

# The Paintings of Ram Kumar

Among the Indian painters today Ram Kumar is perhaps the only one who has no imitators and no followers, for both his themes and method are simple. His themes are everyday subjects we in the cities see; the poor, the oppressed, the destitute, the frustrated lower middle class, not necessarily or typically Indian, but nevertheless alive and boldly stated in non-theatrical yet dramatic terms.

For all this there is nothing of the grotesque or the ugly or the sentimental in his paintings. Subject matter and style are mutually supporting. With the minimum delineation of the human figure, he strengthens line and perspective, allowing eye to see first things first, a quality missing in many Indian painters today. That is why it is difficult for parasitical painters to copy Ram Kumar's work.

He has a control over the dynamics of composition, quite enviable among Indian painters. His paintings reveal figures in a stance, in arrested motion. They reveal a search for the simplification of formal structure where the parts are few but valid. His drawing (if slightly stylized) has the power to place the telling gesture and the small articulate detail. Though the figures just now are reminiscent of Picasso's drawing in the 1920's, the similarity ends there.

Ram Kumar's palette is on the heavy side, but is neither oppressive nor monotonous he avoids the expressionistic use of colour, keeping to a chromatic scale which includes warm and cold colours. As he attempts the universal in feeling, the drapery on his figures, even when recognizable, does not limit the social implications, the merely serve to keep the figures in bolder relief or to increase the range of shape and colour.

(...)

## Methodical Worker

Though obviously inspired by the Indian predicament, such paintings like *On the Street*, *The Toilet*, *Disintegration*, *Frustration of Youth*, *Beggars and Lower Depths* are authentic records of the suffering in any city in the world. Without losing sight of the particular, Ram Kumar is not deliberate in his deployment of effects and unselfconscious in the communication of the emotion in his work.

It is characteristic of Ram Kumar that the order

he strives after in his paintings would influence his method of work. His hours are regular the fresh hours of the morning he spends in his studio in Karol Bagh in Delhi. There he paints, sketches, thinks his way out of problems, always within reach and in the company of the finished work and the tools and implements of his craft. This is a very necessary discipline, for the ground of a great painting is craft, the knowledge of surfaces, textures, the limits there can be no heavenly bread he knows, too, that the spirit of man that destroys the enemy of essentially fragile in its desire for peace and for love. He is content to depict the fragility of life and people. He is a painter of the people, not the people of the countryside but of the city. His motifs are urban his inspiration also is urban. I hesitate to say it is a 100 percent Indian, because much of the life in the city is cosmopolitan, being mixed and influenced by the West.

(...)

## European Style

Using a European medium, Ram Kumar paints in a European style but convincingly enough for most Indians. He is strikingly different from many of the Bombay painters, who, for all their force and dexterity, are mostly making lyric attempts with drawing and colour. An exception is Husain. Ram Kumar's striving is for the epic, even if he has not as yet conceived or executed any work of an epic dimension there is more of the traditional India in Husain's *Village Life* and *Zameen* but there is more of the Indian contemporary situation in Ram Kumar's *Starvation*, *Unemployed Graduates*, and *A Worker's Family*.

The Bombay painters believe in the fragmentation of colour, and in brilliant colourisation, in the decorative effects and in intensity. Ram Kumar stands for order, clarity, directness, for the graphic and the solid qualities in painting and for sincerity in the feeling communicated. He has no affinities with the traditional school, for the effeminate drawing, and maudlin colouring does not appeal to him, nor does sentiment attract him. (Ironically enough, he began his early training at the Sharda Ukil School of Art, Delhi.)

His European education in painting and his experience in the Continent where he saw the painters struggling for expression, often more sincerely than their counterparts in India, taught Ram Kumar that

art is a struggle and no fashionable or flirtish gesture. Though inspired by a great master like Picasso from whose work he learnt solidity and strength, Ram Kumar's treatment of similar subjects is typically Indian. One can sense Karol Bagh and the Ganda Nala in some of the works. The conception is Indian, the atmosphere is Indian and the colours are Indian. The Frugal Repast, The Old Guitarist, and Blind Man's Meal of the early Picasso depict the poor European just as much as Starvation, Frustration of Youth and Beggars depict the poor Indian. But the approaches of the two painters are entirely different. A good proof of Ram Kumar's sincerity and integrity is that though he studies under Late Fernand Leger in Paris, his style is very, very different from that of Leger's own dramatic, if semi-abstract, manner of expression. From Fernand Leger he learnt that the tone of the colour need not necessarily condition its volume. As such he did not imitate the fashionable palette. If one can classify Ram Kumar, one must call him neo-realist. But he practices neither socialist realism nor naturalism, nor extreme expressionism. He has compounded these into an acceptable formula which answers his needs and best communicates his emotion, this is his achievement.

(...)

## Limitations

Notwithstanding this, he has his limitations and his weaknesses. Firstly, there is the repetition of motif. The city has much more to show than the poor, the lame, and the sorrowful. Secondly, there is the tendency to arrive at similar effects through the use of a stylized form of drawing. The ease of linear rhythm can work out to be a lazy formula. Thirdly, the time has come for evolution, for the bold departure after these

years of painting and pencil, departures in grouping, atmosphere, and an exploration into new states of being and sensation. Ram Kumar has yet to exploit the possibilities in texture, and in lyricism. He has yet to widen his range of colours. He must bring out the smile and the laughter in humanity which are just as important as the cry of pain.

