

Manav Gupta

By Keshav Malik, Art Critic and Scholar

Even as we appraise Manav's new work we are led to reflect on the medium of water colour and on some of its salient strategies: namely and obviously that it should only be broken down or diluted with water, that it may be used on almost any type of paper, whether tinted or white, that its permanence is assured by good hand-made rag paper and of course that the thing can be tried out also on board.

Well, Manav has obeyed all the relevant norms; and, what is more in his choicest compositions, he has avoided the common error of producing colour schemes which are unduly rich. For this reason the finest of his offerings are understated, even when bright hued works shine out as well. There is strength to these colours. The pictures never look dry but really watery. When painting the sky — as the painter does at times, he does not make the semblance of clouds too heavy and the edges too sharp, those remain mellow. The colours merge into each other appealingly. Wisely then, there never is a muddy feel to his paintings. At certain moments there are fascinating effects of time-worn stone-walls — indeed the same strange patina, and where as though the artist had scraped the paper and then run his colour again over the roughened surface! Some of the largest works have this very feel of maturation.

Colour, as an aspect of light, is what Manav's work may be said to be about, and he explores the matter soberly. The intensity of his colours is strengthened without altering the colour itself. The transience and shifting moods of light are a delight in this selection. At moments the colours appear to quiver excitedly as if rising to a higher emotional state.

Manav's moving hand, and moving brush, follow an inner impulse faithfully and which bespeaks of in-born mobility in the artist's persona. The feel of his colour being supple, the energy of life is seen registering the growth of what is germinating in the artist's spirit. Thus, this painter, by virtue of the fusion of an inner and outer vision find, in nature the counter part of all those inward stresses that move our core humanity. In his landscapes of the mind we find reflected all that we can hopefully think or feel or know. There is joy here, since we are enabled with him to explore a deeper visual space. Such, and all similar degrees and shades of experience become the stuff of art in terms of the echoing life of nature. Thus, within the outward mutability, the artist perceives and reaffirms the language of his designs, and which have an underlying energy and purpose.