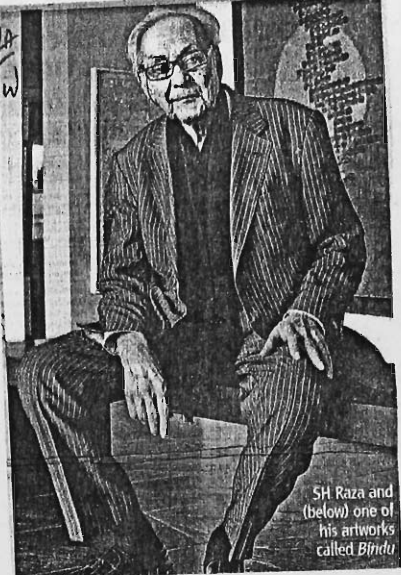


LA
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SH Raza and
(below) one of
his artworks
called *Bindu*

French laurels for SH Raza

Authorities grant him a place of honour in an art tower; he can live there and train younger artists

Riddhi Doshi

HONOURS and accolades are not new for renowned artist Sayed Haider Raza. He has received many of them in his lifetime. However, a recent honour that he received is most dear to him because it makes him feel 'successful' in a particular mission.

Raza, who lives and works in Paris and Gorbio in France, wanted to popularise Indian art there. Finally, he feels he has succeeded in accomplishing that mission. The Mayor of Gorbio has constructed an art tower and has given a special place of honour to Raza to live in it and also train and encourage younger artists.

Raza says, "Gorbio is a very small village. But it attracts about 500 people every Sunday, who come to see my works. So the Mayor is happy with me and has bestowed this honour on me."

He adds, "I have dedicated my entire life to art and took the decision of settling down in France to make Indian art known in the art capital of the world. I am happy that I have succeeded as till date I paint only Indian philosophies in my works and will continue doing so."

Raza arrived in India on January 12 for his yearly visit. During his stay he checked out artist Kalpana Shah's show. He says, "As a senior artist, I want to encourage and guide the younger ones. Kalpana's works have definitely impressed me."

Though he has been living in France for about 40 years, he refuses to give up his Indian citizenship and still holds an Indian passport. He also plans to build a cultural centre in New Delhi, where artistes from across the world would be welcome.

"I am very much an Indian. In France, I read the *Bhagvad Gita*. Now, my only dream is to build a cultural centre in Delhi. I have been in talks with the Indian Government for the last two years. I am hopeful that the construction work will begin next year. The centre will be called 'Ekat' (unity). I love people from all religions and I want to strongly propagate unity."

The 88-year-old artist plans to bring in his birthday on February 22 in Mauritius. "Abhi toh main jaiwan hoon," smiles Raza. He continues, "For me every day is my birthday. I think every day is a new beginning. I want to learn something new everyday."

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