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**Malhar: A lyrical exposition**

Curated by Chhavi Jain

A journey into Malhar is an attempt to interlace the classical with contemporary visual forms. Within the realm of Indian mythology and legend, Malhar is one of the most ancient ragas in Hindustani classical music that, when sung, is believed to induce torrential rainfall. The story is famously traced to Tansen, a prominent figure in Hindustani classical music, in the court of the Mughal emperor, Akbar. Indian lore manifests magic realism in its peculiar power of invocation. It has over ten variants, the more prominent ones being Megh Malhar and Mian Malhar.

Malhar in some cultures is also associated with Lord Shiva or, Malhari to whom the months of *saavan* and *bhaadon* (monsoon) of the Hindu calendar are also dedicated. While raging, intense rain can be seen to assume the traditional role of Shiva, as a destroyer (*rudra*), these conjectures are not popular within the larger cultures of classical music or dance forms.

*Raga*, the word in Sanskrit, means ‘colour’. Each raga associates with a *rasa* or emotion, wherein its structure and performance evoke a certain mood related to a season and *pahar* (time of the day). Malhar is a raga of night time. It is usually depicted in its intense form and visualised in hues of blue and deep purple. Despite its association with rain or monsoon, the depiction of this raga, in forms of *bandish* (musical compositions) and other forms of representation, has been variable- from an uncontrollable storm to a sense of longing, wonderment, and tranquillity.

The raga’s power comes with a combination of primarily two elements- water and air- mediated by the purity of energy and determination of a being. It follows a free verse, of fleeting moments frozen in time and memory. In its very nature lie positivity, fragrance, creation and a power to of cleanse. Plausibly, the rainfall alludes to a state of mind brought about by the recital of the raga.

The artists render upon a journey to explore, ‘Mann ka Malhar’, or the Malhar within, a state of being (of mind and emotions), with a range of internal or external scapes to experiment with.

The physicality of Malhar is unequally experienced by people across hierarchies. Artwork by Tanaya Sharma, *Garden of Bloom*, uses the symbol of floating crowns to suggest an alleviation of oppressive system as a method of cleansing brought about with rains. Abhijit Saikia conceives an image of displacement and longing, inspired from his surrounding realities, as though struck by a storm. Rajib Chowdhury creates magic with his perception of monsoon and adorns his work with Agha Shahid Ali Khan’s poetry. Artist and professor, Indrapramit Roy, delves into the unpredictable nature of life as well as the anxieties of urban life especially during monsoon.

Khandakar Ohida’s audio/visual work, ‘Rain is Falling’, was conceived in the rustic fringes of Kelepada, a village in West Bengal, India. Impacted by changed realities and added complexities due to the global pandemic, Ohida, while on a visit to her family in the village is reminded of simpler times of her childhood days in her home. A lullaby, symbolic of motherhood, subtly encapsulates the work in its wake. Through a heavy, dark sky, a metaphor to a heavy heart, Ohida relocates the horizon of 'Mann ka Malhar' with nostalgia in an attempt to reconnect with her roots and emotional depths.

Featuring 10 artists from across the country, this show is a culmination of dialogues between artists and their artworks. At the backdrop of this is a share, yet unique experience of the pandemic that has impacted realities and intensified complexities around us. The exhibition hopes to open avenues of expression and acknowledge artists as they continue to bestow upon us a newer vision of aesthetics.

Participating artists: Abhijit Saikia, Digbijayee Khatua, Ganesh Das, Indrapramit Roy, Khandakar Ohida, Laxmipriya Panigrahi, Malavika Rajnarayan, Rajib Chowdhury and Tanaya Sharma

The exhibition opens from 20th July 2020, onwards.

**About the curator:**

Chhavi Jain is a writer and has made her debut as a curator with the show, ‘Malhar: A lyrical exposition’. She completed her Masters’ in English literature from Delhi University in 2017. Since then she has pursued an active career in the fields of content writing, art management and publishing. Jain is also a trained Kathak dancer and performer with over eight years of practice.

**About the Gallery:**

Director - Mamta Singhania

Anant Art is a relaunch of Anant Art Gallery which played a significant role in promoting contemporary Asian art and progressive ideals of art representation from 2004-2009.  Anant Art Gallery not only hosted significant South Asian contemporary artists such as Himmat Shah, Valsan Kolleri, Sheila Makhijani, Imran Qureshi, Aisha Khalid, Latika Katt, Atul  Bhalla, Sumedh Rajendran, Pratul Dash, Muhammad Zeeshan, Indrapramit Roy, Subba Ghosh and Gigi Scaria; it also played a crucial role in

defining new standards in display, artist residencies and  catalogue writing.

We have had many successful shows in Delhi and NCR region across multiple spaces. HASHIYA – THE MARGIN, which took place in early 2018, received tremendous critical appreciation. It explored for the first time the tradition of illustrated margins in miniature paintings through contemporary art. Other notable exhibitions include IMAGINED FUTURES RECONSTRUCTED PASTS (2016), Mutant Beauty (2008-

09), Living Off the Grid (2009) and ‘Middle Age Spread’, a major Photography show presented at National Museum (2004).  Anant Art Gallery also presented a group show ‘Ritu: A Gathering of Seasons’, which was a landmark exhibition in January 2005 and ‘Between Heaven and Earth, Himalayas and the Art of Bireshwar Sen’, both of which were curated by Prof. B N Goswamy.

The enduring values of Anant Art Gallery are integrity, quality and service and with our re-launch we strive to maintain these ideals and groom a new generation of talented artists. We are a team of trained art professionals and art enthusiasts committed to making the art-collecting experience enjoyable, accessible, and enriching.

For more information on all exhibitions please visit our official website [www.anantart.com](http://www.anantart.com)

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Monday to Friday from 10am to 5pm.

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