

THE MUMBAI AGE



Diary in pictures



(Top) Dhruvi Acharya working on one of her paintings, (above) a collage of her collection, *Woman, Mother, Goddess*

BY SHWETA SHIWARE

Anyone who keeps a personal diary will agree that there is no greater joy than jotting down what's going on in your life on that piece of paper and capturing it forever. So even when you move on with your life and the memory begins to blur, the very incident that made you the happiest person on the planet or something that hurt you deeply or some experience that taught you the hidden aspects of life, will be inscribed on those pages for you to visit as when you desire.

When Dhruvi Acharya began working on her collection, she intended to do just that. This budding New York based artist refers to her first solo show, *Woman, Mother, Goddess* (acrylic on canvas) as "an emotional diary, where I reflect upon on my personal experiences, hopes, and dreams."

With one foot in the Big Apple and another in *Bharat*, the collection is all about her memories, experiences of a

divided life and about "coming back to her roots".

"The images in my paintings are a mirror to the duality of my life. When I got married, seven years back, and shifted to America, there was a lot of intermingling of Western and Indian cultural traditions. Through my work, I confront the issues of being an expatriate in America as well as being an Indian woman. There was also a lot of emotional baggage involved — isolation in an alien country and longing for home, India," says Dhruvi.

This very experience of exile is depicted in one of her work, *Divided*.

Her present body of work also deals with her encounter with motherhood and marvels at the female body — the spiritual, mental and physical strength of women.

You don't need to have a degree from Glasgow School of Art, or have "art critic" written on your resume to appreciate her work. What catches your eye first is the use of symbolism, ancient metaphors and pop culture which completes the narrative picture.

Where does the influence come from? "Indian miniature painting and Amar Chitra Katha," pat comes a reply from the artist.

"I begin my paintings by sketching the images which tell a story. Every painting tells a story. Stories which are drawn from my experiences; or something that has happened with a close family member and is transferred on the naked canvas," she adds.

A native of Mumbai, Dhruvi has learnt art from Maryland Institute, College of Art in Baltimore and began painting only after she got married. As the artist puts it, "I am not a painter by accident but by choice."

Even though all the images, that are part of *Woman, Mother, Goddess*, have women as central figures Dhruvi dislikes being labelled a feminist.

Her work will be on display at the Jehangir Art Gallery from March 25 till March 31.