## Richer in Experience

Ram Kumar has just returned from a second visit to Europe where he visited Finland, the U.S.S.R, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and where he lived for sometime in Paris and Vienna. He has had a very successful exhibition in Prague, his second show in Europe, the first having been in Paris in 1951. He is richer in experience and in the comparative knowledge of his craft. This is apparent from the sketches of the European cityscapes. That he sees the need for evolution is clear from these new departures. With three exhibitions to his credit in Delhi and one in Bombay, we look forward to the next show where the formulation of six years of painting in an individual style will find, not a break, but a strong extension. For it was to fight the insularity that grows upon the Indian painter that Ram Kumar visited Europe again. He knows that to be more Indian he must make these periodic visits. And he is right enough to admit that the West, for all its materialistic progress, has still a soul and a spirit. His recent visit has assured him that in Europe, too, there is a return from extremist trends to a new realism in painting.

**(Extracts from Richard Bartholomew,  
*The Art Critic, BART*)**

**Date of program organized by The Raza Foundation:**

24th April 2018

**Venue of program:** Triveni Kala Sangam,  
New Delhi, India



*Swasti*, Acrylic on Canvas, 100 x100cms, 2016



# स्वास्ति SWASTI

THE RAZA FOUNDATION  
New Delhi, India

No:02  
2018

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# In memory of Sayed Haider Raza



Nestling in the lap of Narmada river, the picturesque town of Mandla, Madhya Pradesh was soaked in sublime remembrance as it observed the first death anniversary of its famous son and legendary painter Sayed Haider Raza on July 23 2017 with a series of programmes to commemorate his memory and perpetuate his legacy.

A unique participatory artist workshop and a concert of devotional music are among the programmes paid tributes to the artist, who was born in and lies buried next to his father in Mandla.

In keeping with the inclusive spirit of the painter's discourses with young artists, the Foundation organised with the help of Ma Rewa Sewa Maha Aarti Samiti, Rapta Dham, Mandla, and the people of Mandla, a week-long artist workshop on the banks of the Narmada where young artistic talents from and near Mandla district gathered to recall and commemorate Padma Shri Raza Saheb's roots in and deep association with the city and the river.

The workshop drew the presence of students of Fine Arts from Gwalior, Jabalpur, Indore, Dhar, Bhopal,

Khairagarh and Mandla. On the morning of July 23, Hindustani classical singer Kalapini Komkali, daughter and disciple of Pt. Kumar Gandharva, gave a soulful rendition of Nirgun music.

"This is a humble initiative to pay tribute to the generosity and magnificent oeuvre of works of Raja Sahab, the legendary modernist who spent a greater part of his creative years in Paris but never lost sight of his emotional connect with his motherland," said Shri Ashok Vajpeyi, Managing Trustee, Raza Foundation.

"Shri Raza's contribution as a painter is immense and the legacy he left behind is prodigious and priceless. The Foundation has embarked upon a series of initiatives to preserve and carry forward his legacy," he added. Kathak dancer Prerana Shrimali, poet-writer Udayan Vajpeyi, and culture critic and photographer Sadanand Menon, graced the occasion with their presence.

**Date of program:** 18th-23rd July 2018

**Venue of program:** Mandla, Madhya Pradesh, India

# Raza and me

Ahead of SH Raza's first death anniversary on July 23, we ask his close associates to recall the relationship they shared with the veteran artist.



## **Atul Dodiya, Mumbai-based artist.**

SH Raza was not just a fine painter but a great mind. I still remember the day I first met him. I was a student at the Sir JJ School of Art in the early '80s and Raza had been invited to speak to students in the college. He used to have an exhibition in Mumbai almost every year back then. He came sharp on time, and seemed emotional walking around the campus that was also his alma mater. After this I got in touch with him years later, when I was in France on a scholarship to the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He was very encouraging to young artists and gave a lot of suggestions on artwork to see, places to visit, and often invited Anju and I to his place for meals.

I was ill-equipped for winter in Paris, and when he realised that, he immediately gifted me a warm coat. He spoke and wrote in pure Hindi, and we only spoke to each other in the language, discussing the Vedas and Upanishads. He learnt a lot from the French Masters, but remained rooted in India. The Hindu philosophy, relationship between the self and the cosmos... all these philosophical concepts were a part of his thinking and reflected in his work. I could spend hours just watching him paint. I have a small painting by him, which is very dear to me.



## **Krishen Khanna, veteran artist and member of the Progressive Artists' Group**

We shared a long association and a friendship that began years ago. I first saw Raza sitting in a corner at Warden Road in Mumbai, painting the city. Both of us were members of the Progressive Artists' Group, and exhibited together in Mumbai, before he left for Paris. All of us parted ways over the years but we remained close, exchanging letters and meeting each other whenever we could. We even painted a canvas together when I was visiting Paris in 1954. Raza began it and then left to meet his fiancé. He asked me if I would like to amuse myself and complete it, and I did.

