

We are surrendering our old belief that work is the path to wealth. We see the wealth of America distributed with no regard to work or sacrifice. We live increasingly on borrowed funds. So we have turned to gambling. We gamble on radio, on race track, in church and on stock exchange.

The cure for this cultural disaster lies in ourselves, not in others. We need to discuss ourselves, not the U.S.S.R. First we must regain our reverence for the truth. We must look across the world and dare to see the former empire of the czars transformed to a peaceful, contented people, with schools for their children, pensions for their sick and old and books for all to read. We can see China whom America for centuries despised and caricatured, gave dribblets of its wealth and exploited millions from its labour. This China today is conducted by Chinese for Chinese. That alone should uplift our faith in mankind.

If thus we dare to face the truth we may ourselves cure our unfounded hysteria. We can begin to make friends instead of suspecting our neighbours

and jailing men for what they have a right to think. We may live beside Negroes, talk with Communists and, emerging from a world of snoopers, spies and liars, again walk like men. It was Franklin Roosevelt who told us: "We have nothing to fear but fear itself."

Finally we must revise our whole concept of education and look to our children. Children who play with fire arms and pretend to shoot their playmates dead are on the way toward murder in peace or war. Education is not for getting jobs. The best paying jobs are not the result of the best education. The highest science does not make the biggest weapons of death. Education is for building human minds which can reason and love. History is not to feed our self-esteem but to teach us the good future by revealing the evil past. Mathematics is not for aiming cannon but to teach us reason so as not to make fools of ourselves, age after age and time and time again. With educated children we can thread the murk and again cry:

"It is the stars, it is the ancient stars, it is the old and everlasting stars."

PARIS HONOUR FOR INDIAN ARTIST

Ram Kumar

LAST month S. H. Raza created a sensation in the French Art world when he won the 'Prix de la Critique' which is a rare honour bestowed on a foreigner. Fourteen art critics of Paris under the presidentship of Claude Roger-Marx selected 18 best artists from numerous art shows in various galleries of Paris and invited their works for a group show in gallery St. Placide. From this galaxy they selected Raza for the prix-laurette and he was declared as the artist of the year.

From numerous art-reviews of various papers—*Les Arts*, *La Figaro*, *Les Lettres Francaise*, *Combat*, etc. it is found that there was a very keen competition between Raza and some other artists. To some extent it was an ideological fight between realistic trends and non-representational abstract art. Quite a number of reviewers found Raza as one of the most talented and original artists who did not lose himself in the labyrinths of the Paris Art world.

It is interesting to note his interview with the critic of *Les Arts* when he said: "I am not good in speaking about painting. I think that one talks about painting when one is in the school or much later when one is old and has the experience of a life when he had worked. Between these two periods one paints."

MOTIFS OF VILLAGE

Regarding his landscapes he said: "The motifs of villages is an extraordinary subject to work on. At the base of my pictures there is an emotion but more important for me is the organization of the elements of painting; of colours, of forms, of lines unified with an expression. The houses which I paint do not represent the actual houses but the geometric forms which permit me to construct the paintings like a still life."

At certain moments I felt Raza as a man is as much esteemed in my eyes as he is as a painter. I have seen his mute endless struggles for a bare existence in Bombay even after winning the gold medal in Bombay Art Society's Exhibition, his severe hardships in Paris after his scholarship was over, his strivings to earn enough to pay the rent for a very modest little room in some proletarian quarter of Paris. His eventual psychological struggles to find his own language, his own style, his own palette, his own vision to express his ideas created sometimes a precipice for him but he never became diffident. I remember his first few days after his arrival in Paris when seeing the world Masters in original in the Louvre, in the Musee d'Impressionistes, in the Musee de l'Art

Moderne he had become so critical about his early paintings as if he would wish to wipe them out completely. He never felt attached to them which had won so many laurels for him in India.

SEARCH FOR NEW FORMS

He is ruthlessly self-critical in the real sense of the word. And in this process he always searched for new forms, for unexplored new lands of fantasy and colours. He has a very fertile imagination which would imbibe everything new in life and in the world of plastic arts. These influences did not do any harm to him as he was able to grasp their essence after penetrating deeper into them.

Raza has stayed in Paris for six years. He has exhibited his works in several group shows with other Indian and French artists and also in the Venice Biennial. His works attracted attention of some of the French art critics though this has been rather a slow process which could have exhausted the patience of any artist. In 1951-52 his landscapes in flat tempera colours, reminiscent of the landscapes in Moghul and Rajput miniatures won a few admirers and buyers for him including the famous writer Andre Maurois. If he had continued in this style, he would have been faring well. But as soon as he realized that he had exhausted all the possible tracks leading to a certain goal, he left that direction in search for a new one leading to new horizons. This time he took up oils though he had been painting in tempera all his life.

In the summer of 1955 when I met him again in Paris after three years, he had painted a few pictures in oils but he was not satisfied with his achievements. He used dark and sombre colours, greys, blacks with its numerous variations, dark-blues and suppressed whites. His compositions were very carefully integrated, every form thought out and properly balanced, every colour thoroughly tried and weighed. The pictures were full of intensity created by the infusion of the intellectual and emotional planes which resulted in a strange fantasy of haunting houses, domes and roofs scattered in a village stretching lands of a European countryside. Every stroke of brush or a palette knife had great importance for

him; placing of various objects in a unified manner and the problem of space mattered a lot. There was a no trace of sentimentalism or decorative lyricism which one found in his earlier works. Instead there was some sort of monumental quality in his latest landscapes.

DEEP STUDY

He takes severe pains before starting a picture. He makes numerous sketches of various forms of houses and their spacing in the picture. Sometimes his houses would be impossible from an architectural point of view but he always lays stress on their aesthetic quality. He deeply studies landscapes in the earlier Chinese and Japanese paintings, in Russian icons, in Italian pictures of the renaissance and in oriental miniatures.

His latest works which unfortunately have not been shown in India seem to emerge with a lot of mental strain and aesthetic struggles. No chances are taken by the artist, no effort is made to hide his limitations and his weaknesses. It seems that a harmony comes out of the mental chaos. He does not take any short cuts which artists are usually tempted to adopt in the vain hope of being original. He has maintained his originality, the seeds of which one had already seen before he left India. And in Paris too where young artists indulge in all sorts of cheap and dishonest trickeries under the name of modern art, Raza has emerged with a distinctive personality which leaves a strong personal mark on his works. He has not made capital under the garment of pseudo-Indian art as has been the case with some Indian artists who have exhibited outside India. Persistent hard work and a sort of sacred concentration in his efforts has won recognition for Raza in Paris.

In an effort to earn his livelihood when he was not selling his paintings he did some beautiful book illustrations for the 'Club de Beau Lions France' which were highly appreciated in France and other countries.

The 34 year old Raza spends hours in his work in a tiny little room in the quiet Rue Chaptalle of Paris. He hates distractions but occasionally likes to meet the small circle of his artist friends with whom he discusses Art and artists and sometimes literature.