



08 CREATE  
THE SPEAKING TREE

Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity;  
and I'm not sure about the universe  
—Albert Einstein

# Coming Full Circle

The bindu or dot has become the favourite theme in Syed Haider Raza's paintings. But there's infinitely more to it than meets the eye, the acclaimed artist tells DEEPSHIKHA KALSI



S H RAZA WITH HIS PAINTING FROM THE BINDU SERIES, 1996, PURUSHOTTAM BHAGGERIA'S COLLECTION

The moment one beholds a work of art with a dominant, mystical, and alluring circle composed effortlessly within ecstatic colour bands, the name that spontaneously springs to mind is that of Syed Haider Raza.

Raza attributes the inspiration to portray the bindu to his elementary school teacher, Nandalal Bhaskar. The teacher drew a dot on the blackboard and asked Raza to concentrate on it to help him channelise his energies. Subconsciously, Raza found that over time, he and the bindu became one. And the artist was transformed.

Raza is known to have done 30-40 canvases on what has come to be known as the 'Bindu Series'. He says his work is greatly influenced by Hindu and Jain philosophy. His artistic vocabulary, strengthened by a skilled understanding of Western colour application traditions, draws profoundly on potential cosmic elements for intense abstract expressions. Raza says: "My work is my own inner experience and involvement with the mysteries of nature and form which is expressed in colour, line, space and light."

Raza offers to talk about the painting featured

on this page. At the epicentre is the black bindu surrounded by concentric circles, enclosed by black, orange, yellow and blue fields, followed by successive colour bands forming a square frame. It's a mandala, the universe. "I start from the centre and go in circles around the bindu or vice versa. It's great to start at the centre and reach outwards," he says.

Reflecting on the painting, Raza says: "This is an important canvas representing the bindu and the panchtatva." When you look at the painting, the eye begins to travel along the rhythmic currents of the colour evolved from the panchtatvas and as the viewing time increases one is drawn towards the stillness of the bindu from every perceivable point.

Raza says that this work is inspired by deep Indian philosophy. The panchtatva or five key elements *shristi* or earth, *jala* or water, *tejas* or fire, *vayu* or air and *akasha* or ether compose the universe. The human body is perceived to be the sum of these five elements and as one life cycle comes to an end, the physical body gets transformed into the five elements present in nature, thereby preserving the harmony of the universe.

These elements are also represented by colours corresponding to them — *akasha* with indigo or

black, *vayu* with blue, *tejas* with red, *shristi* with yellow and *jala* with white. Other colours are derived from a combination of these elements.

The artist who is known for his metaphorical language — *mansa pratakshita* — has incorporated these cosmic idioms in his painting with the ingenious use of colours. In other words, it's poetry on canvas. Raza realised that these five elements must form the mandala, the universe, the central seed, and the *bejbindu* with mother-colour black representing *akasha*. Each of these elements are further related to the five senses, but it is *akasha* that is most significant as it the medium of sound. Devoid of *akasha*, everything will cease to exist. Creation came into being with the sound of the syllable AUM when Brahma emerged from the navel of Vishnu and uttered his first word, thereby sowing the seed of Creation.

Raza says: "Bindu is to painting what AUM is to meditation and music." Interestingly, the bindu at the top of the syllable symbolises *Turiya*, the Absolute Reality, or Pure Consciousness. The bindu is the doorway to the Absolute. Thus the bindu becomes the seed from which Raza's creations germinate. He says that he always starts his work with a prayer.

He relates classical music to the Bindu Series as an *alap*, a *jap*, every time a new feeling or emotion is evoked. It could symbolise the Brahmin, the *akasha*, sun, *shunya*, *bej*, and time. In the Tantra school of philosophy, it is believed that a bindu chakra exists at the pinnacle of the head where the learned often grow a small tuft of hair, as the chakra leads to the path beyond. Raza's bindu permeates one's consciousness, awakening one to the Sahasrara and the path to the realisation of the void, the universe beyond.

