CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

This study of painting in modern Andhra has essentially been an attempt to explore the manner in which painting as an art form evolved during the colonial period. It makes an attempt to present an elaborate account of the two art schools which emerged in the coastal districts of present day Andhra Pradesh and how the artists and supporters of the school strove to work within the parameters of the nationalist ideology. The study also enables us to derive certain useful conclusions and to arrive at some generalisations regarding the socio-historical factors that play a significant role in the creation of art.

As mentioned earlier, both Rajahmundry and Machlipatnam were a part of the Madras presidency for a period which was subjected to British supremacy for over 100 years. This association of the region with British officials and government, had its direct repercussions, with the region being subjected to winds of change, transforming Indian society, economy and culture. The two areas also have had the credit of having important educational and social institutions, aiming at the progress of the native society.
The cultural conquest of a subject society seems to be as much a part of colonialism, as political and economic conquest. The introduction of English education and art education at both school and college level can be seen as an explicit manifestation of this process of colonial conquest. The statement by Lord Macaulay, to advocate a class of persons "Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, opinion and morals", shows that the officials aimed to subjugate the natives culturally. For Macaulay and others of his like, cultural subordination was an essential activity of colonial conquest. In other words, to change the native society and emphasize the colonisers superiority was considered as important as economic or political conquest. However, repercussions of political and economic change are instant, while that of culture is slow and gradual.

The British were successful to a great extent with the rich and educated Indian middle classes taking to new English education, for whom the 'new' culture was synonymous to 'modernity' and 'development. The change in language, fashion, art, education and ideology among the Indians can be seen as an outcome of the cultural conquest of the British. However the process of cultural subordination does not necessarily take place only in the class rooms of art schools or other academic institutions. It is rather a complex situation in which both the
coloniser and the colonised have a vital role to play. Much more significantly and through a wide variety of means, colonial culture permeates through the subject society, partly this is due to the implicit power that colonialism wields. Deriving from this there is also the association between modernity, liberty and progress. The educational system introduced by the British and the powerful influence of English language and literature served only to reinforce the notions that modernity and westernization represented progress, and that Indian tradition and customs represented backwardness.

It is in such an intellectual context that we need to understand the decline of traditional painting and the immense popularity of a new westernized painting style. In fact, while the schools in their curriculum did emphasize on western traditions and thus contributed to the decline of indigenous tradition, it alone cannot account for the popularity of western style painting. Rather it would be appropriate to argue that the change in artistic styles was accepted and encouraged by the people themselves who were looking for new alternatives in the form of modernity.

Secondly, it may be argued that the indigenous traditions vanished because of lack of patronage. But this leaves the question as to why patronage declined for these forms, unanswered. The decline of the aristocracy
as a consequence of the British conquest of India is only a part of the answer. After all the British especially after 1857, reinforced substantial segments of Indian aristocracy. But as a result of the Europeanization of tastes, their patronage now extended to those artists who could turn out 'modern' that is western style paintings. It is this change in aesthetic sensibility that explains the rise and popularity of an artist like Ravi Verma.

The foregoing argument would seem to imply a total transformation of Indian aesthetic sense. This of course was not the case. Nineteenth century was for the Indian intelligentsia a period of intense cultural crisis. Although large segments of the rapidly growing middle class in the cities and towns of India enthusiastically embraced many aspects of the new culture that was emerging in India as a result of colonial conquest. But this new culture was not and could not be fully Western. The Indian mind, even as it was being wrenched into modernity, carried with it powerful and enduring influences from the deep well springs of tradition. This was as true of the realm of art as of the religious or social reform.

We need to see the emergent traditions of painting in Rajahmundry and Machlipatnam in this light. The shaping of Damerla Rama Rao's artistic perspectives or that
of his friends, owed as much to the intellectual, cultural atmosphere in which they grew up as to the formal instruction imparted to them in the schools of art or the enthusiasm of individuals like Oswald J Couldry. That is, it may be suggested, the artist even while making an individual imprint has to be seen as being the product of an entire social and cultural context.

