

Indian Council for Cultural Relations presents Manav Gupta — A Curtain Raiser

By Shubhra Mazumdar, Editor and Art Critic

The newly opened art gallery of the ICCR, the Azad Bhavan Gallery in New Delhi, has become a prime attraction for the art fraternity. Having clocked more than half-a-year of showcasing Indian art, the gallery has attained the status of being a place for discerning art exhibitions, where displays explore the ever-emerging mediums of self-expression among the artists of today. A round-up of the premier exhibitions held at this gallery space throws light upon the variety of Indian art, the need for creating a vibrant platform to uphold the principles of cultural propagation, and connectivity that is the primary focus of the ICCR.

It was therefore in the fitness of things that the inaugural exhibition at the Azad Bhavan Gallery should showcase a display with multi-dimensional aspects. The pick of artists therefore homed on to Manav Gupta, who besides being a painter is also a film-maker, an environmental activist and music lover. His show titled: Rainforests and the Umbilical Chords summed up his concerns about the environment by focusing on the damages suffered by the earth.

His telling explanation about the exhibits is worth mentioning as he stated: "We are because there are umbilical chords of earth, of fire, nature's elements that hold us. If we break away to mindlessly build and expand, we surround ourselves with our own follies."

Mapping these concerns in the form of art, Manav Gupta expresses himself as a brilliant colourist, which makes his images flow in a lyrical harmony across the canvas. In particular, his depiction of the plight of the rainforests is a grim picture at first sight. If one were to 'scratch' into its depths, it would reveal a ray of hope inculcated through the use of light peeping through the gloom, breaking out of the shackles of the surrounding and enveloping environmental degradation.

The cool greens, the mellow yellows, the deeper indigos and the earthy tones of his canvases are not mere colour patches. They express a profound vocabulary of concerns that transcend beyond the physical and touch nature on a superior level altogether. The artist and his work are enshrined into a higher plane of consciousness and the viewer vibrates in this energy, making the works a feast for the eyes and serenity for the soul.