When I quit my job at Grindlays Bank in 1961 to pursue art full-time, Raza had thrown a dinner party in Paris to celebrate, while we were celebrating in Mumbai. I stayed with him whenever I visited Paris, even when he had a modest apartment, with one room for him and his wife. I remember there was no couch, he used a very old church pew instead. He was a man of fine taste. Of course, he was a very fine painter from whom there was a lot to learn.

In 1959, when I went to London for my first exhibition, he shared a list of people whom he thought I should interact with. He took me on his scooter and introduced me to people.

He was doing well for himself in Paris by then but when he had arrived in Paris I remember initially he had to make ends meet by giving tuition in Hindi and designing book covers. He got recognition for his art soon, and was even awarded the Prix de la critique when he was very young. He lived in France for decades, even paid taxes there, but he never surrendered his Indian nationality; that is being loyal to one's country. Not shouting out that one is nationalist.





### **Sujata Bajaj, Paris-based artist**

I am grateful that I shared such a deep and uncompromised friendship with Raza sahib. We were best friends for over two decades (1984 to 2008) and like family to each other. The last time I met him was in Delhi in February 2016, he was in the hospital and unconscious. I paid my regards and left.

Our first meeting was in 1984, when I was interviewing renowned artists of India for my PhD on Indian tribal art. I was at the Jehangir Art Gallery in Mumbai, when he walked in. He immediately agreed for an interview. During our discussion, he asked what else I did and when I told him I was an artist, he insisted on seeing my work. To my surprise, we immediately took a cab for Pune where my studio was, and on seeing my work, he assured me that I had a bright future and that I should try to come to Paris. I applied for the French Government scholarship, which I obtained. Thanks to the scholarship, I could follow his and my dream of going to Paris.

I will never forget seeing Raza sahib at the station. He had come to receive me. He helped me with everything, from how to use the phone card to travelling by metro and where to buy art material and so on. It was as if I had a family member in Paris. I met my husband in Paris and it was natural that he became witness to our marriage. We used to visit each other several times a week. I used to cook Indian food for him and we could talk about art for hours. I have over 100 handwritten letters by him, sent over a period of 25 years.

Raza sahib was especially encouraging to young artists. We even exhibited together in several places, including New York, Paris, London and Mumbai. What I probably remember the most was the attention he provided to every detail in his life — whether it was packing a painting or purchasing flowers, which he loved. He used to listen to old Hindi film songs and ghazals, and was equally proficient in Hindi, Urdu, French and English. When I got the news of his demise, I was in Paris. I went to the church with my husband and daughters and we lit a candle for him knowing this is what he would have liked the most



### **Ashok Vajpeyi, poet and trustee of Raza Foundation**

We became close because he was very interested in Hindi poetry and I was interested in art. In 1978, I invited him on behalf of the government of Madhya Pradesh to exhibit his works in Bhopal. This was his first exhibition in his home state, and was a sell-out. He declined to take the money, and we used the funds to institute the Raza Award. His care for young artists was very deep-rooted. I had only written one book till then, *Shahar Ab Bhi Sambhavana Hai*, and gifted that to him.

In early 1980, he called and said he wanted to use a line from one of my poems, *Ma Laut Kar Jab Aunga*. That work was jointly bought by MF Husain and Bal Chhabra for Rs 19,000, and was later auctioned for Rs 2.5 crore. It is now in the personal collection of Amrita Jhaveri. We discussed all kinds of things — from the state of the arts to what is happening in Madhya Pradesh. Later, he started coming to India often. After I retired from the Indian Administrative Service in 2001, he insisted that I should travel to France twice a year, and we spent summer in his village Gorbio, south of France. In the last 35 years of his life, all his paintings were titled in Hindi. He often inscribed lines in Devanagari on the canvas itself. He often said. 'India told me what to paint and France made me see how to paint'

After I retired from the Indian Administrative Service in 2001, he insisted that I should travel to France twice a year, and we spent summer in his village Gorbio, south of France. In the last 35 years of his life, all his paintings were titled in Hindi. He often inscribed lines in Devanagari on the canvas itself. He often said. 'India told me what to paint and France made me see how to paint'

**(Vandana Kalra)**

**Date of program:** 18th-23rd July 2018

**Venue of program:** Mandla, Madhya Pradesh, India

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मध्यप्रदेश के मंडला में जन्मे और यहीं की मिट्टी में दफन ख्यात चित्रकारपद्म विभूषण हैदर रजा की पहली बरसी को उनके ही रजा फाउंडेशन ने रजा स्मृति समारोह के रूप में मनाया। नर्मदा तट पर चित्रकला कार्यशाला का आयोजन किया गया। कार्यक्रम का समापन शास्त्रीय गायिका सुश्री कलापिनी कोमकली के निर्गुण गायन से हुआ। रजा के चाहने वालों ने कब्रिस्तान पहुंचकर उन्हें श्रद्धांजलि दी।

