CONCLUSION

The mainstream argument of Indian modern art, engaging critics like Geeta Kapur especially in her book When Was Modernism, has not really outlived the skepticism or aporia in the dichotomy of national/modern. And irrespective of the fact that the post-colonial initiatives in the late 60s Baroda reveal some significant negotiations to create a space for an alternative modernism a certain discomfiture or unease dominated the Indian artist’s psyche throughout the roughly four decades after Independence. In the recent years, however, the relatively comfortable duality of local/global has made some older constructs irrelevant. More importantly due to a global shift in paradigm caused largely by information technology the conventional notion of art-world is met with decentralization where the old hegemony of Euro-west-centric is swept away by the emergence of a certain hyper-interconnectivity. Moreover, with the emergence of new mediums like performance, installation and video/digital art the traditional obsession with originality and the pride of a certain stylistic signature no longer breeds as grave an artistic anxiety as it used to. The post-colonial art criticism, which engaged the theoretical developments in Baroda of 80s, seems to have come of age as an artistic practice in the last two decades or so. The recent upsurge in the act of revitalizing or redefining not only a modern Indian painting, for instance by the aesthetic intervention of painters like Atul Dodiya and Surrender Nair or sculptures or sculptural-installations of Ravinder Reddy, Vivan Sundram and Sudarshan Shetty but also subverting the icon oscillating between sacred and the profane. Now artists are addressing such concerns which are globally urgent the question of west and the east does not seem any more relevant to negotiate.

As discussed earlier the major objective of the present thesis lies in its chronological testimony to delineate a comprehensive historical record of the
aspiring Kashmiri artists whose work is conspicuously informed by the modernist treatment. The validity of such a claim finds its significance in the fact that the sixty year old history of modern art activities in Kashmir has hardly seen any academic intervention to initiate a systematic investigation or documentation.

The most difficult task in achieving the desired end was the sheer lack or practically inaccessible primary sources, due to which some of the possibly important artists are left unexplored. However, the little mention may serve as a starting point or a layout for future researchers to dig a bit deeper for more sources.

The 1950s Kashmir reveals a great and often surprising enthusiasm, considering the level of awareness about modernism in general and modern art-practice in particular, among the aspiring artists such as S N Butt, Triloke Kaul and later Santosh to venture into unknown. At the same time they were excited about the fact that a mere passion for painting, which they had inculcated from nature or instinctually through various chance encounters with traditional artisans, had the potential to translate some of the complex human experiences. In a politically volatile backdrop, which Kashmir became more acutely ever since the Partition in 1947, the nation was reinforcing the faith in secularism and progressive thoughts. However, not in direct accord with the spirit of the politics the artists from across the country were reciprocating the idea of progress in a rather west informed modernist formalism. This is how some of the local artists from Kashmir relate and respond to the spirit of times and in their own individual way translate their experiences in a language which has evolved in a unique way to address the intricate and the complex realm of human experience that no other language is perhaps capable of.
A place known for its long tradition of scholarship; esoteric/spiritual manifestations to provide an alternative to the materialistic understanding of the relationship between man and the universe; its natural beauty Kashmir provided a great opportunity for an artist to draw from a plethora of indigenous sources, for which Santosh’s aesthetic intervention proved to be the most significant contribution to modern art. In the present attempt to delineate comprehensive analyses of the development of modern art-practice in Kashmir reveals, at times quite surprisingly, a rich plethora of cultural manifestations, which in spite of various political or economic deprivations outlived the pranks of time.

Besides Santosh’s recognized position for having shared a very significant contribution to the modern Indian art, which the present study explores, there are other factors which deserve an academic attention. For instance, not many artists from the second generation fulfill the promise as one may presume considering the ice-breaking efforts of the first generation artists. Most of the artists of the second generation showed a certain lack as compared to the aesthetic rigor, the degree of prolificacy and the active participation in the modern scene shared by artists such as Gayoor Hassan, Bhushen Koul and Mehboob.

At the same time the present study suffers because of its relatively large scale to incorporate the three generations of artists. There is no doubt about the fact considering the unavailability or the difficulty to locate the primary sources may have resulted in missing out to acknowledge the real contribution of some of the artists.

The similar fate is confronted in the third and the final generation of Kashmiri artists. The last and in fact the most significant reason for maintaining a certain delimitation, as regards to include some of the most articulate and prolific artists like Veer Munshi and Inder Salim, who are often considered as most
representational Kashmiri artists for negotiating the communal displacement and social-political manifestations of the contemporary crisis in Kashmir, is because of the politically dense specificity required to negotiate with their aesthetic positions and conceptual paradigms. Presumptive of an out-of-proportion scale the present study is not in a position to incorporate such an academically ambitious project. However, it is hoped that the historical nature of the present study may possibly serve as a convenient evolutionary backdrop to take up the different variable of political intervention as anticipated by the Kashmir question.

The recent history of visual art has witnessed a great upsurge as a cultural industry accommodating experts from diverse disciplines to launch collaborative projects of global concerns. The old elitist or exclusivist position of an artist is replaced by a new eclectic paradigm. At the academic level the emergence of ambitious cultural theorists has triggered a professional seriousness in art criticism and scholarship, in whose crucible the meaning of art is subject to a persistently rigorous trial. Confronted with the ever challenging socio-political world order the aesthetic engagement of an artist was transformed into an intellectual responsibility. The revolution in information technology, while making the dissemination of knowledge incredibly easy, questioned the very language on which the ego of modernism was established. The traditional methods and means of artistic expression, which for quite a long time were held as absolute, seemed suddenly redundant and obsolete. The influx of new media like photography, text, video, performance, installation transformed the nature of visual art; the relationship between artist and art, art and society. The present study, in its concluding remark to refer to the event such as Khoj Kasheer, sets forth a certain aesthetic
urgency to negotiate the political and the personal in radically new and more effective mediums.

The six decades of sustained development since 1950 reveal, at the least, three major aesthetic directions. Firstly the abstract-expressionist or the cubist-expressionist treatment to landscape motifs of artists like Triloke Kaul, Kishori Kaul, S N Butt or Kachru is by and large informed by the western standards. The second, in fact the most significant dimension, comes by way of revisiting the indigenous traditions specifically the Tantra and the Sufi, explored by the artists such as Santosh, Gayoor, Shuja. and Masood. The third approach incorporates aesthetic variables such the juxtaposition of ritual and actual to address the immediate and experiential in works of Tiku and Masood; the imagist/narrative mode of Bansi Parimu, Ratan Parimoo and more rigorously by Bhushen Koul, Mehboob and later Chaman and Veer Munshi. But above all the main thrust of the thesis is to provide a comprehensive historical account of modern art-practice in Kashmir since 1950s. The body of the present text also aims to foreground an aesthetic paradigm where from the future prospects of cultural practice can draw its inspiration.