ वर्षों से पूरी तरह चित्रकला को समर्पित हैं और निश्चय ही ऐसा काम कर रहे हैं जो कुछ चमत्कृत ही करता है। सारवान है। और अपनी चित्र-भाषा में बहुत अलग भी। पानी भरती, छोटे-मोटे घरेलू काम करती मध्यवर्गीय और निम्न मध्यवर्गीय स्त्री-पुरुष आकृतियां हैं, कहीं बैटों, सुस्ताती हुई भी। बतियाती हुई भी।

केवल दो रंगों- काले-पीले का इस्तेमाल नरवेकर करते हैं। स्त्री-पुरुष आकृतियों के हाथ-पांव बहुत लंबे करके वह आंकते हैं, जो उन 'छायाओं' की याद दिलाती हैं, जब सुबह-शाम-दोपहर को मानव आकृति किसी खास दिशा में अपनी लंबी छायाएं फेंकती हैं। पर यहां ये लंबायमान आकृतियां एक विशिष्ट लय की सृष्टि करती हुई, श्रम की गरिमा और साधारण जीवन के सुख-दुख की आत्मीय आभा हम तक पहुंचाती हैं। इनमें गहरी जिजीविषा है। और औसत भारतीय जीवन (शैली) के आत्मिक संतोष, और राज-क्षोभ के साथ प्रकृति और ऋतुओं से ओतप्रोत एक आनंद भी है। इन मनोहारी छवियों की स्मृति देर तक बनी रहने वाली है। नरवेकर से मिलना भी एक सुखद अनुभव था। विक्रम ने उन्हें 'दूढ़ा' और कलाप्रेमियों के लिए सुलभ बनाया, इसके लिए निश्चय ही उसे बधाई दी जानी चाहिए। उद्घाटन वाली शाम कोलकाता के कई कलाकारों से भी भेंट हुई।



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