INTRODUCTION

1950’s, as stated in the main title of the thesis, marks a significant moment in the modern history of Kashmir. In the political domain the post-independence forces, the post-partition dilemma and the subsequent dissolution of Dogra sovereignty had a mobilizing influence on the socio-cultural life of Kashmir. The period is also significant in the democratic and communal life of the Valley, often encapsulated in the term Kashmiriyat, which alludes to the communal harmony and cultural homogeneity shared between Kashmiri Pundits and Muslims. In November 1947, interestingly when India’s independence and partition was hardly a few months’ old history, an organization named National Cultural Front was founded in Srinagar. The Front served as a socio-politico-cultural platform for poets, dramatists, musicians, writers, aspiring young artist and the general intelligentsia of the times. Among its founder members such as P.N. Kachru, an aspiring young artist, played as a catalyst to bring other artists of the Valley together under one platform. The Front, by and large informed by political motives and a social propaganda of freedom and democracy in Kashmir, was also instrumental for encouraging the earliest artists who reflected a passion for modern art-practice.

Among its various cultural manifestations, however, it was mainly poetry and theatre which assumed a relatively greater performance and public appeal. Several plays, motivated by the political currents of the time, were written and staged to demonstrate the Front’s ideological viewpoint. Among some early prominent local play-writers such as Dina Nath Nadim and Amin Kamil whose satire and humor is seeped with the public discourse. Nadim is known for his operas, like most popular Bombir ti Yambirzal, (The Bumblebee and the Narcissus), which is held to be the first opera to be published in Kashmiri. Or Me Chhum Aash Paghich (I am hopeful of tomorrow), is explicit in its social
message as a plea for peace in the troubled and uncertain times of political instability and apprehensions of war. Informed by Progressive discourse, political mobilization and the concepts of secularism he is often held to be among the forerunners of modern Kashmiri literature. These early writers' contribution is also significant in terms of decentralizing the then existing linguistic hierarchy. By foregrounding the cultural importance of their mother tongue, Kashmiri, which until then was merely a vernacular, they switched over from the so-called elitist position of Hindi or Urdu and wrote in Kashmiri. In the late 40s the establishment of Radio Kashmir became a most popular platform and the most effective medium of promotion for literary initiatives. The other significant development in terms of serving as a cultural platform was Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages launched both in Jammu and Kashmir in 1958. During this time there was a relatively great upsurge in literary domain of the Valley. Many new clubs were formed across the state showcasing a variety of theatrical genres from comedy to socio-political satire. This tradition saw a more or less sustained enthusiasm until the bloody insurgency in early 90s launched a new chapter in the modern history of Kashmir.

Besides the emergence of theatre which had an active participation for about four decades since Independence, poetry, however, has a long and rich tradition in Kashmir. Kalhana, widely known as the great historian, was essentially a poet. The dichotomy, which has baffled many future academic historians, remains, however, as significant a paradigm as, perhaps, the deconstructionist’s approach where all writing, be it social sciences or humanities, is essentially a creative process. But then the argument may find a certain validation if considering the fact that Nietzsche’s Thus Spake Zarathustra finds its future relevance not as a work of poetry but as a philosophical treatise. In the similar vein Kalhana may have shared the same fate. However, in the present context it is in its poetic sensibilities that Kashmir
has contributed some of the most representational examples of literature. Down the line of history pregnant with the dramatic accounts of rajas and rulers, oppressors and oppressed, philosophers and aestheticians, Sufis and Saints the present character of Kashmir bears more relevance to the historical moment when a certain synchronization between Hindus and Muslim took place, anticipating a special identity which later found a certain ideological consensus in an oft-used term Kashmiriyat.

It is generally believed that no other Sufi or religious leader of central Asian and Persian origin influenced cultural life of Kashmir so profoundly as did Lal Ded and Sheikh Noor-ud-din Rishi, in the late 14th century almost close to the golden period of Kashmir during the reign of sultan Zain-ul-Abidin. Dr. Majrooh Rashid in his analysis of Kashmiri poetry refers to the element of introspection working as some kind of zeitgeist or the collective unconscious in the poets of the Valley right from Lal Ded to the present.