Contemplating on the bindu is to understand an introspective journey. The wish to go outward following the same visual path is similar to the meditative experience of walking a labyrinth, having connected to your deepest self and stepping out into the world with a broadened understanding of who you are. As one moves along the concentric circles that resound with the lyrical strokes of a divine composition, it leaves you yearning to get enveloped by an eternal silence. You feel complete. There is dissolution. ■

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# Rest In Inner Peace

Become fearless by realising that there is neither 'i' nor the 'other'. For nothing called 'i' can be discovered by investigating the body or mind, says **SAGE VASISTHA TO PRINCE RAMA**

**T**he notion of 'i' is utter ignorance; it blocks the path to nirvana or liberation. Yet the foolish man endeavours with the help of this darkness of ignorance to find the light of truth! The investigation of the egosense reveals its limitation and conditioned nature or its total absence. It is found only in the ignorant and not in the knower of truth. The knower of truth, on the other hand, exists in the embodied or disembodied state without the least anxiety or sorrow, having totally abandoned the notion of the ego. There is no fear of destruction in the battle painted on a canvas; even so when the knower of truth is established in inner equanimity, activity does not affect him. In the case of the liberated sage even the manifestations of conditioned behaviour are apparent, not real.

As in the case of the mantle of a gas-lamp, which retains its form and shape though it has really been burnt to ashes, the liberated sage's personality is no-personality, his mind is no-mind and his conditioning is truly unconditioned. It is Brahmn and naught else. He who resets in total peace within though apparently engaged in diverse activities externally is a liberated one.

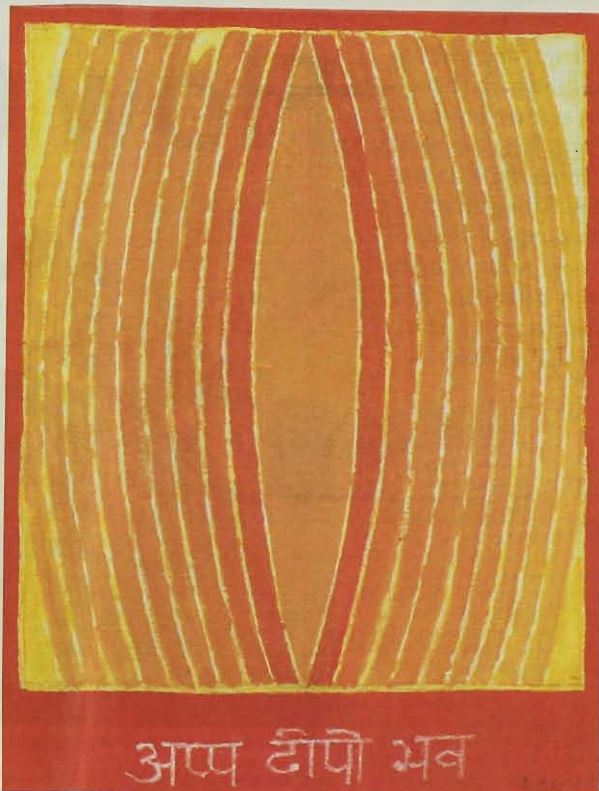
The elephants and chariots which float in the sky are but the cloud-formations which are cloud. The worlds that seem to exist are simi-

larly nothing but the supreme self or Brahmn. The cause of sorrow is therefore the acceptance of the unreal as the real, which arises from misunderstanding or deluded understanding of the real. The truth is that on account of the egosense the ignorant person experiences the existence of the world within it, though in reality he is the infinite consciousness. Just as a firebrand when it is whirled around creates illusory forms in space, whereas the only reality is the single spark of fire at the end of the stick, even so all these diverse forms are but the apparent appearances of the one indivisible Brahmn or infinite consciousness. Let all this (the beginning and the end, the rising and the falling, space and time) exist as it pleases. One should rest in inner peace.

Inert water is able to sustain the ship that carries a load across the water and thus overcome the obstacle created by itself (the water); even so, this inert world itself enables a man to cross this apparent world-appearance. That which is created by thought can also be destroyed by thought.

Hence, attain fearlessness by realising that there is neither 'i' nor 'the other'. For nothing called 'i' is discovered when one investigates the body or mind. Abandon the pursuit of pleasure, engage yourself in enquiry and be devoted to self-effort. ■

Courtesy: Swami Venkatesananda,  
The Supreme Yoga — Yōga Vāsistha



## COMMENTREE



### Inn And Out

A spiritual teacher arrived at a king's palace. None of the guards tried to stop him as he entered and made his way to where the king was seated. "What do you want?" asked the king. "I would like a place to sleep in this inn," replied the teacher. "But this is not an inn," said the king. "It is my palace." "May I ask who owned this palace before you?"

"My father. He is dead." "And who owned it before him?" "My grandfather. He too is dead." "And this place where people live for a short time and then move on, did I hear you say that it is not an inn?"

