



PREFACE

The subject of this thesis was inspired by the thick tradition that ubiquitously envelops every sphere of activity particularly in the city of Madras [now Chennai]. Its range is wide bringing within its ambit religious rituals, classical dance performances, drama and theatre, folk art traditions, sartorial attire and modern expressions. The presence of a colonial established Art Institution and the concept of an artists' commune in the form of Cholamandal Artists Village served as an impetus to explore a trajectory that developed into the Madras Art Movement particularly in the vibrant period of 60s. The nebulous idea of exploring the modern art forms of the Madras artists concretized as my interest became focused on their folk and dynastic art inspired imagery realized in the painted and sculpted expressions of a group of artists who were alumni of the Madras School of Arts and Crafts. Investigation into its documentation brought me awareness that this particular area within the episteme of Modern Indian art has received scant attention. Initial investigation suggested to me the vital and crucial role-played by the Madras School of Arts and Crafts. This institution served as a nerve center for its art protagonists to experiment and consciously adopt regional repertoire to track its involvement towards contributing to modern Indian art from the Southern periphery. In the persona of its two principals namely Devi Prasad Roy Chowdhary [1929-57] and K.C.S. Paniker 1957-67] important changes in the art pedagogy were formulated. Under Roy Chowdhary fine art curriculum was initiated, drastically moving away from a predominantly craft oriented pedantry while K.C.S. Paniker was crucial in introducing an awareness of modernism as it emerged in Europe and America.

Certain contingent factors within modern Indian art in the decade of late 50s and 60s made Paniker initiate a program on Nativism/indigenism that became crucial in the emergence and development of the Madras Art Movement. This is the crucial question that this thesis attempts to analyze and study.

The study of the Madras Art Movement with its central agenda grounded in indigenism became the governing factor in the 60s consequent to certain exigencies that prevailed within the country in the face of internationalism and third world consciousness as various cultures throughout the world sought status quo. Throughout the country this was a need urgently felt to establish Indian

identity, but in the South it was attempted as a conscious move to realize its own identity within the pan Indian milieu.

Emerging from this calculated and consciously worked program was a regionalism that defined the contours for the regional modern. Art Historians within the country see this as an opportunity for a critical definition of the emerging regional modern in a culture that is already pluralistic. A framework of this type allows space to identify and recognize art movement in the South located at Madras and centered on the colonially established Madras School Of Arts and Crafts. These considerations vitally also brings within its purview the artists responses and sensibility that is markedly traditional and regional bound, visibly creating a case for the study of art movement within the country having indigenous/local bias.

At the outset I wish to acknowledge the immense contribution made by the Department of Art History and Aesthetics, Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University Baroda where I registered under a Teachers Fellowship sponsored by the University Grants Commission under the IXth Plan in 2000. My research would not have materialized without the productive help and collaborative efforts with this department. I wish to place on record my gratitude to Deepak Kanal Former Head of the Department, for facilitating my registration as a research candidate. To D.P. Dhumal, the former Dean of the Faculty for clearing the formalities and aiding the registration process. To Shivaji K. Panniker for his critical comments and clarification of many of my ideas and concepts. And to my guide Parul Dave Mukherjee whose invaluable cooperation, her methodical guidance, and her sharp intelligent insights were instrumental in shaping the form of my thesis. She was extremely generous with her time and extended her support in many other areas concerned with research. My due acknowledgement to Kadam Bhai and Ravi Bhai in the archives for lending their cooperation, support and help. I deeply appreciate the cooperation and support extended to me by all of them.

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Kunhiraman, Rm. Palaniappan, C Douglas, K. Muralidharan and Premalatha Seshadhri. The one artist who remained out of my ambit was Munuswamy from whom I could elicit no support though many attempts were made by me to arrange a meeting for discussion of his works.

Among the art galleries in Chennai, a special mention must be made of Apparao Galleries. Sharan Apparao the art dealer and owner of the gallery lent unstinted support towards my research project. Her well-documented library facilitated my task of material collection, particularly the catalogues that provided information on the contemporary situation and exhibitions held nationally and internationally. Her generosity, interest and enthusiasm in this particular research area served me well. Her insight into the contemporary situation, proved productive as we held meaningful dialogues and debates.

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clarified many of my ideas. Kunhai Kunhiraman in Trivandrum was generous with his time in giving details about the excitement pervading the vibrantly charged atmosphere of the College of Arts and Crafts in very early 60s when technical experiments and search for local vocabulary was on for a modern expression. The Trivandrum sojourn was made all the more meaningful with the unstinted support and help of my student. Latha Rajeev Kurien whose close proximity to the art historian R. Nandagopal and the sculptor Kunhai Kunhiraman served my purpose well. Mr. Devan in Mahe provided information about the School of Arts and Crafts and his close association with Paniker.

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To my spiritual mentor Sayyedi Abdul Kader Hakimuddin of Burhanpur and to my parents I dedicate this thesis.