The language through which art came in a form was of symbols. Symbols not only gave language an expression to the unexpressed concepts but also depicted the divine and semi-divine. The environmental forces which could not be conceived in realistic forms, were represented by sign and symbols.

The beginning of art and religion alike lie far back and hidden in the life of the primitive man. Religion historically was the great sources of art. There are few religions in which the symbol has played an important role as it has, in the religion of ancient India.

According to the opinion of the anthropologists in one way or another most of the arts forms like music, dance, sculptures, poetry, architecture all were developed out of exercise. The objects originally devised for the magical control of divinities, like the celebration of seasonal feasts or the production of ecstasy for its own sake or for power in war, all were exercises of primitive religion.
Art had its foundation in religion. Art needs religion to universalize its background of concepts, both mentally and morally, and religion, needs to be impressive. Early civilization or epoch evolved its own techniques, motifs and symbols of art depending upon the scientific invention, religion or philosophical thought and social structure of that class. Every mature work of art not only expresses the values and goals of a particular person but also the artists unique vision.

History of art has the record of constant struggle, with alternating victory and defeat and in the process of this struggle man created symbols for communication and expression. Prehistoric art must be understood as a response to vital needs. The symbols which were evolved for this economics or utilitarian purpose were acquired in the process of their evolution. The belief that man gain power over a person or an object by his power over its representation, is the major inspiration of the primitive artist. Among primitive men artistic adventures gained much from magic that has
given its seal of social approval upon the images of various spirits, ancestors and Gods.

Primitive art is on the whole expressionistic and rich with formal values that cannot be achieved without a certain degree of intellectual maturity. At the same time it has expressed only a limited range of human emotions and attitudes especially fear, sex and assertion that are also discernible in the formulae and gestures of worship and ritual. It is not without significance that the occasions of birth, death, initiation, sacrifice or war which moved the primitive's whole emotional being most profoundly are celebrated rituals or dramatised enactments, regulating effective life and lying down norms of behaviour through an impressive array of idols, masks, decorations, totems carvings and painting activities.

All through social evolution it is from magic, animism or religion that art derived its intensity of expression. But the attitudes and values that art expresses range from fear to anxiety and power in
primitive art. The objective of this study is structured around the concept of symbolism in Indian painting.

The symbols with various definitions and interpretation of different art scholars. The practice of signifying a thing by means of something else that stands for it. In other words, a symbol or a sign is a widespread phenomenon in the visual arts, of special relevance in the transmission and modification of images. Symbolism always involved the stitution of signs and thus has its roots in visual experience, the symbol does not arise from aesthetic experience, but formed as a part of the cultural patrimony from which it is selected for purposes of artistic expression. In symbolic representation there is an immediate and direct relation between the chosen symbol or sign and the thing it signified. This explains among other things, the deep connection between symbolism and the religious imagination.

Next we dealt with the traces of symbols. Whether they were found on Harappan seals or whether they
were to be incised on coins, on sculptural frieze, drawn in a painting anywhere on the ground or on the walls in the course of rituals. The symbols on coins, seals and sculptures have their artistic value as well as religious connotation.

The continuity of world civilization can be assured only through a wide and full participation by different people in the rich legacy of generic human symbols, rhythms and values expressed in their forms of architecture, sculpture, painting and music. We also find constant representation of some auspicious symbols from the primitive findings for example the symbol of chakra, srivastava and svastika. These symbols have represented the Buddhist stupas at Bharut and Sanchi.

The purpose of symbols is discussed in the last part of this thesis. Primitive art with its freedom from technical canons and its directness, and grasp of certain fundamental rhythms offers important clues to the understanding of art in its most elementary and
vital form. In Hinduism there are countless forms of worships. The rituals are essential in all forms of Hindu worship. In primitive societies magical practices were performed to combat illness or to protect man from the threat of illness and death. Magic symbols were drawn on the skin this is how tattooing originated.

Tantra offer a systematic method through which the spiritual powers inherited in man can be brought out. In Ajit Mookerjee view "Art is not a profession but a path towards truth and self-realisation". Tantra offers a variety of symbols and patterns. Tantra art is a sign language which symbolises the relation of man with universe. Most of the contemporary Indian painters were greatly inspired by Tantric symbols and produced a number of paintings representing different tantric concepts. The important contemporary painters are Biren De, Swaminathan, Barve, Santosh and Paniker. These were the artists who inspired the younger artists.
In the end we discussed the concepts and methods of some artists whose work is symbolic like Rabindranath, Chughtai, S.H. Raza, K.C.S. Paniker, Jeram Patel J. Sultan Ali, Biren De, G.R. Santosh and Hussain.