

DUDHAT

It's a wonderful world of Art

BHANU DUDHAT: Born in 1949 at Ankolwadi, a small Village in Gir forest. No one knew that a child born in a poor Kanbi Leuva Patel family would turn to be an intellectual artist in future. Today this artist has written his and his family's name with golden-alphabets in the map of india and world. His ambitions are still high. To measure his development, one must know his journey through the life. Only than one can get inspiration and guidance for one's personal development.

1958 to 1965:

Lost his father in the childhood, little Bhanu had to do primary schooling in Anadabava's Ashram at Jamnagar. At school level Bhanu showed the spark. In 1965 when he was in 5th standard, he made portraits of national leaders and saints on the walls of newly constructed Sharda Mandir School. These portraits were there till recent past. Bhanu also made various pictures on the walls of nearby temples, when he had to be at home during school vacations. Most of them are still there on walls of Ramji's temple and Hunumanji's Temple of Selana village. If his fate would have lead him towards foreign countries, his achievements in childhood would have taken him out of the country and he would have achieved more success. But whatever he has done even without going abroad, has come out as fruits to the society and nation. This is the reason that this artist is now on top. It is seen that children coming from the high society which gives them full facility, can win various prizes and awards in art competition in foreign in childhood. But later on most of them almost fail in this field in. This man survived and hence, I am writing this about his life.

1965 to 1970:

At high school level in Junagadh Bhanu had to study by living with yogis in their ashrams because his mother was widow and feeding her four children by doing labor work. Where the meal was a problem, education was naturally a far away matter. In this situation possibility of creating art was zero. Even though this child kept his art alive by his instinct in the Sub Mountains of Girnar. He was also maintaining daily working of Ashram while doing his own work. He also made pictures for many temples. When Bhanu Dudhat was in 8th standard he won the first prize at a local painting competition in Junagadh. The award was handed over to him by Ratubhai Adani, minister for gram panchayat at that time.

Ones a young painter studying in Fine arts faculty at M. S. University, Baroda saw Bhanu when he was making paintings in Ramdev Pir Temple at Chittal after passing old S.S.C. That painter got impressed by Bhanu's work and advised him to go Baroda for further education. At that time the biggest problem for Bhanu was the expense for going to Baroda. He didn't even have enough money for fare to Baroda, so education in Baroda was only a dream like thing. But his faith in God was as same as his ardour. He was

only making pictures with devotion. Bhanu carried his work, putting faith on the whose pictures were made by him. Suddenly one day Mahant of that temple Sri. Triloknathji asked him, Bhanu do you want to go Baroda to study about Painting/ drawing? Bhanu replied, 'But expense is a higher one'.

1971 to 1976: Some memories of college life. The biggest difficulty was the language. Bhanu was very poor at English the problem started at 'how to fill the admission form'. He got an application form office and came out. There he saw an aged gentleman wearing kurta and pajama was standing near the doorsteps. Bhanu found him like a headmaster of a school so he asked, 'Sir, will you please fill this form for me? The gentleman looked back, a young man with bright eyes was asking him that question. He took the application form from that young man and told him 'come with me'. They entered the office, the gentleman scolded the clerk and told him, 'listen, help this boy in filling this form. After that he went away. Clerk asked Bhanu, 'why did you go to Din? Bhanu couldn't understand what the meaning of Din was. But the gentleman met that day was Sri. K. G. Subramanyam whom Bhanu believes as his master. What a wonder of nature! That gentleman didn't even know that rustic boy of that time would become leading artist and make his family an artist family. There was a man whose hand in Bhanu's life is very big. That man was Late Sri. Shivkumar Shukla who was in Music college of Baroda and creator of India's famous 'Khyall gayaki' (A style of indian Classical music).

Memories of college-life and Inspiration:

When Bhanu was in 4th year of college, he made pictures on subject "MONEY CRISES" by taking inspiration from Dalie. First of all he carried out pencil drawing. But it was to be made in three dimensions- It is very difficult to convert 2D into 3D. Bhanu was hesitating in showing his drawing to Mani sir. But sir understood anxiety of Bhanu so he called Bhanu to his studio and asked him to draw a sketch of a model of 10 paise made by clay. Bhanu made some sketches and in the end gave it a smaller form. Bhanu wanted to make that drawing on canvas, but how to buy canvas? He spent 3 to 4 days in anxiety.

