

A Double Celebration For Raza

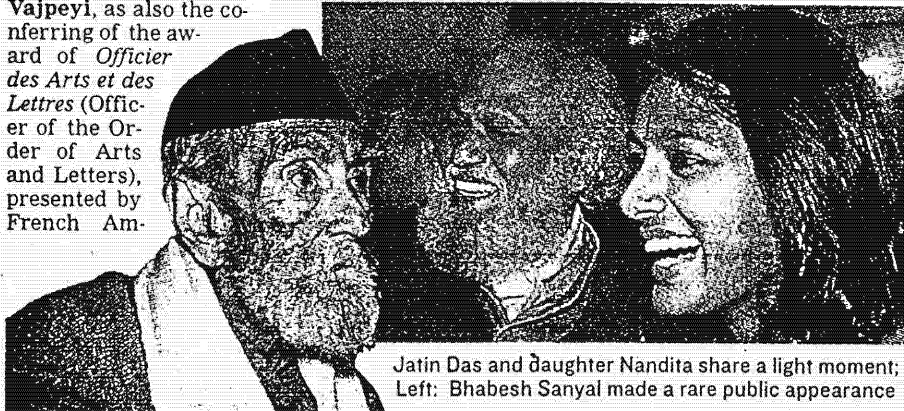
Vinita Faridi

WHEN A veteran artist, that too one who is Indian to the core despite living in France for a greater part of his life, is felicitated, it's reason to rejoice for the entire artistic community. And if the occasion coincides with the artist's 80th birthday, it is a double celebration. So it was at the ITC Maurya Sheraton on Thursday when a special evening was organised for **Sayed Haider Raza**, who turned 80 on February 22. The evening also saw the launch of *Raza*, a book comprising an in-depth interview with the artist by **Ashok Vajpeyi**, as also the conferring of the award of *Officier des Arts et des Lettres* (Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters), presented by French Am-



French Ambassador Bernard de Montferrand (right) releases the book as Sayed Haider Raza looks on

PHOTOS: RAJ K. RAJ



Jatin Das and daughter Nandita share a light moment; Left: Bhabesh Sanyal made a rare public appearance



Chef Sultan (left) shares the secret of his delicious kebabs with Laurent De Gaulle



Poet Ashok Vajpeyi (right) strikes a pose with Greek art aficionado Eyvah Dafaranos

bassador **Bernard de Montferrand**.

The evening, organised by Seher, had Vajpeyi, who considers Raza among the "saptarishis of Indian arts", talking about his trips to Paris to get an insight into the psyche of the artist for whom he has also written a poem on the occasion. Raza himself was "overwhelmed by the affection I've got from friends." He announced that the Raza Foundation will

th visual and performing. He presented a cheque of Rs 1 lakh each to Seema Ghur-aiyya, "whose works I've followed for the last five years and who shows a lot of promise", and Akhilesh, both from Bhopal.

Raza got a standing ovation from a veritable who's who of the art world: B.C. Sanyal, Satish and Kiran Gujral, Jatin Das with daughter Nandita, Arpana

Bawa, Ina Puri, Manu and Madhvi Parekh, Paramjit and Arpita Singh, Rajeev Lochan, Naresh Kapuria, Kumar Shahani, the Vasudev Sisters Uma and Aruna, Aman Nath, Rekha Purie of Art Today, Arun Vadehra of Vadehra Art Gallery, where a show of Raza's works is on till March 5), Sanjeev Bhargava and others. Then, the crowd dispersed to enjoy the kebabs dished out by Chef Su-

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Prodigious Homecoming

"*Kisine tilak nahin lagaya tumhe?*, a concerned B.C. Sanyal asked **Saiyed Haider Raza** after the award 'Officer of the Arts and Letters' was conferred upon him by the French Ambassador **Bernard De Montferrand**. But with or without the *tilak*, Raza, the Paris-based artist, succeeded in evoking a sense of reverence rarely seen in the art frat."

The evening also saw a release of a book on the artist, *Raza*, by Ashok Vajpeyi, who's planning another one in Hindi soon. But even as admirers showered him with praises, the artist himself sat humbly. "I

small talk

want to thank all of you because I'm nothing. I think it was after the 1980s that my paintings started becoming my expressions," he said. Others, however, waxed eloquent: "He has played an exceptional role in Indo-French ties," declared Montferrand.

An interesting aspect of Raza is the notebook he always keeps with him, making a note of anything interesting, be it a word, a person, or incident. Those present included **Satish Gujral**, **Jatin Das**, **Manjit Bawa**, **Madhavi** and **Madhup Mudgal**, **Uma** and **Aruna Vasudev**, **Arpana** and **Ajit Caur** and artist **Gopi Gajwani**.



Centenarian BC Sanyal welcomes Raza with a tilak

RENUKA PURI