...They (Kashmiri poets) have loved to sing of the spiritual aspect of human life and relatively ignored its material aspect. They believed in a life wherein wealth proves of no value and difference of faith and community become irrelevant and wherein humanity is the source of determining values and justice... There are, of course, poets like Rasool Mir, Mahjoor and others who lived colorful lives and portrayed their beloveds of flesh and blood. But the fact remains that the hangover of the several hundred years' tradition has not allowed even Rasool Mir, Mahjoor and Kamil (modern day Kashmiri poets) to be at rest and their collective psyche has compelled them to abide by the great tradition, the essence of Kashmiri Saivism, Reshut and Islamic mysticism.

It is important to notice that similar introspective element is present in some of the important artists, the concerns which finds a considerable mention in the chapters that will follow. For instance, in the case of Santosh, who occupies a complete chapter, the Reshut and Islamic mysticism works as a significant undercurrent in his neotantric body of work. The other artists who reflect a deep sense of inwardness or introspective attitude are Gayoor Hassan, in his
recurrrent theme of Sadhana. To invest his work the quintessential spirit of the mystical heritage and as a tribute, his recent series of works incorporates, in a direct and deliberate stance, the very text of Lal Ded’s Vakhs and Nund Rishis Shrukhs. Shuja Sultan’s, however, horizontally, contemplative or introspective mode seeks some kind fusion between Santosh’s precise geometric and architectonic permutations, the secretive ambience of the mystical associations by referring to its metaphysical and poetic metaphors and the subconscious of surrealism. There is a striking co-relation between Kashmir Saivism and Vaak-Shruk temper of Lal Ded and Nund Rishi. According to P. N Pushp the poetic philosophy of the two poets owes its evolution to a long historical process of interaction, of pragmatic acceptance and thoughtful rejection, of liberal incorporation and realistic assimilations. Referring to the evidences of Harihara concept of Kashmir sculpture of eight century, Pushp describes:

...The Harihara of Kashmir quite tellingly signifies the essential unity of Godhead and, therefore, of the followers of various paths. The iconographic peculiarities of the ideations (i.e., the three-headed Maheshamurti Shiva and the Four-faced Vishnu), have, herein, merged into a single three faced form artistically balancing the right half of Shiva with the left half of Vishnu. Such a configuration could not have appeared in stone unless it corresponded to some sort of similar cerebration somewhere around, at least in aspiration, if not in action. That the inspiration for such an ideological unity was widespread in Kashmir is corroborated by the pronouncement of the Nilamata that Shiva and Keshava are essentially one, and six hundred years later, Lal Ded echoed the same conviction in a wider range of unified variety.3

The element of ‘unity in diversity’ being a characteristic outlook of Kashmir Saivism, which developed by assimilating some features from Buddhist, Vaishnavite and other esoteric cults, and by the time of Lal Ded (c. 1350) steered clear of all the types of divisive ritualism, including idol-worship. It is in this insightful evolutionary moment which gave Kashmiri literature the immortal Vaak of Lal Ded and in the dualistic stance illuminated the ennobling
Shrik of Nun Rishi. The forms of poetry and its spiritual/emotional content that seeped into the very matrix of Kashmiri psyche still finds echo in the cultural manifestations of modern times. The plea to do away with worshiping the idols and instead seek within is so elliptically profound in this couplet:

*Why besmear yourself with dust and ashes;*

*Why not be just as you are.*

Nund Rishi, while principally in good faith with the Islamic mysticism of Central Asian or Persian Sufi order, was an ideal complimentary to the humanism of monistic Kashmir Saivism and especially its orientation in the thought or poetry of Lad Ded. The memory of Kashmir history is pregnant with some revealing and profoundly telling anecdotes of their spiritual companionship. This great encounter of the seer and the disciple anticipated what came to be known as the Rishi order of Kashmir. It is largely due to this historical event that Kashmir became a perennial example of communal harmony even in the worst times of communal crisis. This Sufi orientation and mystic attitude has outlived the pranks of time. It has found its way in modern day poetry which resonates with the transcendental stance of Sufi thought. The modern day poets like Ahad Zargar, Rahim Sahib, Rehman Dar, Shah Qalandar, Asad Parray, Swacha Kral, Shams Faqir and many others enjoy an astonishingly powerful local appeal and popularity among all classes of the people, be it an elite or a simple farmer.

