

A Bureaucrat, a poet and a self taught abstractionist, Sangeeta Gupta works in the Indian Revenue Service, and started her artist journey making intricate drawings. It was in her solo show in 2002 that she exhibited her love for colour; the works seemed to splash off the canvas. A distinct lexicon in which Sangeeta Gupta spins a composition of calligraphic and sculptural imagery hearkens of Himalayan journeys and inspirations. These recent paintings reveal panoramic motifs inspired by the continuity of harmony in nature.

The purpose of the art for her is to reflect the absence of shared convictions, and the concomitant accumulation of catastrophes, the changes of finding the joy of hope has become increasingly rare. At moments, the otherwise bustling metropolitan space appearing as a kind of cruel joke; and which only by dint of talking ourselves lightly are we able to endure. But self-induced euphorias wear off soon enough. The chimeras of almost insoluble problem loom up once again. Apparently there is too little on which we can genuinely rejoice. Yet, right on such a scenario arrive the truer of the artists, reminding us of what we habitually forget: the duty to impose order upon endemic chaos.

In her works she quickly brings home to the observer her undeniable commitment of life. It is such zeal as energizes her animation, and that same intensity is brought to bear upon her new compositions with force. They breathe life, and are entirely the result of felt experiences of her surroundings. Here, then, is a sign of health in a climate of narcissism. To pursue an intense, and independent life of the mind within the parameters of the over all community, means precisely that.

In Sangeeta's work, colours blend, juxtapose and suggest myriad pairings, of cobalt and indigo, colours of earth and trees, reds, mixed monochromes, gilded detail, using the natural spectrum with its visual sensibility.

Work-out of a Faith

The purpose of art is to celebrate the world we all have in common. In these times, through the absence of shared convictions, and the concomitant accumulation of catastrophes, the chances of finding the joy of hope has become increasingly rare. At moments, the otherwise bustling metropolitan space appearing as a kind of cruel joke; and which only by dint of taking things lightly are we able to endure. But self-induced euphoria wear off soon enough. The chimeras of almost insoluble problems loom up once again. Apparently there is too little on which we can genuinely rejoice. Yet, right on such a scenario arrive the truer of the artists, reminding us of what we habitually forget: the duty to impose order upon endemic chaos.

I felt the foregoing preamble right, even as I brought to mind the persona of Sangeeta Gupta, as much as her art. From what I have known of her, and her work, she quickly brings home to the observer her undeniable commitment to life. Yes she has the necessary madness, of a creative passion and so without neglecting her obligations to the family – I mean the human family (often, in her case made up of underdogs). It is such zeal as energizes her anima, and that same intensity is brought to bear upon her new compositions with force. They breathe life, and are entirely the result of felt experiencing of her surroundings. Here, then, is a sign of health in a climate of narcissism. To pursue an intense, and independent life of the mind within the parameters of the over all community, means precisely that.

Keshav Malik
New Delhi, March 2006

FOREWORD

Art, as has been well said, is a strange necessity, lack in which life can be a poor maimed thing. There is much talk these days for a spiritual revival. That need is evident enough in a civilization largely made up of a superfluity of things, or things of use. But how will the spirit prosper in a soil of religious dogmatism, dire blind faith, or hushed up sentimentalism.

And yet, fortunately, despite the sicknesses in the nation's soul, a new order of experience is thrusting itself up like a young, sturdy growth on an old ancient tree, and it is in terms of this experience that we must be convinced not only of supreme wisdom, and a divine love, but of our own eternal part in it. Art, and the purer of the sciences, invest the world of every day with new meanings, fresh symbols, whereby to express the refreshed vision or a timeless quest.

By the very force and persistence of innocently looking upon the world, the creative folk open up new kingdom in which the minds of men can find greater freedom, and when their hearts are moved to wonder.

And it is through such wonder that the choice of the art works presented in the exposition move us out of our rut and lethargy of spirit. That all these artists happen to be women, at least for me is uplifting, and nevertheless the fact is incidental. After all, the feminine principal is a spiritual attribute shared both by women and men. It is universal. That being so, it is yet of paramount importance right now to stress the key virtues of womanhood - their intrinsic humanity. There is a deficit of this in the here and now of a world rich in much reasonings, but woefully short on the reason of the heart. In this last women usually lead.

But over here, these artists exceed their normal human virtues and treat us to worlds within the one world, namely those of the creative imagination. But then the works included do more than delight. They enlighten. The lot of them, largely at any rate, stand as it were at the mid -point of a pendulum's swing- a pendulum of experience that swings outwards into the life around us, and inward into ourselves. And then too with an unalloyed love they seek to so image their experience that are made increasingly aware of the whole that is instinct within us. Here is the crux and which only good artist seize, and sensing enrich us with a vision which India of imagination proposed at the very dawn of its civilization.

So that these art works are more than escapist sedatives or pleasurable dope. They are, rather, a commentary upon life, revealing its dynamics as well as its harmonies. This set of creators knows nothing of finality and draws no conclusions. Their works live by the sheer force of urgency of profound rhythm; and which in the very flux of their transmutation can be prophetic or unfoldment. It is the business of artists to deliver to the domain of feelings and the delight of vision, all that the mind may hold of the world's essence.