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हैदर रजा की प्राथमिक शिक्षा मंडला जिले के छोटे से गांव ककैया में हुई। चित्रकारी की विशिष्ट बिंदु शैली की प्रेरणा उन्हें इसी स्कूल से मिली थी। हैदर ने प्राथमिक शिक्षा मंडला से हासिल कर दमोह जिले से हाईस्कूल उत्तीर्ण किया। चित्रकारी के शौक के चलते उच्च शिक्षा हासिल करने के लिए उन्होंने नागपुर कॉलेज में दाखिला लिया। इसके बाद वे मुंबई पहुंचे और उनकी कला और प्रतिभा को देखते हुए उन्हें फ्रेंच स्कॉलरशिप पर फ्रांस जाने का मौका मिला। यहां उनकी कला को नया निखार मिला। फ्रांस उनको इतना भाया कि वो 60 साल तक पेरिस में रहे। लेकिन इस दौरान भारत आते-जाते रहते थे।

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हैदर खुद को इंडियन फ्रेंच और फ्रेंच इंडियन मानते थे। उनका कहना था कि चित्रकारी कैसे करना है ये उन्हें फ्रांस ने सिखाया लेकिन क्या चित्रकारी करना है यह भारत ने

सिखाया, फ्रांस में उन्होंने शोहरत की नई बुलंदियों को छुआ इसके बावजूद वो मंडला की माटी और नर्मदा का किनारा कभी नहीं भूले। उन्हें पेरिस के साथ-साथ कई यूरोपीय और अमेरिकी विश्व विद्यालयों में चित्रकारी के गुरु सिखाने बुलाया जाता था। भारत सरकार ने उन्हें तीनों पद्म सम्मानों से सम्मानित किया। फ्रांस सरकार ने भी उन्हें सर्वोच्च नागरिक सम्मान से सम्मानित किया था। हैदर रजा को उनकी इच्छा के मुताबिक मंडला कब्रिस्तान में उनके पिता की कब्र के पास सुपुर्द ए खाक किया गया।

**Date of program:** 18th-23rd July 2018

**Venue of program:** Mandla, Madhya Pradesh, India





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बूढ़ी कुँवारी उमा दी,  
 हमारी सिलाई टीचर  
 अक्सर ये कहती थीं हँसकर:  
 " जो बातें मुझको चुभ जाती हैं,  
 मैं उनकी सुई बना लेती हूँ!  
 इस सुई से ही तो काढ़ीहै मैंने  
 कायनात की चादर,  
 काढ़े हैं चंदा-सितारे—  
 धरती के सारे नजारे!"  
 आठवीं कक्षा मेंउन्होंने हमको हिंदी भी पढ़ायी थी,  
 याद है मुझे!  
 यादहै ये भी कि " उसनेकहा था" कहानी पढ़ाते हुए  
 वे थोड़ी गुमसुम— सी थीं!  
 वैसे तो आपातकाल शाश्वत भाव है देश का,  
 पर वह इमर्जेन्सी थी सन पचहत्तर की!  
 पढ़ाते-पढ़ाते वे भटकीं जरा —सा  
 और धीरे से कहा:  
 "कुछ तो हो, कोई पत्ता तो कहीं डोले,  
 कोई तो बात होनी चाहिए जिंदगी में अब,  
 बोलने में समझने —जैसी कोई बात,  
 चलने में पहुँचने—जैसी,  
 करने में कुछ होने—जैसी कोई तरंग!  
 सुनती हूँ, यह प्रेम में ही सम्भव है,  
 प्रेम में ही सम्भव है करना हर सरहद पार!  
 प्रेम से बड़ी हैं प्रेम की कहानियाँ!  
 प्रेम के या खुदा के बारे में सबसे

खूबसूरत बात ये ही है:  
 आदमी ने गढ़ा उनको या उन्होंने आदमी को,  
 ताल ठोंककर आप कह ही नहीं सकते!  
 जिसने भी जिसको गढ़ा हो, इससे क्या!  
 कल्पना ही सुन्दर है कि कुछ तो गढ़ा जाए,  
 कुछ तो हो...अच्छा, चलो, छोड़ो,  
 आज हम पढ़ेंगे एक प्रेमकथा!  
 प्रेम माने क्या?  
 एक के बहाने जब सारी ही दुनिया  
 अपनी-अपनी-सी लगे,समझो कि प्रेमहुआ!!  
 "उसने कहा था" कहानी पढ़ाकर  
 वे हमको लिए गयीं  
 अंधे कुएँ के जगत तक  
 और कहा:  
 "सृष्टि में चारों तरफ बिखरी हैं  
 प्रेम की कहानियाँ,  
 देखने की कूवतपैदा हो जाए अगर,  
 तो दीख सकती है प्रेमकथा  
 अंधे कुएँ और बुझती अलावों के बीच भी कहीं!  
 बज लोग जिनका कोई नहीं होता  
 और जो कोई नहीं होते, कहीं के नहीं होते,  
 झुंड बाँधकर बैठ जाते हैं कभी-कभी  
 बुझती अलावों के चारों तरफ!  
 आग की जबान लड़खड़ाती है,  
 फिरभी वह कहे चली जाती है  
 वही एक प्रेमकथा  
 अलग-अलग लपटों में चटकी हुई!