— Zen Flesh, Zen Bones





## SONG OF GOD

### The Distress Of Arjuna

When I see my own people arrayed and eager for fight, O Krishna,...I am not able to stand steady. My mind is reeling...I do not foresee any good by slaying my own people in the fight. I do not long for victory, O Krishna, nor kingdom nor pleasures. Of what use is kingdom to us, O Krishna, or enjoyment or even life.

Arjuna's words make us think of the loneliness of man oppressed by doubt, dread of waste and emptiness, from whose being the riches of heaven and earth and the comfort of human affection are slipping away. This intolerable sadness is generally the experience of all those who aspire for the vision of Reality. Arjuna's attention to omens indicates his mental weakness and instability. In moments of great sorrow we are tempted to adopt the method of renunciation. This verse indicates Arjuna's inclination for renunciation of the whole world. ■

*Bhagavad Gita*

Chapter 1, Verse 29-32

Commentary: S Radhakrishnan

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# One Form, Many Expressions

The Holy Book is not an intellectual or political document; its message is that of humility, moderation and submission, writes SADIA DEHLVI



I am passionate about the Quran. I love delving into scriptures and begin each morning reading verses from the Holy Book that Muslims believe to be the word of Allah. The Quran is not an intellectual or political document, but a call to recognise the Lord and submit to Him. It drives one towards purification of heart, mind, body and soul. Many misinterpret what there is in the Quran and so they fail to grasp its real essence. The problem is with the perspective of the reader, not the book.

The revelations to Prophet Muhammad began in the year 610 AD and were completed over a period of 23 years. The Quran is an extraordinary and powerful text divided into chapters of unequal length. It contains 114 surah and 6,236 verses, each called an ayat, literally meaning a sign.

For Muslims, simply believing in God is not enough. The Quran needs to be read, understood and acted upon. Muslims have to translate the meaning of the Book into prayer, righteous intent and behaviour. Without this God remains just an abstract idea.

Prophet Muhammad provided detailed interpretations of the message, after which countless sages, scholars, theologians and jurists,



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down the centuries, have given their interpretation of the Quran, keeping in mind the exigencies of the time. The prophet's words, "The difference of opinion amongst scholars is a blessing", establishes that Islam requires unity of form but encourages diversity of creative and positive religious expression.

The Quran describes itself as a book of wisdom and guidance for the pious. With its all-inclusive vision, it attempts to build a global community. One cannot be a Muslim without affirming all the prophets who came before Muhammad. Islamic traditions believe that around 1,24,000 prophets were sent to earth. The Quran informs that there has never been a time when God did not send messengers who spoke the language of the people. "To every people was sent an apostle."

The tale of the Miraj (Ascension of Prophet Muhammad to the Heavens) has become a paradigm of Muslim spirituality; for we all have to follow him in making that Ascension. It is a story of pluralism, where the Prophet journeyed to the

the Greek patriarch to the main church of the city. It was time for Muslim prayer, so the patriarch invited Omar to pray right beside the tomb of Christ. The caliph declined, walked across and prayed on the street. Omar explained that if he had prayed inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, some misguided Muslims attempting to celebrate the first Muslim prayer in Jerusalem, might convert the church into a mosque and that should not happen.

Later a small mosque was built at this place and it still exists from across the church where Omar prayed. The caliph signed an edict allowing Christians to keep their churches in the best part of town.

Omar then asked the way to the great mosque of Prophet Solomon, mentioned in the Quran. (The Christians thought he was going to burn it down like they had burnt down the Jewish temple and they had kept the ruins as evidence of Jewish subjugation.)

To Omar's horror he discovered the Byzantines using it as a garbage dump. He got Muslims to clear the rubble, sprinkle rose water, and restore the place of worship. He asked Jews, who had fled, to return to the city. Some 70 Jewish families were invited to settle in Jerusalem, and live alongside Muslims. Jerusalem is the third holiest city for Muslims after Makkah and Madinah.

In today's world, torn apart by strife and conflict, Muslims need to reclaim their heritage of compassion, moderation, submission and quest for knowledge; they need to be good ambassadors of the essential message of the Quran. ■

The writer convenes Sufi gatherings.  
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## The Moment

Understand that past and future are both non-existential.

All that you have got is a very small moment: this very moment. You always have only one moment in your hands; and it is so small and so fleeting that if you are thinking of the past and the future, you will miss it. And that is the only life and the only reality there is.

— Osho, Gold Nuggets



## One Wave to Another

A little wave was bobbing along in the ocean, having a grand time. He was enjoying the wind and the fresh air, until he noticed the other waves in front of him, crashing against the shore.

"My God, this is terrible. Is this what's going to happen to me!" the wave said.

