

October 03, 2003

## **Rooted in tradition.**

By ASHRAFI BHAGAT.

'The Matriarch' ... acrylic on canvas.

THEY ARE a group of five sincerely and enthusiastically dedicated to allow a free play of their creative expressions. Their exhibition on at Lakshana Art Gallery is titled Moods and Revelations. The all-women show comprises of **Lakshmi Srinath, Reena Kochar, Swapna Reddy, Thejo Menon,** and Kavita Prasad. **The first four have had their art education at the department of Fine Arts Stella Maris College,** while Kavita Prasad is a practising architect having obtained her degree from the School of Architecture and Planning, Chennai. The thread of commonality among them is the strong sense of design that manifests their works. As a ubiquitous modern Indian art phenomenon generally and particularly to Chennai, the paintings show a remarkable sense of affinity to tradition and conventions.

Lakshmi dedicatedly declares, "I am traditional by nature and what has been internalised finds expressions in my works". Her themes based on everyday rituals be it worship at the wayside shrine under the tree or the ground breaking ceremony in Manai Pooja or Supplication exude extraordinary power in her structured organisations of shapes and colours.

Swapna's canvases weave a geometric magic on the viewer as she craftily deploys both organic and geometric shapes. But they are not superfluous organizations rather they have been meditatively configured with inspiration derived from Indian philosophy. She clarifies vehemently, "I have not been inspired by any modern Indian artist". Bold textures and effulgent hues hallmark her style. In her geometric configurations the play of triangles is complemented by curvilinear lines, which she characterises as the duality in nature as prakrit and purusha the very essence of creation in abstraction.

The rich diversity of culture finds lively expression in Thejo's figurative canvases that has the centrality of the theme of Theyyam performers. Says the artist, "my roots are in Kerala" and this explains the subconscious urge to revel in the richness of culture that Kerala provides. Her bold and monumental countenances in the Coronation reinforced by the ubiquitous green associated with the coastal state strikes a dominant note in the white gallery space. Though human figures dominate her compositions the overtly decorative linear rhythm subverts the emphasis on them.

Marking polarity with themes of culture and tradition, Reena's canvases of intimate size are expressions of relationship. The minimal reduction of human forms juxtaposed with symbolic signs reflects the enigma of relationships. The abstraction of the concept has been defined relatively with muted colours. Kavita's over magnified depiction of flowers undeniably brings her craftsmanship to the fore. And though poetry resides in them they are decoratively starched

in pastel hues. Her canvases stand diametrically opposed to the energies manifest in the works of the other four artists.

Having banded together under the name of Amaranthos a Greek word meaning unfading, this group has been consistently showing from 1997 in India and abroad.