धीरे-धीरे फिर तो  
 लोगों के भीतर भी काँपकर  
 सुलग जाती है सिगरी,  
 फिर अपनी बेडौल, खुरदरी, आश्वस्त  
 हथेलियाँ पसारे  
 वे सिर्फ आग नहीं तापते,  
 आग को देते हैं आशीष:  
 आग जिए, जहाँ भी बची है,  
 वह जीती रहे और खूब जिए,  
 प्रेमकहानी की उम्र लिए,  
 जिए हमर बबुआ लाख बरीस!"  
 इतने बरस बीते,  
 एक लपट मुझमें अभी तक सुलगती है  
 उनकी सुलगायी हुई  
 ढूँढती फिरती हूँ प्रेमकी कहानियाँ  
 पथरायी आँखों में भी!  
 यह मेरा गुरु ऋण ही होगा  
 कि सधता नहीं प्रत्याघात!  
 जो बातें मुझको चुभ जाती हैं,  
 मैं उनकी सुई बना लेती हूँ  
 और काढ़ने लगती हूँ  
 धीरे-धीरे  
 एक प्रेमकथा  
 क्रूरतम आँखों के शून्य में दबी  
 प्रत्यभिज्ञा-सी टटोलती हुई!  
 ¼vukfedk½





## cgus dk t let kr gqj

जिन स्कूलों में गया, वहां केवल तैरना सिखाया गया  
डूबने का हुनर मैंने खुद विकसित किया

बहना मैंने कभी नहीं सीखा  
मैं इतना हल्का था हमेशा कि कभी जरूरत ही नहीं पड़ी

कहीं भी बह सकता हूँ, तुम्हारे कंठ से निकले गीतों में भी.  
बह जाने की वफादारी मुझमें भरपूर है

मैं एक उदास चिड़िया का पंख हूँ  
जो उसके प्रेमी के ठोंगा मारने से टूटा

मैं घास का वह तिनका हूँ, जिससे एक अल्हड़ लड़की ने  
एक संजीदा किशोर के कानों में गुदगुदी की थी

मैं पंख की तरह बहा, तिनके की तरह बहा  
तुम्हारी सोच में बहा, बातों की लोच में बहा

एक बारिश जिसका सरनेम फुहार था, शादी के बाद मूसलाधार हो गया  
उसके पानी में मैं कागज की नाव—सा बहा

जैसे बह—बहकर सात समंदर पार पहुंच जाता है एक बीज और उग जाता है  
तुम्हारे मन के भीतर बहते—बहते मैं किसी और के मन में उग गया

जब कभी हवा में बहा, उसे हवा की नदी कहा  
आँख की नदी, बात की नदी, श्वासन में लेटकर रात की नदी में बहा

कभी नहीं भूला उन नदियों को  
जिनकी देह पर मेरे बहने के रेखाचित्र हैं

जब अपने आप उगता है मेरी हथेलियों पर पसीना  
नदी का पानी, मेरी देह के पानी से संवाद करता है ।

½hr prqñ½





## दण ह्म ओऽ क उघा

अब जब तक तुम लौट कर आओगे  
कुछ भी वैसा नहीं रहेगा  
न यह सुनहरी सुबह और न ही यह गोधूलि शाम  
न यह फूलों का चटक रंग  
न चिड़ियों की यह कतार  
और न ही यह पत्तों की सरसराहट

अब जब तक तुम लौटकर आओगे  
रात का अंधेरा और काला हो चुका रहेगा  
बारिश की बूंदें और छोटी हो चुकी होंगी  
हमारे फेफड़े में जगह लगभग खत्म हो चुकी रहेगी

जब तुम गये थे तब हमने सोचा था  
कि अगली सर्दी खत्म हो चुका होगा हमारा बुरा वक्त  
राहत में होंगी हरदम तेज चलने वाली हमारी सांसें  
लेकिन अगली क्या उसकी अगली और उसकी अगली सर्दी भी चली गयी  
और ठीक सेमल के पेड़ की तरह बढ़ता ही चला गया हमारा दुख

अबकि जब तुम आओगे तो  
तुम्हें और उदास दिखेंगे यहां हवा, फूल, मिट्टी, सूरज  
और सबसे अधिक बच्चे  
अबकि जब तुम आओगे तो चांद पर और गहरा दिखेगा धब्बा

मैं जानता हूं कि तुम आओगे देखोगे इन उदास मौसमों को  
और तुम जान लोगे हमारे उदास होने का ठीक ठीक कारण।

½mek 'kɔj pɔkɔh½

**Date of program:** 27th July 2018, 21st September 2017, 23rd November 2017, 15 January 2018, 22nd March 2018,  
**Venue of program:** India International Centre (Annexe), New Delhi, India

# Aarambh: The First Steps



Hindustani classical vocalist Mandar Gadgil and Odissi dancer Paridhi Joshi became the first artists to perform live on stage under The Raza Foundation's new Aarambh series.