Along came another wave. It saw the first wave, looking grim, and said: "Why do you look so sad?"

The first wave said, "You don't understand! We're all going to crash! All of us are going to be nothing! Isn't this terrible?" The second wave said, "No, YOU don't understand. You're not a wave, you're part of the ocean."

— Mitch Albom

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**Singer Peter Dinklage takes Japanese honey to cure throat problem**



**Cruz plans big fat Spanish wedding with beau, orders wedding gown**



**Rapper Lil Wayne barred from signing autographs for inmates in jail**

# Newsmakers

## Most people sexist while writing names

**London:** Men, not ladies first! Yes, when it comes to writing names, most people are still sexist, says a new study.

Researchers in Britain have carried out the study and found that putting male names before female names in writing is a remnant of sexist thinking, the *British Journal of Social Psychology* reported.

"In the 16th century, naming men before women became the acceptable word-order to use because of the thinking that men were the worthier sex. This grammar has continued with 'Mr and Mrs', 'his and hers' and the names of romantic couples like Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet.

"While the original sexist ideas behind this grammar are no longer accepted, we wanted to investigate whether the sexist habit of male names coming before

**In the 16th century, naming men before women became the acceptable word-order to use because of the thinking that men were the worthier sex**

female names still holds true and the psychological reasons why this might be," lead researcher Dr Peter Hegarty of University of Surrey said.

Firstly, the team investigated the modern written context of the Internet. Using 10 popular British boys and girls names and 10 popular American boys and girls names, the team searched the net using each of the possible male-female name pairs as search terms, for both the male name first — i.e., David and Sarah, and then female name first — Sarah and David.

The results of this search found that for the British name pairs, the male-first name pairings accounted for 79 per cent of the mentions, and female-first pairs only 21 per cent.

For the American names this was 70 per cent of the mentions were male-first and 30 per cent for female-first.

Lead researcher Dr Hegarty said: "These results were found to be statistically significant, and support the idea that gender stereotypes still affect the written language."

"It has been argued that the male-first effect isn't down to sexism but that it is due to phonological attributes of male names, or because male names come more readily to mind as they are popular and familiar. We therefore tried to investigate whether the male-first finding was a gender stereotyping effect." —PTI



Renowned artist S.H. Raza shares a laugh with models at the launch of a new line of jewellery depicting his work in New Delhi on Saturday. PHOTO: PTI



A man holds the head of a dragon used for a traditional Chinese dragon dance during an event for St. Patrick's Day in Shanghai on Saturday. PHOTO: Reuters



## Brunie to have fling on *The Simpsons*







Michelle Obama

## Michelle's designer goes bankrupt

Chicago: US first lady Michelle Obama's

favourite city-based designer Maria Pinto is going out of business as sales have waned in a bad economy.

Pinto, whose clientele also includes talk show host Oprah Winfrey, is closing her store Lola Black LLC. In a five-day sale starting here next week, her collection of daywear, evening wear and accessories would be liquidated at 50-70 per cent off. Her designs were carried by major stores like Bergdorf Goodman, Saks Fifth Avenue, Barneys and Takashimaya in New York, as well as high-end boutiques across the country, reported *Chicago Tribune*.

But the designer hit a rough patch after sales to retailers started dwindling. She decided to close her shop and cease wholesale operations in January 2010.

—PTI



## Kiss & make up before sleeping

London: It's often said that one should never let the sun set on an argument. And now a new study has claimed that kissing and making up with one's partner before going to bed really does improve one's mood the next day.

An international team, led by Harvard University, has located the precise area in the brain — the lateral prefrontal cortex — which leaves people seething when they wake up the following morning after an unresolved row.

Scans showed that those people whose brains were more active at that spot were less likely to be upset the following day after a spat. And those showing less brain activity in the cortex were more likely to see the — and for longer.

"This critical brain area could also help regulate emotion in our day-to-day lives," the researchers were quoted by the *Daily Express* as saying.

Lead author Christine

Hooker said: "What we found, as you might expect, was that everybody felt badly on the day of the conflict with their partners. But the day after, people who had high lateral prefrontal cortex activity felt better and the people who had low lateral prefrontal cortex activity continued to feel bad."

For their study, the team analysed healthy couples in relationships of more than three months. Brain scans examined them as they viewed their partners with "positive, negative or neutral" facial expressions.

