According to Korean curator Sionnyang Yang, the Korea-India exchange exhibition holds particular importance as it aligns with the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

"It embodies the spirit of ‘Culture Blending’—aiming to foster special exhibitions and cultural experiences by merging our respective cultures and arts," it’s a significant occasion as the ‘Onward... together’ exhibition returns to Inha Centre and Jita Culture and Arts Studio, following ‘2022 Come together...’ We anticipate that these encounters will continue to flourish. The outreach of each artist is showcased here with the hope that they will create a unique and culturally enriching experience for visitors, honoring united Korea on eight occasions," I’ve found striking resonances between the landscape and experiences they hold and the customs and nostalgia I remember from my youth in the Pusanghong area. This contribution always brings both vivid memories of people’s lives,” says Sionnyang Yang.
Gangwon-do on my mind

Fifteen artists from Pyeongchang in South Korea join hands with veterans of the Madras Art Movement to create new work, currently on display in the city.

The quietude of the humble art gallery at Inko Centre compliments what occupies its walls. A motley collection of canvases, photographs and paper embodying varying emotions, themes and stories are on display, all with an invitation to look and imagine. Imagine a pristine sunrise at the Geungnak mountain range in North Korea hand-painted across a paper fan, or a verdant green hill range on a canvas that sets a contrast, bringing the focus back to more familiar terrains. By R Sokara. Or a couple of fabric scrolls that charts out a bird perched on the branches of perhaps a cherry blossom tree in fine Korean ink with impressive detailing.

Back in Cholamandal Artists Village, the very same unlikely group of artists are busy with new canvases. Ideas are exchanged in an art camp, as onlookers gather, to create collaborative work. The veterans of the Madras Art Movement shake hands with contemporary artists from across Korea. Here, we can see artist PS Nandan stooped over a small paper canvas lending finishing touches to what seems to be two figures in motion, while a Korean counterpart Sooheon Koo carefully chisels on a mass of mark-making.

The art exchange was to initiate a cultural dialogue between the two nations. For this, 15 artists from Gangwon-do in South Korea, and 15 from Chennai were selected, says Sooheon Yang from Pyeongchang ARFocu, curator of the Korean leg. "Tamil Nadu was a place where I felt the same nostalgia that I have for Pyeongchang (South Korea) when I grew up. What struck me most is their kindness. Although it was an extremely personal experience, it felt like I had found home. Also, their languages and pronunciations are familiar, and the special foods we cooked every holiday reminded me of my life when I was young," says Sooheon who has visited Tamil Nadu eight times. It is on one of these journeys that she met Gita Hudson, who was the curator then at DakshinaChitra.

All the work on display at Inko Centre are eight-inch, small format canvases. Sooheon sees this exchange as something more than just a liaison. "It's also about getting to know each other. We strive to respect each other more and make each other's culture more valuable," Gita, curator of the Indian leg, says. "Over the two days that they were at Cholamandal Artists Village, the eight artists who had come thoroughly enjoyed the institution, considering its legacy. The museum, galleries and the space gave them an idea of what the institution stands for." Everything had to be observed visually since there was a language barrier. Artists, over the course of the camp, invited visitors to work, and even meddle around with some canvasses in-the-making. Veteran calligraphist artist Joon Kim made seven calligraphy scrolls at the Cholamandal camp. Some unusual mediums also made their appearance at the camp - imagine paper cups held together with paper clips to create a what seems like a meticulous web.

"It was a learning experience for us, since both groups are not familiar with each other's mediums. The Korean ink and rice paper were interesting mediums to experiment with," says Gita.

The display at Inko Centre will be on view till November 10. Artworks from the camp will be on display at the Indigo and Lehermum galleries at Cholamandal Artists Village till October 21.