

## Concept Note

The National Gallery of Modern Art, (NGMA) Ministry of Culture, Government of India presents an exhibition entitled *Reflections: Man and Nature in the paintings of Bireswar Sen*. This is an in-house curated exhibition from the prestigious permanent collection of NGMA that showcases seventy plus works of art of the celebrated landscape artist Bireswar Sen. It highlights the organic relationship between man and nature. The curation and display enable visitors to appreciate the finesse of Sen's works from close quarters. This exhibition is divided into four thematic sub-sections: *The Majesty of Nature*, *Seekers*, *Abodes of Sacredness* and *The Rhythm of Life*.

Bireswar Sen (1897-1974) is one of the most outstanding landscape artists of Modern India. His style was initially shaped in the mould of the Bengal school, under the guidance of Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose. It later changed on account of the influence of Nicholas Roerich's landscape paintings, in which the leitmotif was the Himalayas. The myriad hues and slopes of the lofty mountains that Sen painted, however, were different from Roerich's because of the size of his paintings. Sen painted miniatures to perfection. The size of his paintings in no way compromised with detail. Notwithstanding this, his miniatures were not crowded. His penchant for literature made his works more evocative. Sen in fact felt that the poet and the artist were no different, for one painted with words and the other worded with paints.

Sen's colour schematisation contributes as the key component in creating the monumental scheme in such compact space. The effortless application of colour and sweeping brush work add to the glory and magnificence of nature in his works. Sen's paintings arouse a sense of wonder: the *adbhuta ras* and leave the viewer to marvel at nature's creation.

His miniatures are not sans human figures. However, the elements of nature only go on to emphasize how miniscule man is in front of nature. Panoramic views of the mountains, the floating clouds and the whispering winds make his miniature landscapes sublime. M. S. Randhawa, in the book- '**The Himalayas**' writes, '*In these miniatures, he (Bireswar Sen) has successfully caught the evanescent moods of nature-passing showers, sunset gleams, which appear for a moment to vanish forever, shimmering sunlight on rusting foliage, clouds that*

*form and reform in all sorts of fantastic shapes, and the approach of heavy rain clouds of the Indian monsoon.'*