Now even though they also articulate in words, they do not really philosophise. It is not their business. Instead, in line with the goddesses of supreme vision their works suggest a way of life, a way of being; they affirm ten avenues of the informing spirit of life; they hint at immortal beauty; they reconcile darkness and light.

I will round off by saying that I have hugely profited knowing the majority of these adventures in that, no matter the assailing circumstances through which we all must find passage, they brought balm to my city-sore eyes.

Art is the most solitary of the creative acts. The very state of withdrawing from the world in order to create a parallel world – a metaphorical one- is curious, it eludes comprehension. And yet if such beauty has no obvious use, no clear cut cultural necessity, not a few of us will die without setting eyes on it.

These gentle women, then, serve us life renewing fare. They deserve thanks.

Keshav Malik
New Delhi, August 30, 2008

Sangeeta Gupta Here is a work that does not serve solely as a means of expressing the painter's personal admiration for nature native. Instead, she feels strongly that painting has a task of its own to accomplish in the service of imaginative life. I say this since, even till this last date on the Indian urban scene, few still pursue art-craft as if there had been no changes in sensibility. Sangeeta has developed a style which is in keeping with the thrust of mankind's own restless mind. Here, then, is a greater and starker simplicity, though without any risk of reification, expressive of inner form. In this way the work becomes closely associated with genuine, and refined, rarely viewed architecture; natural seeming and free of impediments of any kind. In this way the socio-cultural function of painting is extended. Instead of relying on the temporary, the fortuitous, and the individual, the painting is given content by artistic values belonging to all time (you may as well call it geologic time) and of a significance surpassing the personal.

It is in this way all good artists work. The traditional realistic manner, based on the observation of the changing appearances of nature is felt to be inadequate. Means are thus sought so as to enhance the interpretation of the inspirational idea. Distracting and superfluous accretions are eliminated. The main theme having thus been isolated and set free from all accidental circumstances, gives a new environment in which ideal spatial dimensions replace those nature apparent to the unaided, naïve eye. It is how a fresh pictorial convention develops whose chief characteristics are a twin dimensional scheme of composition, a firm and yet spontaneous seeming stylisation of the forms of nature in depth and a symbolic content.

In breaking down the phenomenon of reality into clear, simple, elements and then joining these together independently of the original stuff, the painter is working on problems of form very similar to those explored by some veterans in the chronicle of contemporary art. All were ways and means to liberate painting from overly emotional and subjective tendencies and impart to it a more un-hemmed or universal significance. In nature they discovered the laws applicable to basic geologic or geometrical forms. Analysing and simplifying their motifs according to these fresh perceptions, they transferred them from nature to the flat surface of painting. The different aspects of a still life were synchronized and joined together into a compact but freely arrived unity of parallel and intersecting lines confined within the flat surface. Sangeeta quite independently is searching in the same direction. She too has developed a system of elegantly simplified subtle

forms by means of which visual reality is given a new expression determined by the limitations and possibilities of the flat surface. The relation is to the physics of nature at the primordial level alone.

The purity of form is thus the burden of this careful exercise, as if designed to awaken us to the beauty deep within the heart of a silent reality- a spatial harmony without the least trace of obvious and banal representation. The impartial openness of the work is thereby palpable and which attains to a stateliness by the use of spontaneous spatial planes. The painting of this order is the representative of the human eye's deeper clairvoyant moments of its musings. The unity of form in these works is classic though in an entirely new meaning of that term. Over here nothing is imposed, everything appearing self-born, not designed.

Keshav Malik
New Delhi, August 30, 2008

Artist's Statement

Since my childhood notions of Time, Space and Light have preoccupied me. My paintings are from my inner world of memories and dreams. I am not very sure if I can express myself only through words, the modes of my journey. The connection of inner world with all mundane experiences is not easy to explain. However, on many occasions, I realize there is no compartment between the two and that perhaps brings into being incoherent visions in the idioms of colours and shapes. I take it as a temporal perception of my Time Zone which has been changing continuously ever since I was born. I am inspired by the spontaneous tribal painters although to whom painting has never been an organized activity separate from life. I find myself inclined to paint mostly without preparedness. To my inner self and elsewhere, nature is a phenomenon that creates and destroys time and space without a halt.

Writing poetry is also my means of knowing nothingness. My perceptions sometimes bring about amazing personal revelations. As a painter too I have been composing shades of colours that dissolve nature into forms and formlessness and subsequently enter the region of nothingness. One may not be endowed with the knowledge of how to go beyond this experience.

It begins suddenly at an empty space, generates energy, goes on clubbing with opposite forces and finally passes beyond time. I have attempted to identify space at every nook and corner of the landscape, discovering and rediscovering the infinite existence of nothingness. My urge to conceive the truth of our time drives me sometimes to probe the elusive realms of humane existence.

My works on canvas like my poetry talk of the primal and the historic-of Time's own future. Some of my paintings, therefore, float into non-stop fantasies dispersed all around. The volatile acts of earth and nature arrest my fancy and lead me to the nucleus of my body and soul drawing me to a unique experience that possibly cannot be expressed through mere words.

In my paintings, I represent nothing. Pure abstraction has become my inevitable destiny. I pray to God and my Guru and meditate before I touch the canvas and like a blessing a painting is born each time. Each time it is new, yet there is an organic unity, a cosmic bonding between all my works. When I paint, I salute the spirit.