Aimed at providing a platform for promising young Indian artists from classical music and classical dance, Aarambh invites two artists from different genres from various parts of India every month to perform before discerning audiences at two different venues in Delhi.

Mandar, a Pune-based artist specializing in Khayal gayaki, and Paridhi, a dancer with the Bangalore-based Nrityantar Dance Ensemble, will perform for 45 minutes each at the Triveni Kala Sangam on Wednesday, September 27, and at the Civil Services Officers Institute in Chanakyapuri on September 28.

The Raza Foundation will organize and fully support the performances of the artists. The Aarambh is in keeping with the mission of its founder, the late artist S H Raza, to support and nurture young talented artists.

"Excellence is not confined to seniority or experience: so the Raza Foundation while celebrating seniors is forever making opportunities for the young available both for expression, dialogue and debate," said Ashok Vajpeyi, Managing Trustee of the Raza Foundation.

Mandar has been training in Hindustani classical music for the past 16 years under the tutelage of from Pt. Vijay Koparkar (a disciple of Pt. Jitendra Abhisheki

and Dr. Vasant Rao Deshpande). He has previously performed at classical music concerts, sangeet sabhas and baithak in several cities.

Paridhi is currently learning Odissi under the guidance of Smt. Madhulita Mohapatra at the Nrityantar Academy of Performing Arts in Bangalore. She has performed as a solo artist at the Pankaj Charan Das Award Festival 2016 in Bhubaneswar, Vasanthotsava 2016, Ananya Nruthyollasa-35 2016, India International Dance Festival 2016, Tarang Utsav 2016 in Bangalore and the Odissi International 2015 in Bhubaneswar, where she was recognized as a Top Ten Talent Awardee in the Senior Group.

**Date of program:** 27th September 2017

**Venue of program:** Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi, India





## Two artists to perform in the Capital every month

Taking forward their aim of providing a platform for promising young Indian artists, the Raza Foundation's Aarambh series has entered into their second month. "Aarambh" invited two artists from different genres from various parts of India every month to perform before audiences in the capital. A total of 25 artists perform under the series in the next one year. The idea behind this series is to bring performers of music and dance who have not been seen or presented in Delhi.

In the second month, Hindustani Classical Vocalist Meenal Natu and Kathak Dancer Vishavdeep performed for 45 minutes each at Civil Services Officers' Institute on October 23 and Triveni Kala Sangam the following day. On the question of how important it is to promote classical art forms among young artists, Ashok Vajpeyi, Managing Trustee of the Raza Foundation said, "When it comes to classical arts, the younger generation needs support because these arts are not very popular and they require very hard, long training. If young artists don't get opportunities for showcasing their skills then it could create a problem. Such a platform can add to their confidence or skill."

In contrasting views, Vishavdeep, a scholarship holder of Ministry of Culture in kathak dance and a math graduate says, "I am also from the current generation and I don't believe that people's interests in Indian classical art forms are diminishing. I see more and more of parents enrolling their children into learning an art form. I have seen them consider classical art as a serious career prospective." A senior disciple of Guru Narain Prasad, Nandini Singh and Prerana Shrimali started off with Shiv Vandana and then he improved himself into the technicalities of Kathak or 'shudh nritya'.

A disciple of Dr Usha Parkhi and a well-known exponent of Jaipuri Atrauli Gharana, Meenal Natu was elated to perform at such a huge platform and felt that every genre of music is equally important and interesting.

**(Shreya Das)**

**Date of program:** 23rd- 24th October 2017

**Venue of program:** Triveni Kala Sangam and Civil Services Officer's Institute, New Delhi, India



# Ramaa Venugopalan lived multiple emotions



From devotion to romance, Ramaa Venugopalan lived multiple emotions during her absorbing Bharatanatyam recital at Aarambh series

Within the short duration slot given to her in the Aarambh series, danseuse Ramaa Venugopalan ably presented a wholesome treat from her repertoire. The varnam she took up “Moham Aginen Inda Velayil...” essentially picturises the frame of mind of the nayika (heroine) who is hopelessly in love with Lord Shiva. The entire length of the lyric runs on this emotion.

The dancer was as lithe and graceful as the lilting Karaharapriya. Her nritta (footwork) was her metier if her agility and adherence to taal as she undertook complex adavu patterns was anything to go by. The subtle swing in movement as she executed the series of jatis (mnemonic patterns), the brilliant use of stage space which left one wondering whether it was a solo at all, the perfect sync of eye and hand gestures with



that of her footwork, the electrifying presence and pace made Ramaa stand out as an artiste to reckon with. Her gestural narration that took minute details into consideration brought out the creative side of the artiste. For instance, stringing the bow was done with technical perfection as were the gestures depicting Lord Shiva through emblems like the damru, the cosmic dance postures, et al were impeccable, more so as she goes through the sancharis with the damru mudra where she compares it to the nayika's heartbeat as she looks upon the bedecked form of Lord Shiva!

The footwork to “Etthugada Swara Sahityam” and ensuing expressive abhinaya more gestural than facial established her as a dancer with vivacity and verve. The varnam in Deepthi Srinath’s dulcet tones acquired another dimension altogether in Ramaa’s hands.

