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## Mixed Media — Manav Gupta doesn't rely on paint alone to make his point

*By Rajlakshmi Bhattacharyya*

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There is a certain haunting quality to Manav Gupta's paintings. It was the same quality that characterized 'Timeless Metaphors of Dreams', a collection of his works, which was recently exhibited at the Taj Palace hotel in Delhi.

But to judge Gupta's works from his canvases would be doing injustice to the versatility of the man. He writes poetry and gives it a visual interpretation through faces he sketches, bringing out the artist's sensitivity to the bountiful treasures of the earth. The images in his canvas are far from abstract. They are vivid and are to Gupta like truths 'having come to me all the way to take shape...'

A look at 'The Call' which shows women wanting to whisper is evocative while 'Elusive Pursuits' depicting somber women is pensive. Both 'Shadows' and 'River' rely on the use of Indigo though their meanings are vastly different. In the former he goes 'seeking shadows in blinding light' whereas in the latter he asserts, 'I am alive'. A keen observer, Gupta's 'Aqueous Dreams of the Future' features two limpid eyes. Recollections from his childhood are portrayed in canvases showing folk singers, the guru-shishya parampara and palm leaf manuscripts. 'These ideas evolved from mythical stories I heard on my mother's lap,' clarifies the artist.

Gupta was so inspired by the freedom struggle, he painted the national tricolor on canvas. Shadows of freedom fighters caught in a moment of agitation are shown as fleeting images in the backdrop.

Born in 1967, Gupta is a self-taught artist. His solo shows at the Birla Academy of Art and Culture at Calcutta in 1996 and at the Taj Bengal in Calcutta in 1997 were highly acclaimed. The Calcutta painter who has now moved to Delhi confesses to a deep-rooted attachment towards nature. The furniture he sculpts 'are recycled roots', reminding one of swans, octopuses and antelopes. The exotic blend of flora and fauna are drawn from his early years at the National Library campus.

Nature is also celebrated through vibrant watercolour landscapes. 'Echoing Green' gives the impression of hills fringed with trees in turquoise blue and jade green. Gupta paints the passage of time in 'Personification' using the metaphor of a landscape. He sees morning as a concept in orange blending into the darkness of the night in 'Prabhat'.

Sounds, moods and rhythms have deeply affected the artist to give a brilliant sensitivity to his works. Colours flow, merge and forms evolve to create a symphony of subtle and glowing tones.