In this picture the artist shows country's economic situation - poverty and exploitation of poor woman and her victim, her child and vanity of rich people- arid environment in the darkness of night. In this first Oil on Canvas of Bhanu because of inspiration from Dalie, guidance of master, a soul of artist can be seen alive. Bhanu still has this feeling to the family of Shivkumar Shukla. During this period Bhanu, by his heart, became student of K. G. On Bhanu's part, K.G. was his 'Guru' On K. G.'s part, Bhanu did not know whether K.G., would consider Bhanu as his disciple.

1972 . Shri K. G. Subramanyam advised Bhanu that he should think on relieving his mother from hard and laborious work she was doing at her village. He also advised that Bhanu should bring his mother to stay with him rest fully. Bhanu followed the advice of his Guru and to begin with, joined famous Garden Silk Mill, Surat, as Textile Designer.

The artist inside this textile designer was alive. his dreams were always in his mind. He had to give a lot to the art world and to the society. But at the same time Bhanu had to accept his financial needs as a fact. He had responsibility of settling his elder brother. He called his mother and brother to stay with

him at Surat and tried to settle his brother in diamond business, which was in full swing in Surat at that time. However, the fate did not support Bhanu in this aim and thing could not be managed properly.

1977: Bhanu's dream became true in Vidyanagar. Join the lecturer in painting department of Kala Kandra college of fine arts. Vidyanagar' means a campus dedicated to knowledge and education, an education-town designed by far-sited engineer and Nobel educationist late Sri Bhaikaka. It has the blessing of iron man of India Sri Sardar Patel, This ever - young town. After all man needs a companion to cross hard legends of life. Man considers himself 'successful' when he arranges his life and the family the way he wishes. Bhanu married to Prabha, young girl from a small village of Junagadh district. Prabha came to Vidyanagar in 1978 after her marriage with Bhanu. The mother was already staying with Bhanu.

Now, a real family-life began. Bhanu was a struggling artist, he had many problems including economic aspect. C.V.M. provided a one room-kitchen quarter. Beside that mother in law and daughter in law were living together. Obviously, some quarreling had to occur. Bhanu had to settle the disputes of both the ladies when he returns home after passing all his time with art in college. Poor Bhanu, to whom he can do a favour? One was the mother and another was the wife.

Bhanu thought that if he can find something to keep both the women busy, the problems will reduce to normal level. He suggested Prabha to learn painting. Reluctantly Prabha agreed to join the course for drawing teacher. She didn't know the painting. Bhanu taught her painting within six months. In the mean while Prabha became mother. Bhanu's mother was taking care of little kids and Prabha was doing her college. However the quarreling was still a problem.

1980: Bhanu's name came to light. He was just a young man of 25 years when he arranged first one man show of his paintings at Jahangir Art Gallery. Thirty-two Oil Paintings were displayed in this exhibition. However, Bhanu still did not get acceptance of art-loving people. He also expected this poor response, as it was his first exhibition. But he made his mind to work to earn the name and reward.

He has full devotion to Lord Shiva. He believes Lord Shiva as the source of motivation. He kept on working with faith and trust. One of the directors of Mex Mooler House called Bhanu to exhibit his painting in Mex Mooler's private gallery. This business house is known for supporting new comers and growing artist of various fields.

Exhibition at Mex Mooler proved a break-through for Bhanu. He received overwhelming response at Mex Mooler. Then Bhanu did not stop- He arranged exhibition of his paintings at mega cities like Delhi, Bombay, Bhopal, Madras, Ahmedabad etc. Bhanu's painting reached to Government, business houses and art loving people's personal collections.

In this situation Bhanu arranged an exhibition of his painting at Bombay. Bhanu took his mother to Bombay. The mother was happy that she was the first lady of her small village who was going to Bombay. The exhibition was arranged in Jahangir Art Gallery. The mother used to sit with Bhanu. She was watching all the activities of Bhanu. Journalists and other people were coming to meet Bhanu. Mother was happily observing.