**Early accounts of visual art**

In the domain of its visual culture the historical account of Kashmir is draught with discontinuity and obscurity. In fact, quite interestingly, the early history of Kashmir’s visual culture, especially its plastic arts, is as much clumsily documented as its most recent history of modern art. However, in order to imagine a certain link with the past, it is important to make a few
representational references to some brief accounts, largely hypothetical or speculative, where writers at various occasions have mentioned about various cultural encounters and activities which may have influenced, motivated or generated certain types of art in Kashmir. It is largely with the help of authors like Karuna Goswamy, in her book *Kashmir Painting, Assimilation and Diffusion; Production and Patronage*, and W. R. Lawrence’s *The Valley of Kashmir* that the references find its sources.

Harwan is one of the earliest archaeological sites in Kashmir to yield important artistic remains. The Buddhist monastery at the site was founded under the Kushans (second century AD), and was enlarged in the period of the Hunas (mid-fifth century AD). From roughly around fourth century the terracotta tiles from Harwan are often referred to as the earliest surviving artistic remains in Kashmir. Harwan is one of the earliest archaeological sites in Kashmir to yield important artistic remains. The stamped decoration on the tile shows crouching ascetics in the central band, with a row of geese below and a railing with figures above. Believed to be originally a site of some ascetic sect called the Ajivikas which was later appropriated by the Buddhists, the naturalistic treatment is suggestive of the Gandharan influence for Kashmir formed an important part of the Kushana Empire.

In the 7th and 8th centuries, likely under the influence of Lalitaditya of Karkota dynasty, one of the greatest of kings, the most significant developments took place in respect of arts. The famous accounts of Goetz referring to the enormous artistic activity under Lalitaditya, who is known to have made an enormous collection of artistic riches from his famously remembered campaigns, “golden and silver idols, copper statues, jewellery, treasures of every type”. Goetz also describes his insatiable artistic tastes who like Akbar invited artists from as far as his empire extending from Bengal to the borders of the Arab Caliphate and from Central India to the borders of China. One can
imagine the variety of influences to give rise to a heterogenous style incorporating sources from Gandharan, Gupta, Chinese and even Syrian-Byzantine. The sun temple at Mrtand is believed to be manifestation of cross-currents flowing from Roman, Byzantine, Sassanian and late Gupta elements. At Parihasapura, northwest of Srinagar, the remains of an immense stupa and a whole complex of Buddhist buildings demonstrate the fresh proficiency. The stones are often of grand size, including a breathtaking one, measuring 16 x 14 x 5 ft 6 in. (4.9 x 4.3 x 1.7 m.) and weighing as much as 64 tons roughly. The blocks are evenly clothed and fastened by lime mortar (a practice exceedingly unusual in India until the advent of the Muslims) or by metal dowels. The so-called chaitya, a court with a central temple for the image, deduces in part from Gandhara and Buddhism, persists to co-exist, at least until the Muslim subjugations and images become more and more syncretic. The singular Buddhas and Bodhisattvas from Parihasapura, now in the Srinagar Museum, are in a variation of the early post-Gupta style.

The typical iconographic characteristics of Gandhara are the plain moulded rectangular bases; the plain circular nimbus, which continued its popularity with Kashmiri sculptors, well into the Utpala period; the inlaying of the eyes and the urna in bronzes; the shape of the Buddha’s face; the puffed and fleshy cheeks, the small but full lower lip as well as the large staring eyes; the rock formations under the seat with occasional animals seen emerging from their lairs. Likewise, iconographic features seen on the Vishnu-Vaikuntha images, or on the great prabha from Devsar, for instance, the arrangements of the heads in many tiers on the eleven-headed Avalokiteshwara, the emphasis on the pectoral muscles, must all have come from diverse sources, but were subordinated to the Kashmiri vision as it emerged between the sixth and twelfth centuries.

