

# ART FOR THE WEEK

## Indian artists abroad

NOT long ago, contemporary Indian art was mainly a matter of reproduction — feeble and frivolous — from books and magazines presenting plates from Paris, London or New York. This was not surprising for we never had any modern evolution of art, nor did our present roots reach directly to the heritage.

In such circumstances, it was but natural that some of our enterprising painters and sculptors decided either to go abroad for a long apprenticeship or for permanent stay.

Eventually, a few expatriates acquired name and fame: Souza, Samant, Krishna Reddy, Raza and such others.

The Indian Artists Abroad exhibition at Chemould, now presenting the second part of the show, does not really do full justice to art or artists. However, it is a small attempt to focus attention on the achievements of contemporary Indian artists in foreign lands.

We had an introduction to Mohan Samant, among others, in the first part — though Souza goes unrepresented. Krishna Reddy was seen earlier at the same gallery with a fine selection of his prints.

Now, we have Raza and Viswan-

adhan, both from Paris, along with Qadri, Khandalkar and Prafull Dave. Raza has been a periodic visitor to Bombay and even the rare exhibitions of his work have confirmed the view that he is the most significant Indian artist abroad.

One makes this definitive statement taking into account the entire range of his work, the fine record of progress, the gradual emergence of a philosophic strain of thought to sustain the art and the final crystallisation of talent. This has not been the case with any other Indian artist, for, in other cases, either the outward appeal of modernism has held sway or the constant shift in stresses has led to a loss of direction.

In other words, Raza is the only Indian artist abroad who has held on to India and has given a modern meaning to our tradition, both in thought and art.

The "Bindu" that features in the graphics by Raza, at the current show, brings forward the dynamism of the conception of energy, sustained by the elements. Deceptively simple in composition, Raza's art holds the force and fury of timeless, boundless energy, coming to us through colour and form. The central circle, set in a square, is both the microcosm and the macrocosm visualised in scale for deeper realisation of art.

It is not that one does not appreciate the art of Viswanadhan or

Khandalkar on a different plane. But in the case of Raza, we have art with thought and it is this fusion that eventually counts, for mere stylistic explorations cannot take one far beyond the immediate present.

Whatever the period, art has to survive in time and it is from this viewpoint that one applauds Raza for his art holds the burning moment in the palm of the hand, as a poet visualised truth.

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