

# 'It's been a 56-year satisfying journey'

... but one that's not been too easy, says eminent artist S H Raza, as he takes a walk down his artistic memory lane

**E**ighty-six-year-old Syed Haider Raza sits down on the couch, dressed in a suit and a shawl to beat the chill, ready for the interview. In fact, more than ready to speak about his favourite subject, his passion, his life – art. After all, the renowned artist has been having an affair with the brush since 56 years.

"I'm enjoying myself. Painting is a difficult profession, and sitting here today, I'm delighted to see significant paintings of my life being presented. It's been a 56-year, satisfying journey for me, but I want to tell the younger painters, '*Bahut kathin hai*'. I myself am amazed that all this could have been possible in one lifetime," smiles a contented Raza.

Form within the abstractness, use of colour and the incorporation of Hindu philosophy are the trademarks of a Raza masterpiece. "The *bindu* or the dot, is the starting point of all my works. The concept emanated from an important lesson from the *Bhagvad Gita* – that it is essential to concentrate your mind on just one thing. Eliminate the unnecessary, con-

centrate on what's essential for you, your work, your growth. *Bindu* is the germination point, the centre of creativity, the womb," explains Raza of the essence of his works. So, while the five colours that dominate the Universe – black, blue,

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green, red and yellow – also dominate his paintings, shades of white represent peace – *shanti* – and spirituality.

Triangles denote the male, inverted triangles, the female. "Together, they represent the Universe. Nature is a masterpiece of God, as is the complexity of the human mind," he says.

Having lived in France for over half a century, Raza learned the intricacies of art, how to coordinate form and colour. "But I was still unhappy, I felt something was missing. It was the Indian vision. In India, we don't look at nature with our eyes, but with our *antar gyaan*, inner vision, what we call the 'third eye'. I wanted to contribute Indian philosophy to art, and it is this aspect of my art that is being appreciated the world over," says the much-learned Raza, who admits that though he lives in France, he speaks Hindi, reads Urdu poetry and also studies the *shlokas*.

Does he have a word of advice for the Gen-Next of Indian art? "The period of confusion in art is over; the Indian art scene is more concrete now and has established itself on the world map in a big way. But I would like to caution painters and collectors: Go slow, don't rush into things."

And a sentence to sum up his artistic journey? "I'm doing something that is nearest to my heart. I'm happy. God is great..." smiles Raza.

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FROM HIS HE'ART':  
S H Raza with one of  
his masterpieces