On very second day after returning home Bhanu brought paper and ink and given to his mother. The ink didn't suit to the old lady. She herself lit up an oil lamp, collected the dark carbon; ash on backside of a mettle bowl and added gum to it. Brush also did not suit this lady. She started painting with matchstick. First of all she painted Bhatigal Bharat (Traditional Dress painting of Saurashtra region). The painting of Lord Ganesh, painting of blouse pieces Ulesh, Zulnu, Todalya, Chakla, Chandarva etc. were main of her designs. Bhanu saw a new way to the mother now the mother, son and daughter in law all the three were painting. All of them were discussing designs. Bhanu was trying to put his mother on a wider and long path. He saw a specialty in his mother's painting. She was mainly drawing pictures of God like Radha-Krishna etc. In indian tradition the man is identified by the symbol like his weapon or other article. Bhanu suggested to his mother that if she paints a bow and arrow in hands of the male character of her painting he would be Ram. If flute is painted it would become Krishna, if Damaru is painted it will become Shiva. The mother was happy to draw different God's by changing weapon or belongings.

Ma started discussing with Prabha also. Now the quarreling ended, the tart had entered into the life of family. The house became home. The mother who was calling Prabha as Vahu (means wife of my son) started calling her Prabhi. Meanwhile in the month of December 1978 Bhanu's Guru K.G. Subramanyam visited Vallabh Vidyanagar.

Bhanu was happy and presented all the paintings done by mother. K.G. observed all the paintings with eagerness and selected drawings of Gopi Ras, Ganesh, Shiv-Parvati, Shravan kumar etc. The Ganesh was the main picture in total eighteen picture selected by K.G. Bhanu was more than happy, All Drawings made by his mother, using natural carbon ash and matchstick, were selected by his own guru for display at Baroda Fine Arts College where he was a student in past.

K.G. exhibited all the drawings in Baroda College and invited Bhanu and mother to be present there. All the pictures were sold out. The price was Rs.100 each. Bhanu's dream came true. She was willing since his childhood to make a hard working labor woman, his mother, mother of the world. He made it and the mother's name SANTOKBA was announced among the world of art.

Since 1978 Ba, Bhanu and Prabha worked jointly, they earned fame as "Art family", particularly Ba's age her natural way of painting, her style of speaking, her openness and her love for basic indian tradition were impressing the people.

1985 : Bhanu thought to make a big scroll painting. Ba didn't agree saying that she can't do the work under pressure of time and schedules. Bhanu wanted to create a style in on, He tried to convince Ba. Lastly she agreed saying that Bhanu and Praibha should work.

The scroll painting was on. it was based on religious stories. Numbers of subjects were there and every story had enough characters and events for painting of any length one wishes. The handmade paper was selected is basic material of roll. 25 Feet long roll was made and events of Ramayan were painted on it.

1987 : one Mr. Ulibyer a retired director of a museum in Germany came to Baroda. Mr. Shek informed Ulibyer about Dudhat , so he came to Vidyanagar. It was a fine Sunday morning. People at Bhanu's house were just out of bed. "Good morning Mr. Dudat, I am Ulibyer " the strange visitor entered the house. Bhanu had a surprise of having a European as guest at his house. He talked to him in English whatever he could speak. He took Mr. Ulibyer to his college, and around Vidyanagar. Mr. Ulibyer has seen number drawings he stayed with the family for a day and taken photograph of Bhanu's family and children. Mr Ulibyer was impressed with the family's work and he invited this family to Germany. He purchased the Scroll painting of Ramayana and advised Bhanu 'your should now stop working on small subjects and draw as much as you can on the subject of your enceinte stories, Shastras and Puranas. Make one long drawing on such subject, and I will come again to see it. Even I will invite you to Germany and Australia.' In 1987 Ullibyer has organized an exhibition in both the above country and invited the family. The family can hardly forget the memories of this trip.

While I am writing these notes, Bhanu becomes emotional in the memories of all such events. I am here from USA only for one and a half-month. But such homely relations are developed between this family and me, I feel as if I know them since years together.

In August 1987, Ba, Prabha and Bhanu exhibited their drawings in Jahangir Art Gallery . The Ramayana was the main subject of an eighteen-meter long painting. Mr. Mehar Pestanjee wrote about this exhibition in 'Indian Express'. That detailed write-up by Mr. Pestanjee made this family famous among art-loving people. Air India, Directorate of advertisement and visual publicity, Bank of America, Bombay Dying, Wipro and many others has purchased their drawings. The Ramayana scroll was also sold out there.

Film director Mr. Shridhar Kshirsagar was making at TV serial named as 'STREE based on self

developed Artistic family life. He read this write—up of Pestanjee. He covered Santok baas andbhanu dudhat family story and presented in 5th episode of STRI. This drew attention of management of State bank of Saurashtra. A nationalized bank from Saurashtra region, to which dudhat belongs. Sri. H. D. Mehta honored this dudhat family on the behalf of the bank. On this ocation Bhanu suggested that the bank should finance Bhanu's project of painting complete Mahabhiarata on scroll longast painting.

