

## An Inward Attunement

*By Keshav Malik, Art Critic and Scholar*

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Manav Gupta's present phase of art, facing both forwards and inwards, is a contemplation of spiritual communion. And so, his images exist purely to act as the vehicle of a visionary world that is itself the instrument of self-transcendence. His disposition is towards invoking the inner world of the soul as the stage of divine immanence. Through his most achieved latest works he expresses the need for purification, and so spells out a lyrical consciousness that makes use of simpler, more direct means of pictorial expression. Thus, in effect, he tries to apply a balm and heal the currently troubled human psyche. In this way his work has undergone a notable change and development. The maturation is palpable.

Working in watercolours, as he does, he puts the medium to fresh creative tasks. Technically, as far as colour goes, he is highly professional. Moreover, he has a precise understanding of colour as the language with which nature tries to communicate meanings and values. For him colour is a function of sight — implying a sun-like quality in the eye. For instance, his delineation of the lotus flower partakes of the whole colour spectrum. Here, then, is a silent discourse on the music of colours. In this way, visually he works out notes and scales to produce melody as well as harmony. One can follow Manav's development from colour harmonies of great refinement even in his earlier work — on to a progressive liberation of light from the object, or perhaps the resolution of the object into light. The artist has come to understand light as that from which the objects we see are made.

But all this expertise is in favour of the benign vision; the renewal of wonder at the nuances of the paradisaical world even refreshing itself before our eyes. The epiphany of the universe helps open up the sacred source.

If some painting is a metaphysical activity, this does not mean that it is quasi-mystical. At its most mature and articulate — that is, when it is informed by a profound intuition — Manav's pictorial language emerges from, and surmounts the creative process to exist objectively. It is then the instrument of a level of experience that is communicable in terms that relate to the knowledge and wisdom of the inwardly attained. This painter's technical know-how, as a colourist, is not deployed for its own sake, but because his technique has its own meditative content.

Thus, and in sum, here is evidence of a self-spiritualizing imagination, and wherein the painter is trying to integrate such wholes of experience as bring about our union with the essential reality. Through his external senses the painter is able to perceive the visible world. Through his internal senses he tries to perceive the microcosm, including the twin level of body and soul. In this way the perception of inward reality is expressible in visual language — but a language which has become imaginal. The painter seems to feel that he has a message to deliver to his ordinary self — a message concerning our deepest being. It means an awakening to a more elevated plane of living. Certainly Manav's peak moments draw the viewer to them in communion in more than a superficial manner.

Finally, his lotus symbolizes an epiphany of the universe continually opening up from a sacred source, the centre of the birth of life. An epiphany of which it is both an expression and symbol.

Bibliography — [manavgupta.in](http://manavgupta.in)