The couples also recorded in an online diary their daily emotional state and whether they had a fight with their partners. Professor Hooker said: "The key factor is that the brain activity in the scanner predicted their experience in life. Scientists believe that what we are looking at in the scanner has relevance to daily life, but obviously we don't live our lives in a scanner." —PTI



Carla Bruni

her extra-marital affairs, Sarkozy has reportedly asked her wife to end her holiday with her alleged lover Benjamin Biolay in Thailand.

The animated series, a satirical parody of a working class US lifestyle epitomised by its eponymous family is the longest-running American animated programme in the history of Television. —PTI



## Aniston open to reuniting with ex-lovers

London: Hollywood superstar Jennifer Aniston has no problems rekindling romance with any of her former lovers if she finds him a changed man.

The *Bruce Almighty* star, who was married to Brad Pitt and previously dated Vince Vaughn and John Mayer, is open to the idea of re-establishing an estranged relationship, reported contactmusic.

When asked if she would get back with a former lover, Aniston replied, "Absolutely. When you dated before maybe you were at a time in your life when you're not ready and not mature enough to make a big commitment. But people change and you learn to accept the good and the bad." —PTI



Models walk the ramp at a fashion show in Skopje, Macedonia, on Friday. PHOTOS: AP



Ms Gursharan Kaur (2nd right), wife of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, with artist Paresh Maity (right) at the opening of Maity's new exhibition *The World on a Canvas* at the Lalit Kala Akademi in New Delhi on Saturday evening. Also seen are actress Sharmila Tagore (who wrote a book accompanying the show) and Jawhar Sircar, secretary, culture. The exhibition, which also features photographs by Nema Ghosh (who had worked with the legendary Satyajit Ray), will be on till March 27. PHOTO: Sondeep Shankar

## Did small domestic dogs originate in West Asia?

Washington: Small domestic dogs probably originated in West Asia more than 12,000 years back, a new study has suggested.

Researchers in the US traced the evolutionary history of the IGF1 gene and found that the version of the gene that is a major determinant of small size probably originated as a result of the domestication of the West Asian grey wolf.

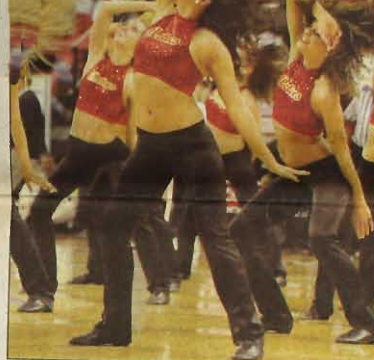
For their study, the University of California team, led by Melissa Gray, surveyed a large sample of grey wolf



populations. Gray said: "The mutation for small body size post dates the domestication of dogs. However, because all small dogs possess this variant of IGF1, it probably arose early in their history." —PTI

"Our results show that the version of the IGF1 gene found in small dogs is closely related to that found in West Asian wolves and is consistent with an ancient origin in this region of small domestic dogs."

Previous archaeological work in West Asia has unearthed the remains of small domestic dogs dating to 12,000 years ago. Sites in Belgium, Germany and Western Russia contain older remains (13,000-31,000 years ago), but these are of larger dogs. —PTI



Cheerleaders perform at the Conoco Mountain West Conference Basketball tournament in Las Vegas, Nevada, on Friday. PHOTO: AFP



## MJ's luxury furniture on sale in June

Los Angeles: The luxury furniture Michael Jackson commissioned before his death, will go under the hammer in June in Las Vegas along with other personal items from the King of Pop. Julien's Auctions announced Friday.

The 22 pieces of furniture Jackson ordered from Italy's Colombole Artisans to fill the home where he was to live during his *This Is It* London concert series will be featured in the June 25 Music Icons auction at Planet Hollywood Resort and Casino.

Before the event, the furniture and a recreation of Jackson's home in Kent, England, will be exhibited at Newbridge Silverware's Museum of Style Icon's in Ireland from March 16 to May 30. Julien's said in a statement. The exhibit will then be shown in Las Vegas. "Michael's fans and the public will experience how the entertainer's home would have looked like with his custom designed" furniture, the auction house said.

The collection includes several armchairs upholstered in mother of pearl or platinum-gold leaf and two with gold double-headed eagle embroidery. —AFP

## Depp dream to be popstar shattered

London: Hollywood heart-throb Johnny Depp's dream to be a rock star was nipped in the bud when the band Baby Bird refused to let him join them on tour.

The *Pirates of the Caribbean* star is a huge fan of the indie group, best known for their 1996 hit *You're Gorgeous* and played guitar on a track on their new album.

The group are kicking off their UK tour next week, but had to decline Depp's offer to join them on stage due to security worries. —PTI