1987-; Mahabharata Scroll Painting

Bank Agreed to extend the loan or Rupees sixty five thousand. Dudhat started painting perhaps India's longest its type on is August 1987. (15' August is birthday of renowned artist Kala guru Ravishanker Rawal.) The subject was Mahabharat. All the three artists had long discussions on the subject. Bhanu wanted to draw Mahabharata as it is written, but Ba said, "I do not know anything about what Vyasa has written. I will paint the story as I have heard from the people. I am not sure that we will be able to draw complete Mahabharat. Where do we have time? And who will buy such a long painting. Make small pictures we will earn small amount. Is that O.K.?"

Ba had not done anything except labour throughout her life. It was difficult for Bhanu to convince Ba but after all he was son of Santokba. He made her to except the challenge. Ba invited Bhanu and Prabha as Ved Vyasa had invited Sri Ganesh to write Mahabharat as he dictated.

Friends, co-workers, and colleagues were making fun of Bhanu. "Came out to be the greatest painter of the world It is difficult to sell even a small painting than who will buy this big scroll?" They said. Some of the people also said that Bhanu is trying to earn the name on shoulder of his mother. Bhanu had no reply to all these. He had will and trust. He wanted to serve the culture of the country and to bring up the name of India. He wanted to put his mother on highest possible peak of world of arts.

The schedule was made. Prabha to prepare food for day's requirement in the morning itself and sit to work. Mother to take care of children. Due to old age Ba could not draw the human characters. Prabha to take care of this. Bhanu to draw the background, tree, rivers, birds, cities and villages, palaces etc. Over and above, to read Mahabharat and to discuss points to convert it into painting was scheduled for the day before it comes on scroll. After the painting is done the colour coordination to be carried out by Be. This was the schedule.

Bhanu looked for Mahabharat published by Gorakhpur press. He could not find it from library of Nalini and Arvind Arts College. The librarian Ms. Parabbhai said, " This book is not issued since it is purchased. I am issuing it for the first time after a period of forty years. It is our fate that in the place like this the basic the Indian cultural heritage is ignored.

Events by events, stories by stories, painting continued. Eighteen parvas were to be drawn. Every event, every story had a unique need of painting. First Aadi parva contains story of birth of Padvas and Kauravas, Ashram life of rishies, story of Bhishm and Ganga, story Shakuntala - Dushyant and lots. In second parva that is Sabha parva, they needed to paint childhood to young age of Kumars, Sri Krishna fights and painful events of Dyut Sabha. All these works were in progress in a small room of ten feet by ten feet. Prabha had to look after visitors, relatives and children. Bhanu had to equally contribute to his job. He was painting at college and also at home. It was difficult for all of them to overcome all the needs.

In Van parva, the exile of Pandva to the forest for twelve years was to be painted. There are number of stories in this parva. They painted number of Ashrams, number of rivers, mountains, jungles, rakshasas and wars. War between Bhishm, Chitrangadha, Chitravirya and Vichitravirya took forty meters. By the time they reached Virat parva, the twelve hundred meters scroll was used. It can be said the biggest in Indian history of art.

This painting made this family great. The creation continued from 1987 to 1992 On 2nd October, (Birthday of Mahatma Gandhi)

1991: first Exhibition of Scroll Painting Mahabharata. this painting was exhibited in Sanskar Kendra, Paladi at Ahmedabad. The director Mr. Bhanubhai Shah spoke on the occasion, "The gallery of this center is considered to be biggest in Asia. The architect who designed it had said that it is not possible for any single artist to display his painting covering full space in this gallery in next hundred year. But I

am happy that today we have a painting covering total space and we are still short of space. Only 350 meter scroll could be accommodated. Remaining was kept aside. The exhibition continues for ten days and 25,000 visitors have seen it.

1991 : second Exhibition of Scroll Painting Mahabharata. After that this painting was displayed at Nehru center on 14th of November. The director of center Mr. Kamalkar Sontake is a good dramatist and he acted in some films also. He was quite happy with the painting and he did not charge any rental for the gallery but has also borne lodging and boarding of the artists.

