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Sublime and Sacred in the Works of Manav Gupta

By Manohar Bandopadhyay

It is difficult to draw your eyes away from any work of Manav Gupta who moves you with his ecstatic shade and light so profoundly that you do not know what to admire and what to leave out from mention. There is nothing that calls for lesser attention. You certainly hold your breath in admiration of the artist's emotion that exalts us all to ecstasy.

Nature and myth are the recurrent leitmotifs of Manav Gupta who handles them in his unique way. For him myth is real and spiritual. In a work where a mythic tree stands in the foreground of nature with a hanging bell he crystallizes the sacredness and sublimity where you are at once moved with the archetype and the ritual. It is deeply spiritual — quite affirming what Clive Bell maintained in his art criticism: 'the emotion expressed in a work of art springs from the depths of spiritual nature.' Manav succeeds to inspire intense aesthetic emotion in the spectator. Notice the depth of colour and the human forms in gay abandon on the trunk of the tree. Rarely do we find such originality in the creative imagination of an artist.

Look at his yet another work, 'dance of salvation'. Deep and ecstatic, it drives you through congregation to the journey's end where the soul opens out to merge with eternity. The finite anxious to embrace the infinity. It appears an ascetic resides in the psyche of the artist. It is something beyond esoteric and mystic — the artist may be conjuring elusive pursuit of what is eternal and absolute. Whatever his motif, he for sure, makes us spiritually alive.

Manav's some of the abstract works help us to see through creative symbolism. These facets are eloquently brought about by the painter, inducing your critical faculty to override the emotional quest. There is a lyrical touch in the elegance of Manav's aesthetic emotion. In a work set against the fade-out of nature we are face to face with the primordial men in a land suggestive of Elysium. The characteristic

ecstasy is modulated to a reflective harmony — a harmony of thought and emotion. It is a reflective metaphysical pursuit.

The artist's poetic impulse takes over. A painter and poet, he lets the stream of poetry flow into his work just as his light and shades lend a phenomenal touch to his numbers. In one of his poems he says: 'with paints I draw / which was / and what is / can one sketch what will be?'

To his credit, Manav has six most iconic and revolutionary art projects in India this decade. — Times of India

Massed in their hundreds and thousands, these humble items gain new significance, as tradition reimagined makes an eloquent case for sustainable practices that respect the earth's resources while transforming the familiar into something completely unconventional, unexpected, and magical. — Sculpture Magazine