In painting, there are few survivals in Kashmir before the eleventh century. The Chitravata of the Vishnudharmottara Purana, believed to be of Kashmiri
origin, is full of remarkable details, information and insights, is one of the seminal texts on the art of painting as it was practiced in India around the sixth and seventh centuries, and can easily be seen referring indirectly to such paintings and sculpture as would have been within the experience of its Kashmiri author. However, the important eighth century text Nilamata Purana, does make some references to the evidence of painting but not until eleventh century we could trace any remarkable evidence of painterly tradition. It is only during eleventh century we encounter a dramatic evidence of murals of Alchi in the Buddhist monasteries in Ladakh.\textsuperscript{11} As Karuna Goswamy describes:

The murals, however, have survived and lead us into a wonderful, richly textured world. The shrines at Alchi have gigantic Bodhisattva figures in stucco, with magnificently painted dresses, the entire area of their enormous dhotis covered with figurative and decorative panels. A view of the world of those times seems to have been condensed in these paintings n the garments of the Bodhisattvas. Apart from this, there is much else on the walls. There are evidently several layers of work, and not everything appears to have been done at the same time, but the earliest work belongs clearly to the eleventh century. Here the commingling with the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Taras, Mahakals and Siddhas are whole \textit{mandalas} with figures gliding through the skies, horsemen, warriors, kings and queens seated carousing, earnest conversations in progress, hunters coursing after game, bulls and elephants, tigers and leopards, fantastic \textit{makaras} and \textit{gajasimbas}. The images seem to be drawn from an extraordinary number of sources. The treatment of the figures, the costumes that they wear, the furniture that one sees, the patterns of textiles and caparisons – all bespeak at once of influences and borrowings.\textsuperscript{12}

Pal P, as cited from Goswamy’s book, while referring to the murals of Alchi he makes a profoundly poetic description at once reminiscent of Santosh’s neotantric paradigm:

In this supra-mundane Universe, neither space nor time has any reality, nor is there any day or night; there are no shadows or internal sources of light within any of the compositional frames. Surfaces, whether filled with mandalas, paradises, scenes of
discourse, epiphanies of the Tathagates and Bodhisattvas or narrative scenes (where time and space do play a role), are uniformly lighted...they appear to dissolve the hues that define them so that the entire composition becomes an abstract design of shapes and colors”.¹³

From the advent of Muslim Sultanate in Kashmir in the middle of the fourteenth century, which anticipated a new set of links with the Muslim world especially Persian and the Arabic the cultural assimilations shifted from the mixed Brahminal and Buddhist sources to the Islamic influences. The advent of Muslim Sultanate started off peacefully in its early phase, but with the accession to the throne of Sultan Sikandar, known Butt- Shikan, the idol-breaker, whose is notoriously known for his radical and iconoclastic mass destruction of old temples, the Hindu/Buddhist artistic evidences were almost erased from the landscape of Kashmir. However, as soon as the great Zain-ul-abidin came to the throne in 1420 A.D., the Kashmiri’s history entered in a new cosmopolitan and secular era, marked as the golden period. The Sultan not only patronized Muslim men of letters but also Pandits versed in Sanskrit learning. During his reign a large number of distinguished scholars, poets, historians and philosophers shaped the course of Kashmiri’s intellectual life. However, strangely, there is hardly any evidence of artistic traditions. In fact, the whole period from Sultanate through Mughals between eleventh and the seventeenth century there is no discernable evidence of a recognizably Kashmiri painting. The references that one often comes across are about the works done in Kashmir but essentially from outsiders, done by artists during a temporary sojourn in the valley, or by an itinerant artist working on commission in the course of professional travels.

Towards the end of seventeenth century, as Karuna Goswamy assures after cruising along the mist and obscurity in the midst of numerous references made by various authors about the possibility of a native Kashmiri artist in the occasions when artist from different schools of painting travelled to Kashmir
and stayed there for a great deal of time to engage with their work, the style seems to be well-formed, evolved, with an identity of its own, not simply a provincial version of Iranian work that it is sometimes taken to be. While describing the special characteristics of Kashmiri painting Goswamy writes:

Figures in most Kashmiri painting are generally quite summarily drawn with no attempt on the painter’s part to bring out the extraordinary possibilities of the human body with all its grace, flexibility, variety and subtlety. In this he is very unlike the Pahari painters who delight in the human form and its countless attitudes and flexions. Not everything in Kashmir painting is stiff and frozen: there are stances, gestures, at times even expressions, that change according to the context, but much is strictly iconographic, and not informed by the joy that a painter might derive in rendering the human form...In respect to the treatment of the female body, the painter’s reluctance to trace its contours carefully, to bring out the feminity of figures, is very marked. He goes often to the extent of suppressing the area of the breasts; no fleshy charms are even hinted at. This might derive in part from the Persian tradition where, at places, an almost deliberate ambiguity is employed... A remarkable feature of Kashmir painting is the almost complete lack of interest in portraiture of any kind... The principal, even the predominant concern for the painter appears to be design. Nearly all things are conceived as elements in a design: men, women, vehicles, animals, furnishings, landscape, and architecture included. The painter’s approach is not materially different from that of a naqqash who sat down to work out attractive designs, and arrangements and color schemes for shawls, carpets or pen-cases. This is possibly taking a harsh view of Kashmiri painting, but this reluctance to become involved in individuals, in relationships, in the psychological aspects of human beings, could be seen as defining the terms on which the painter needs and expects to be understood. ¹⁴

These facts elucidate some very interesting characteristics of Kashmiri painting that exists somewhere between seventeenth century to early twentieth century. Their more or less non-representationational mode, the apparently stiff stance, the precedence of design over portraiture, although quite reminiscent of Persian iconography, share something strikingly similar with the more or less abstract
orientation of most of the modern artist of Kashmir. Not necessarily on the religious grounds, as it would be a somewhat prejudicial to presuppose that Kashmir of the post-independent India shared any such inhibitions, but yes one can attribute this position to mystic or Sufi orientation of a Kashmiri creative sensibilities.

However, there are at the same time remarkable evidences of conspicuously figurative mode of painting adopted by some individuals in the early twentieth century. Ratan Parimoo, in his lucid scholarly essay discovers a distinctively Kashmiri genre of painting in the autobiographical adaptations of Naran Murtzagar, an individual artist who belongs to the tradition of Indian miniature paintings of Pahari school of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh.

...Naran Murtzagar earned his livelihood through painting, he would distribute his work freely to the priests and to his relatives during the annual puja or religious ritual, that he regularly performed. The predilection for incorporating his self-portrait into the paintings is usual. There is one showing him carrying Radha and Krishna on his shoulders, an interesting adaptation of Hanuman carrying Rama and Lakshmana. In this painting it is not quite clear whether the artist himself is seated or flying in space. This iconographic adaptation, where the artist is holding the feet of the deity in his right hand, indicates intense Bhakti. The deities on each shoulder hold each other’s hands, encircling the turbaned head of the painter. This may represent the vision that the artist has of his sahasrara as his kundalini is aroused through his sat chakras as tantric meditation. In the symmetrical arrangement of this painting there is an element of asymmetry. This is evident through the depiction of the eyes which slant towards the right but are at the same time fixed in a trance. It is surmised that one of his sources of inspiration was the Krishna Lila poems composed by the eighteenth century Kashmiri poet, Parmanand.  

The other self-portraits or autobiographical adaptations reveal a similar Bhakti preoccupation with various sacred icons. It is interesting to notice that Murtzagar’s thematic position as a devotional artist, for engaging with religious concepts of dhyana or the tantric rituals like kundalini, in distinctively...
autobiographical adaptations anticipate a possibility of an archetypal or evolutionary link to the aesthetic paradigm of modern Kashmiri painters such as Santosh or Gayoor Hassan.

The Inception of Modern Art Practice

The earliest evidence of modern art practice, however, implicitly, can be traced back to the early twentieth century, roughly around 1910, when the first Technical Institutes of Art were launched in the four major pockets like Srinagar, Jammu, Anantnag and Mirpur (now in Pakistan). The Amar Singh Technical Institute of Srinagar was establishment by Maharaja Pratap Singh with the patronage of Sir Walter Lawrence, the settlement commissioner of Jammu and Kashmir. These schools trained students in engineering, floral design, clay modeling, painting, carpentry and smithy. These institutes were modelled on the British pattern of Victorian academic realism, which included a set number of studio practices like drawing from the model, nature studies in watercolor, portraits from life and oil painting. Most of these painters preferred the landscape idiom, possibly because the scenic beauty of Kashmir was the most captivating and unavoidable subject.