There are number of sweet memories of this exhibition. It so happened that the photography of the painting was banned for the public. One afternoon Ba saw an old lady taking photograph of the drawings. Ba went to her and clearly said 'No photography' that lady politely said 'sorry, I didn't know about it.' Ba was impressed by her behavior. Both of them started talking. The lady was Smt. Malti Zaveri. She was happy to see Ba. When Bhanu and Prabha came, Ba introduced them to her new friend. 'She is Maltiben, wife of Damiubhai Zaveri. She is working for tribal people.

Maltiben invited the Bhanu and family to her home. During this visit Maltiben suggested Bhanu to involve her in matters of this painting as a good friend. He and Bhanu agreed to it. Maltiben wrote to Kapila Vatsyan for her help to exhibit this painting in Delhi. It was felt that it may take little time for Delhi exhibition. Bhanu authorized Maltiben to correspond on the matter and decided to go to Udupi for one more exhibition.

1992 : Third Exhibition of Scroll Painting Mahabharata. Maltiben was with Bhanu for all the time when Udupi exhibition was on. All the three artists were honored tremendously and approx. thirty-five thousand people have visited the exhibition. After returning from Udupi,

1993 : Fourth Exhibition of Scroll Painting Mahabharata. Maltiben started corresponding with Kapilaben Director of Indira Gandhi national center. Kapilaben was also willing to support this work of Indian heritage- Lastly the Mahabharat exhibited in Nehru Balbhevan, Kotla road, Delhi. Even spacious gallery of BalBhavan could not accommodate it completely. Four hundred meters of painting could be exhibited. Mrs. Sonia Gandhi has also seen this exhibition. She is proud of being in Indian culture, one of the five oldest civilizations of the world. Her husband sacrificed his life for it and she also wanted to do something for it.

She is the chair person of this Indira Gandhi national center and right from the day it is established by late Sri Rajiv Gandhi, this organization is working for preservation of national heritage of art and culture. Sonia Gandhi, Kapilaben Maltiben and other members of the board of the center have decided to buy this painting for the center and it became the part of collections of the center.

Speciality of this painting :

This is a longest Painting ever drawn, All the three artists belong to one family, This drawing is made under guidance of an old age women artist. According to Bhanu Dudhat, it will take another twenty years for this drawing for completion. First Twelve hundred meters could cover only three parvas of

Mahabharat. Further two parvas are painted on another eight hundred meters. Narration on these two parvas is in progress.

Ba has stopped working since 1993 because of old age. Her grandson Kailash who is studying in fine arts, is now helping Bhanu. Bhanu has now entered in the field of architecture. According to him an artist should also be an architect. He made some small sculptures also. He also wrote history of art, some novels and some short stories. He considers 'Leonard' as god of arts.

I am here with Bhanu for more than a week. I have noticed that Bhanu considers time as God. He never spend a moment for nothing. He has made his daily schedule. He is leaving an simple Ashram style life. Work is prayer for him Ba use to refer every time : 'Kam tyā Karam' (where there is work the luck is also there).

Bhanu believes in Shiva. He says that soul is shiva and mind is shakti. Thus he has great belief in Shiva-shakti. He considers women as human form of Shakti and that is why he respects women.

In Bhanu's own words :

"When I left Surat and came to Vidyanagar, the existence of painting department was like null. Hardly one student was coming to painting section. . We started. convincing students from the first year. In 1978 there were nine students in this faculty. We worked for them very hardly. We often took them for out door work. Now after 20 years, the joint effort of everyone has shown the results and Kala Kendra of Vidyanagar is now famous all over. Some of my students have also made there place and name in the world of art. I am also famous for my work. We have established our own art gallery in the name of our mother Santokba. We are handling this Santokba Art Gallery by ourselves....

Recently in 1997 Bhanu's has exhibition was organized in Adberg Brunt Museum of U.K, Bhanu was there at in UK, in London and visited Wembly, Barnet, Manchester etc. and he is now back and making a 55 meter long painting based on History of Kashmir. 120 meter long with 1.2 meter, Bible Scroll painting, His main creations are - Moneycrises My life my wife - Women power - Agnikanya - Flower valley - 1000 miniature modern creative painting, all various subjects. Trusha - Pyas - Horse power - Atmosphere - Damyanti - Mahabarat - Ramayan - Ramvanvas - Gandhi to Gandhi - Fifty years of Independence day - Geetha Yayanthi - Ganesh Dudhala - Menka-Vishwamitra - Bombay blast etc. 2010.