The Ashtapadi “Radhika Tava Viraha...” that followed and the concluding Krishna padavali seemed testimonials to the dancer’s prowess. It can be established beyond doubt that here was an artiste whose vibrant dance could make you sit up and watch. However, when it came to the emotional quotient, more so the erotic or romantic as it may be, Ramaa though expressive large eyes that could speak, would not allow the emotion to linger but would leap into a sanchari or footwork like a deer which did not allow the romantic feeling to peter down.

It was not as if the dancer was in a hurry either because at one point in the Varnam she conveyed the emotion of bhakti (devotion) with conviction but if she could allow herself to hold on to the romantic element by allowing it to sink into her through subtle, slow body movements that convey the varied shades of love, it would have added one more dimension to her absorbing performance.

The Krishna padavali (a via media between a mallari and tillana), nevertheless a unique one, where she danced with a spring in her step to just the flute. The Venu mudra and the peacock feather mudra that she alternates as she emulates Kaliya Mardhan with only her feet was fantastic. The utterances (for mnemonics) could have been avoided and the entire piece could have gone only by the flute and percussion to keep the rhythm, for it was quite fascinating!

Praveen Kumar on the nattuvangam, Srihari Rangaswamy on the mridangam and Vivek V. Krishna on the flute made for a wonderful orchestra. The show was put together by the Raza Foundation at Triveni Sangam.

**(Ranee Kumar)**

**Date of program:** 29-30 November 2017

**Venue of program:** Triveni Kala Sangam and M.L Bhartia Auditorium, Alliance Française, New Delhi, India



# Cultural Bouquet



As the year ended, the Capital's dance and music connoisseurs were treated to a flurry of cultural events.  
-Manjari Sinha

Raza Foundation's initiative, Aarambh, provides a platform to music and dance practitioners with some potential. This time Aarambh showcased Carnatic Violinist R Sridhar and the Kathak dancer Sangeeta Chatterjee at Triveni and Bharatiya Auditorium on two subsequent evenings.

Sangeeta, a talented disciple of Guru Vaswati Mishra, opened her Kathak performance at the Bharatiya Auditorium with the technical aspect of traditional Kathak in Matta Tala and concluded with Teentala. Her command over rhythm was evident right from the Thaata Amad to the difficult Tode Tukde Paran, Pramelu in the difficult cycle of nine beats, to the crisp foot work in Teentala.

What impressed most was her unabashed Abhinaya on Jayadeva's Ashtapadi "Guru Yadunandan..." from Geeta-Govindam. Sangeeta became the Swadheerpatika Nayika, rivelling in her beloved's love, requesting Him to decorate her with sandalwood paste, to do her long hair, put back her eye makeup ~ in short to give her back her own identity.

Winter Festival, India International Centre

The IIC Winter Festival opened this year with a Sitar recital by Kalyan Majumdar and a Hindustani vocal recital by Avinash Kumar on the inaugural evening. The second evening focused on dance, presenting Sattriya by Lima Das from Guwahati and Kathak by Moumala Nayak from Delhi. Lima Das, the talented disciple of Guru Jatin Goswamy, opened with the traditional Nritya aspect of Sattriya dance in Deva-Vandanam, the invocatory number performed as a ritual dance in the Sattras of Shrimanta Shankara Deva. For Abhinaya she chose Draupadi and Ekalavya, two new choreographies of her esteemed Guru. The second piece, Ekalavya, also impressed with the improvised costume and dance movements. Moumala Nayak, trained in Kathak under Pt Birju Maharaj, offered the delicate nuances of Lucknow Gharana.

**(Manjari Sinha)**

**Date of program:** 20th- 21st December 2017

**Venue of program:** Triveni Kala Sangam and M.L Bhartia Auditorium, Alliance Française, New Delhi, India

# dyk dk feyki



चित्रकार समाज की किस तरह की परिकल्पना करता है, गर इसे समझना हो तो मशहूर आधुनिक भारतीय पेंटर सैयद हैदर रज़ा की प्रेरणा से निर्मित और कला-प्रिय अशोक वाजपेयी के उद्यम से संचालित रज़ा उत्सव (वों) को देखना चाहिए। विचारों और कलाओं के शहर पेरिस में ६० वर्ष बिताने के बाद भी पद्म विभूषण सैयद हैदर रज़ा हिंदी थे। उनके शताधिक चित्रों में देवनागरी में लिखी कविताएँ चित्रित हैं। हिंदी में कला, विचार और साहित्य की पुस्तकें हों और इनके लिए एक वातावरण बने उनकी इसी अभिलाषा का मूर्त रूप 'रज़ा फ़ाउंडेशन' है। यह कलाकार का उसकी कला का विस्तार है।

रज़ा फ़ाउंडेशन ने 'कवि समवाय' शीर्षक से २०१८ का हिंदी कविता समारोह २३ से २५ फरवरी के बीच त्रिवेणी कला संगम, नयी दिल्ली में आयोजित किया। 'समवाय : तम शून्य में जगत समीक्षा' २३, २४ और २५ फरवरी को नियोजित था। इस मिलाप में कविता से जुड़े कवि, आलोचक, संपादक आदि आमंत्रित थे। 'तम शून्य में जगत समीक्षा' मुक्तिबोध की कविता की एक पंक्ति है।