However, not all the students who passed out from these institutes became artists, a vocation which besides a fair knowledge of skills demanded a great enthusiasm, ambitiousness and above all monetary support. Most of the early batches of students either joined a school as an art teacher or while others faded in obscurity. Among the earliest artists Dina Nath Wali remains to be the most senior who shares a relatively fair success as a landscape artist, which finds some discussion in the beginning of the second chapter.

1950s

During the early days of post-independence, while the political space of the Valley was fraught with apprehensions of war, the ever severing relationships
between India and Pakistan, the after-effects of the bloody partition, and the issue of Kashmir, artists on the other hand were busy negotiating the forward-looking ideas of Progressive movements. A few young artists, mostly the ones who had done their elementary course in the fine arts from the Amar Singh Technical Institutes, were seen showing up in the early encounters with some famous artists of India. These special encounters with the modern Indian artists and modern art in general are the earliest evidences of local participation. The mention of the artist may not always be based on the analytical approach or aesthetic validation; however, the artists who have shown sustained and sustainable aesthetic/artistic concerns will occupy the better half of the present study.

In the first chapter, a Capsule History of Modern Art in India, a brief outline of the history of modern art in India will serve as a backdrop to delineate a concise historical account of modern art activities in Kashmir. The recent upsurge in art practice, the free market, and the scholarship has widened the scope of debate around modernism in India – pushing it towards the more complex and open-ended interpretations. The 1950s, being a starting point of the present research, is an offshoot directly linked to the tensions between global modernity and national specificity which characterizes the post Independent India. Interestingly, the celebrations of India’s Independence in 1947 coincide with the foundation of the Bombay Progressive Group. And so does the crisis in rising from the slumber of the colonial past and the slaughter of partition to embrace global modernization. However, being largely apolitical, the Groups independence can be seen in terms of overcoming the stiffly nationalist indigenous conventions foregrounded by Bengal School and opening themselves to global influences. In the 1940s and 50s saw many groups emerging in Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and Madras who claimed different alternatives to Indian modernism. But it was the Bombay Progressives
who can be conveniently understood as modernist for addressing the global challenges of art in a sustained way which paved the way for the first generation of artists in Independent India to position themselves internationally. Indian art during 1950s and 1970s became more International as some of the major Indian artists plunged into non-figurative art of abstraction and formalism, the language adapted by some of the pioneering western artists of the same period. However, implicitly or explicitly, most of the important Indian artists remained attached to the figure, which surfaced in the form of a shadow of the self, a sign, a scribble, a form or a statement.

The post 70s era is charged with the rising demands of the free market, greater investments in Indian modern art, and connoisseurship. The metropolis saw the influx of new private art galleries venturing to invest in art, which boasted the art market to a considerable height.

The major force of the period comes from M S University Baroda whose ideological stand marks a decisive departure from the elitist urban avant-gardism and strongly rejects the post-Independent non-figurative art as playing hostage to western capitalism. The characteristic significance of this period is foregrounded in the vigorous return of the Narrative art and new pictorialism; the appropriation of multiple viewpoint of Indian miniature, the Pop and the postmodern concern for bridging the gap between the ‘high’ and ‘low’ art or between the artisan and the modern artist, and the socio-political commitment. Magic realism as an allegorical paradigm, especially preferred by the third world writers from Gabriel Garcia Marquez to Salman Rushdie, was also incorporated by filmmakers and artists like Krishen Khanna, A. Ramachandran, Gieve Patel and the most daring hyper-realist Bikash Bhattachargee.

The 1970s is also significant for seeing a considerable rise in the presence of women artists. 70s is the peak moment of the postcolonial feminism where we find some of the women artists actively engaged with the similar issues.
However, it is often found problematic for an individual woman artist in India to safely identify with the feminist ideology. But the element of gender difference in the position of a self-conscious woman artist emancipated a space quite unlike and distinct from the male artist’s worldview. In the past 100 years the psyche of an artist, in India and the third world alike, has lived under the inevitable spell of western cultural hegemony. In spite of the seemingly privileged positions offered by the postmodernism’s transgressive/transnational ideology the colonial/imperial hangover is still heavy. On the one hand International auction houses like Christie’s, Sotheby’s, and Bonhams, are investing in Indian modern art and on the other hand the anxiety related to the parameters of authenticity and genuineness of art between west and east is equally being strongly felt.