It is this, in fact, which also explains the attempts of people like Rama Rao, Adavi Bapi Raju or their successors to forge a nationalist art. It is not entirely a coincidence that in Bengal and in Andhra contemporary artists were struggling to mould what they had learnt with what they felt to proclaim a Nationalist art. Nor need we imagine that the nationalist artists of Bengal influenced the artists of Andhra. It is quite likely that the Bengal School did exercise considerable influence especially at the personal level. As pointed out, for example, Nandalal Bose and his disciples did teach at the Andhra Jateeya Kalasala at Machlipatnam, or the travels and stay of Rama Rao and Gurram Malliah at Shantiniketan. But this is not sufficient to explain adequately the rise of the nationalist form of painting in various parts of India.

On the other hand, we can understand this phenomena better as a manifestation in the artistic sphere of the nationalist spirit that began to pervade all parts of
India towards the end of the 19th century, and which began to intensify there after. This spirit of nationalism was visible both at Rajahmundry and Machlipatnam. The two institutions were as active during the powerful political movements, as in any other major town of the country. In fact the establishment of Andhra Jateeya Kalasala at Machlipatnam was a result of the call to take to 'Swadeshi' or the native elements and goods.

The paintings of this period, produced from the studios of Andhra Society for Indian Art or Andhra Jateeya Kalasala did not in their context proclaim a political message. Yet, in their form they were perhaps as stridently nationalist as any political speech or pamphlet of the time. We have noted the attempts of both Andhra Society For Indian Art and Andhra Jateeya Kalasala, to formulate a nationalist art, which derived heavily from the indigenous tradition even in adopting some elements from the modern western tradition.

We do not have many examples of art being yoked directly and explicitly to the nationalist cause (with the exception of the panels executed by Nandalal Bose for the Congress session at Haripura or that of Chitta Prasad). This was much in contrast to the artists elsewhere in the world, who tried to portray social reality directly. Nevertheless in a muted fashion art and artists served
the nationalist cause, even in Andhra. The two art schools served as a bridge between the artist and society at large, shaping and re-defining a new Indian aesthetic sensibility. Much like the literary and social reform associations which sprang up in various parts of the country, the many art schools of India were also thus contributing to forging a nationalist ideology.

These art associations, however, appears to have receded into the background, in the years after independence. There may be several reasons for this. One is that art was no longer charged with the intensity and energy provided by the national movement and it became a mere marginal activity. A nation struggling to define itself, and coping with social, economic and political crises did not, it would seem, possess any longer the enthusiasm for art displayed during the independence struggle. More specifically, the artists of the school no longer worked on a common ideology, after independence, as was in the pre-independence era.

Artists of the Andhra Jateeya Kalasala disintegrated with a few going in for jobs in various parts of the state, like P. Hanumanth Rao, who went to Vinukonda, to teach art in a school, while Kowta Ram Mohan Shastri took up a job as art teacher at Jawahar Bharati college at Kavali, while the other important artist of the association Ankala Venkata Subba Rao took to teaching art.
at Bhimavaram. Few others took to independent work with Gurram Malliah starting his own art school at Macherla, while others more creative took to a career in illustration and film making. Madhavapeddi Gokhale and S V S Rama Rao belong to this class. Moreover, the art school itself gradually relegated to background, and by 1950s the art department of the institution, was totally closed with the place being taken by certain technical courses.

Much in the same way, though not as fast extinct as Andhra Jateeya Kalasala, the artists of Andhra Society for Indian art, despite the death of their initiator, did contribute for sometime in continuing the style formulated during Rama Rao's time. Though the actual intentions of the movement, receded to background, the work towards a separate school of art was carried on by the students of the school for a few years. The Association had its major setback with the death of pioneers of the movement D. Rama Rao, and V. V Bhagirathi, while S. N Chamkur and C .B Rao, shifted to Madras, for more lucrative offers in portrait painting. As such V. Venkataratnam, remained to continue the struggle. He was supported by Satya Vani^Butchi Krishnamma and M. Rajaji.

The art movement which developed in the two schools can be seen as a repurcussion of the national movement and the artists' quest to participate in the movement.
But to see it as a separate school of art, as in Bengal, has a few constraints. Firstly, due to the short duration of the movement in the state and, secondly, due to the ambiguity which pervaded the artists mind to continue the style adopted by the Bengal school rather than developing an exclusive Andhra School of Art.

Thus, it could be observed that Andhra, which has had a very long cultural history did respond to the national movement, in making an exclusive contribution to 'nationalist' art.