

# Manav Gupta is a Natural

Essay by *Kingshuk Mukherji*

He is not what you traditionally know as an artist. An alumnus of Presidency College, Kolkata, Manav picked up the paint brush as a child in the serene, sylvan surroundings of National Library, Kolkata. In that sense, therefore, this young artist lived and grew up in the lap of heritage.

He always had a restless heart, one which died to try out things. And he would... Even as he made this journey, the canvas was never far away and the brush strokes matured. He studied painting under Shri Vasant Pandit, an unsung master. Manav often recalls how mesmerized he'd be as his guru would talk to him for hours. Manav's parents took him to the master when he was a toddler, barely two years of age. Even at that tender age, the Master created an indelible impression on him. And from that day, till the time Manav left the city of his birth for Delhi, the Guru and his shishya vibed. They talked endlessly and painted together. It was as if two souls were tied in one string....

Today, Manav has grown manifold. His art has taken him to the zenith. He's a name the world recognizes. All this because he's spontaneous. His art comes from within. It has nothing to do with formal training. "My art is what I am. What I perceive. And what I look forward to. My art is my heart beat." There have been critics who've praised him for his technique. But more often than not, what he has created has been the result of a storm within. His brush strokes have followed the dimensions of those restless stirrings.

He is as close to nature as possible. All that he does comes from deep within. There's nothing cosmetic about what he feels or what he does." Truly. For, Manav's quality isn't just about a genius. It's about how he feels and the shades of blue he seeks in the sky through his eyes. It's about the grit and struggle of a man from humble circumstances. It's about a man who hasn't grown up breathing tinned air. It's as easy as the flow of a deep river that meanders through a landscape and runs off to an unknown destination where it meets the horizon. Manav is a product of nature. Hence, his love for the trees. Manav is about perception. Hence, his fetish for eyes. Manav is Manav. Unique as ever.