The second, fourth and the fifth chapter are structured on a generational pattern comprising three generations since 1950, while the third chapter is entirely devoted to G R Santosh for the sheer scale of his work. However, apart from the age factor, the classification based on generations does not always reflect any stylistic development or conceptual difference. Neither does it always amount to the death or a certain retirement from the art practice. There are, for instance, some artists who virtually belonged to the first generation but are still actively participating. Each generation is marked by a difference of two decades, which does not necessarily suggest a significant shift in the art practice or any radical change in the socio-political space but is largely based on the participation of new artists to provide a sense of vitality to the tradition of working with the modern vocabulary. In order to arrive at a maximum comprehensive understanding of their works and to position their artistic individuality each artist is discussed under a separate subheading. It is hoped that this somewhat arbitrary structure may be helpful in terms of delineating a comprehensive, and perhaps indiscriminate, historical documentation of the modern artists of Kashmir.
The second chapter, *Inception of Modern Art in Kashmir*, represents the first generation of Kashmiri artists whose work, partially or uncompromisingly, embodies the modern art idioms, comprising of artists such as Dina Nath Wali, Somnath Khosa, S.N. Butt, Triloke Kaul, P.N. Kachru, Kishori Kaul, Nisar Aziz, M.Sadiq, Suraj Tikoo, Bansi Parimo, Ratan Parimoo and Manohar Kaul. The chapter narrates the historical account beginning with the event when some local artists engaged themselves on the ideology of the avant-gardism of the Indian/International modernism and thus anticipating the inception of modern art in Kashmir. It is in this context the cultural front, as discussed above, makes its relevance to the first modern art initiatives in the Valley.

In 1948 the first self-consciously modern art group called Trio was formed by the three active members of the Front P N Kachru, S N Bhat and Triloke Kaul, which eventually was renamed as progressive Artists’ Association in October 1948. In May 1949, the association held its first show in Srinagar. Among some of the influential people who witnessed the show was Percy Brown who declared: “the movement aptly represents the progressive trend by bridging the abysmal gulf of five hundred years, thus linking the tradition with present.” In the same year Raza organized a two-man show of S N Butt and Triloke Kaul in Bombay, which remains to be the first ever exhibition of modern local artists outside Kashmir. Synchronizing with the Progressives spirit as foregrounded by groups like Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi Silpi Chakra in 40s and Madras Cholamandal in 50s the Progressive Artists’ Association of Kashmir was founded roughly in the same time with the experienced patronage of S H Raza.

The most important factor that defines the course of the future development and participation of local artists is mainly due to two reasons. Firstly because of Raza’s active presence in the Valley which anticipated a certain space where many aspiring individuals could share their dreams of artistic ambitions and secondly artists like Triloke Kaul, the first local artist to study in M S
University Baroda, followed by Ghulam Rasool Santosh and Kishori Kaul brought with them a lucid and academically articulate vocabulary of Indian modern art in Kashmir. And thus, it is important to note, the Kashmir’s modern art scene follows the evolutionary link between the outward avant-gardism of Progressives and the inward, more self-conscious, alternative modernism of Baroda. However, not all the artist mentioned are widely discussed, primarily because, while some of them did not show a sustained development in terms of their relevance to the spirit of modern art and other remained somewhat provincial in their aesthetic aims.

In spite of the fact that the artists like Triloke Kaul, Kishori Kaul, Ratan Parimoo and Bansi Parimu, who have shown an active engagement as artists, the scale of G. R. Santosh’s contribution is unthinkable in proportion to any other artist of the Valley. Santosh remains to be the only Kashmiri artist who is internationally celebrated for his outstanding contribution to Indian modern art. The third chapter, **G R Santosh the Vanguard of Neotantric Art**, attempts a comprehensive analysis of Santosh’s profoundly complex and distinctively individualistic neotantric body of work, the paradigm that has placed him in the forefront of Indian modernism, especially, during its most crucial and crisis-ridden phase.

