

EXPRESSION

“**W**hen I was just five or six years old, I used to see a lot of patients coming to my father's (as he was a physician), chamber. I was so little that the table was quite high for me. So I used to take a chair and stand up and draw portraits. I was so tiny, every one used to pamper me, 'Oh! See how he's doing this thing and that thing!' So that instilled some kind of inspiration or ego in me - that I can do this,” Shuvaprasanna recalls his early aspirations to become a painter, now surrounded by a lifetime's work of paintings in Gallerie Nyva. The works will also be on display at Art Indus Gallery. “Till Class IV, Class V, it was okay. But after that, my parents said, 'Don't do that because you need to concentrate on your studies'.” After his higher studies, Shuvaprasanna left his house to take admission in an art college. “My father was very angry. He said, 'You can't stay in my house'. They thought that this was a wrong thing. But it was very serious for me. I struggled a lot. So, it is not that, one fine morning, I decided to become a painter. It is not that.”

Sushma Bahl, editor of *The Black, the Brown and the Blue*, a book on Shuvaprasanna, observes a 'cultivated ruggedness' in his works. And of this, he says, “First is the theme, first is the subject; first is the philosophy. To present that properly, one needs a certain texture, some special colour, some special technique. Everybody does that. All artists, musicians, poets. If it is a poet of nuisance, the lyrics of nuisance are different. If it is a very tragic thing, the lyrics of tragedy are different. So according to the subject, I'm trying to put some special technique, a special texture, a special tune.” The artist has moved from theme to theme, from technique to technique, never continuing with the same series beyond a point. “After a certain number of paintings, I used to change myself. I did many series one after another - Man and Space, Time, Illusion, Metropolis, then Lament in the beginning and then Icon. I also painted several animals - birds, owls and crows, cats and cranes. Now, mostly I'm working on shadow and middle tones.”

From the themes of his paintings, he moves on to explain the medium itself. “Painting is such a thing, it's an abstract. Abstract - not the dictionary meaning. It is not a particular object, not a particular subject. It is beyond that. When I paint a particular owl, it's not just an owl. It is expression, it is texture. It is not just a representational contour of an animal. It is beyond

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that. One brush, one sensitive nervous line is an abstract thing. With a line on a flat surface, you create an illusion. It is a circle, it is a square; it is an oval. But actually it is flat. If I draw a tree, that tree has 3,40,339 leaves in reality. I'm just drawing it using watercolour maybe. There are a few strokes and that tree looks realistic, but you can never find so many leaves there.”

Of the need to paint, he says, “In this world, everybody is born to express. You are always expressing, maybe through your writings, your work. I gather pain, laughter, hatred, everything, and express them through painting. My painting is not just a decoration for any rich house, not a substitute for a carpet. It is my expression.” ■

(A retrospective of Shuvaprasanna's works is on view at Lalit Kala Akademi till March 3, and at Gallerie Nyva and Art Indus, March 8 onwards.)