The **fourth chapter** comprises of the artists of the second generation who joined the tribe of modern art around late 60s and early 70s. Mostly as teachers of the newly launched Institute of Music and Fine Arts in Srinagar, the chapter focuses on each artist’s body of work and analyses their individual contribution to keep alive the modern art practice in particular and their artistic contribution in general. Due to the availability of a proper art institute modelled on Baroda curriculum and the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture & Languages set up in 1958 and declared as autonomous body in 1963, which patronized the Institute and provided an official platform for local modern artists to participate
in art competitions and art camps, this period is also characteristic of a gradual increase in the number of artists. The chapter may look somewhat disproportionate in terms of the text written on each individual artist where some are discussed at length while others find a relatively little space. The variation and the economy of text is largely based on the inverse relationship with the body of work, the element of sustained engagement. The artists who find a relatively elaborate discussion are Gayoor Hassan, Bhushen Koul and M. A. Mehboob. The other artists include K.Khosa, A.K.Raina, A.R.John, V R Khajuria, Shiban Kaw and Gokul Dembi.

The similar pattern is followed in the fifth chapter, which is also the final chapter, comprising mostly of the artists who were taught by the second generation. However, in the fifth chapter *In the Wake of Insurgency - The Present generation - 1985 to the Present*, the attempt to analyze the impact of the dramatic changes caused by the insurgency in 1990s also surfaces while addressing the work of an individual artist working in the midst of turmoil. In this chapter the main focus is on the work of Shujah Sultan, Masood Hussain, Rajinder Tiku, Shabir Mirza and Shafi Chaman. The chapter also highlights, however briefly, the other artists such as Shaiqa Mohi, Zahoor Zargar, Aftab Ahmad, Shora Bashir, Iftikhar Jaffar, Veer Munshi and Inder Salim. The chapter concludes with a brief monograph on the first truly international event in Kashmir organized by Khoj Delhi in 2007.

All the four chapters, from second to fifth, are supplemented with colored plates (images of the art works). The plates are placed at the end of the each chapter to make it easier to refer back to the text. The selection of images of the art works is largely done in a way to show the development of the individual artist from the early stage to the later stage. The images are drawn from different sources such as photographs taken directly from the artist’s studio;
through email correspondence; books, magazines, exhibition catalogues, brochures and internet.

It is important to state that the nature of the present study may have been very different had it taken place before the insurgency of 1989 when Kashmiri Pundits, forming a considerable participation in the modern art scene of Kashmir, were, unfortunately, forced by militant uprising to migrate. Now scattered in different parts of the country, confronted with different dimensions of despair and dilemma, it would require a very special project to negotiate as how they address their existential and political condition, anticipating a considerable degree of specificity and transformed artistic concerns.

Devoid of any communal specificity or religious identity, the characteristic which is as much a significant an element in the classical psyche of Kashmir as it is a universal attribute of art, the selection of living artists is mainly based on three major factors. Firstly only those artists are discussed who have shown a sustained engagement by active participation. The second reason is largely based on the availability and accessibility of the artist, which gives enough space to explore the intimate and the complex nuances of their work. And the third, and seemingly peculiar reason, lies in its specific focus to address those artists who, in spite of the fact that they never left the Valley, are very much actively engaged with their work. The active presence of a working artist was indispensable to sustain and guarantee the future prospects of modern art development in Kashmir. Most of the living artists discussed in the fourth and fifth chapter are full time art teachers in Institute of Music and Fine Arts Srinagar. In this, once again, the tradition reveals its historical link to the pedagogic space of Baroda.
Footnote


2. Ibid. p 96 - Dr. Rashid, Majrooh, *The Element of Introspection in Kashmir Personality as Reflected in Kashmiri Poetry*.


4. Ibid., p 65
Note: (*Vaakh* and *Shruk* are Kashmiri words for Vaakya and Shloka of Sanskrit. There is not much difference in the structural forms of the two differently named genres. Both are four-lined. However, there is difference in their subjects. Vaakh is associated with Lal Ded so much so that her Vaakhs are the only authentic source for understanding her creative personality. Shrukh form is mainly associated with Nund Ryosh popularly known as Sheikh-ul-Aalam and Alamdari Kashmir (i.e. universal teacher and the Banner Holder of Kashmir).

5. Ibid., p 65


11. Ibid., p 14

12. Ibid., pp 14-15


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