दिल्ली में फरवरी का महीना गुलाबी ठंड का होता है। लगभग सभी पीढ़ियों के लेखकों के इस समवाय का शुभारम्भ अशोक वाजपेयी के आरम्भिक वक्तव्य के बाद गरिमापूर्ण ढंग से चन्द्र प्रकाश देवल, नरेश सक्सेना, बाबुषा कोहली और व्योमेश शुक्ल के कविता पाठ से हुआ। चन्द्र प्रकाश देवल का राजस्थानी भाषा में अनुवाद के क्षेत्र में विस्तृत योगदान है और वह हिंदी में भी कविता लिखते हैं। व्योमेश शुक्ल अंतराल के बाद कविता पढ़ते हुए सुने गए। नरेश सक्सेना ने अपनी बहुश्रुत कविताओं के बीच बच्चों के लिए लिखी कुछ कविताएँ भी पढ़ीं।

रात्रि भोज इण्डिया इंटरनेशन सेंटर में था, जहाँ समवाय सार्थक हुआ। कई लोग एक दूसरे से पहली बार मिल रहे थे। छोटे-छोटे समूह में बैठे कवियों में तमाम नवोदित अपने वरिष्ठ को दिलचस्पी से देख-सुन रहे थे। साहित्य के तलघर में विचरण करती कथाँ रससिक्त होकर जहाँ-तहाँ पुनः जीवित हो उठी थीं।

२४ फरवरी को पहला सत्र कविता पाठ का था जिसमें नंदकिशोर आचार्य, मंगलेश डबराल, अरुण कमल और अनामिका को कविताएँ पढ़नी थीं। नंदकिशोर आचार्य की सम्पूर्ण कविताओं का संकलन 'अपराह्न' इसी वर्ष सूर्य प्रकाशन मन्दिर से आया है। उनके विषय में कभी अज्ञेय ने कहा था कि वे मरुस्थल के सौन्दर्य के एक अद्वितीय कवि हैं। मंगलेश डबराल ने अपनी अटकती हुई शैली में कुछ नयी कविताओं का पाठ किया जिनमें वर्तमान की हिंसा और क्रूरता के कुछ बेहद सार्थक और डरावने बिम्ब थे। अरुण कमल अपनी उपस्थिति की ही तरह मोहक कविता पाठ करते हैं। जो कविताएँ पढ़ी गयीं उनमें उनकी 'अपनी केवल धार' की वापसी हुई है। हिंदी में कुछ प्रभावशाली कविता पढ़ने वालों में अनामिका जी हैं। उनके पाठ का असर दूसरे सत्रों तक महसूस किया जाता रहा।

दूसरे सत्र में 'कविता की समझ और पहुँच' परिचर्चा में ओम थानवी, आशीष त्रिपाठी और अविनाश मिश्र को प्रतिभाग करना था। जब तक ओम थानवी जनसत्ता के संपादक रहे, उसका साहित्यिक पन्ना स्तरीय और पठनीय बना रहा। कविता की पहुँच बढ़ाने में सद्दय संपादकों का भारी योगदान रहा है। आशीष आलोचना से जुड़े हुए हैं और अविनाश मिश्र के गद्य लेखन में धार बहुत है। दोनों युवा अध्येताओं ने इस विषय को पर्याप्त गंभीरता से उठाया। दरअसल कविता को समझने के लिए समझ का दायरा विस्तृत करने की कार्यशालाएँ भी अगर हों तो हर्ज़ नहीं है न कि औसत समझ के दबाव में कविता औसत का अजायबघर बन जाए।

भोजन अवकाश सिर्फ भोजन के लिए ही जरूरी नहीं होते। खासकर कलाधर्मी आयोजनों में, यह पाठकों और लेखकों के बीच का एक अनौपचारिक अवकाश भी होता है। रज़ा फ़ाउंडेशन और राजकमल आदि से छपी किताबों के स्टाल भी लगे थे जहाँ आमंत्रित लेखकों की छपी किताबें विशेष रूप से विक्रय के लिए उपलब्ध थीं। वहाँ अपनी किताबों पर आटोग्राफ देते हुए कवियों को देखा जा सकता था।

तीसरे सत्र में निर्मला गर्ग, बोधिसत्व और वाज़दा खान ने कविताएँ पढ़ीं। वाज़दा खान चित्रकार भी हैं। अगले सत्र में हिंदी कविता से रज़ा के आत्मीय रिश्तों पर उदयन वाजपेयी और प्रयाग शुक्ल ने विस्तार से अपनी बात रखी। यह चित्र और कविता के आपसी रिश्ते की एक असमाप्त कथा की भूमिका थी जैसे। इस पर पूरा एक आयोजन ही होना चाहिए जिसमें चित्रकार, लेखक विशेष रूप से बुलाये जाएँ।

चौथा सत्र में विष्णु खरे, विनय विश्वास, पीयूष दर्शिया और तेज़ी ग़ोवर का कविता पाठ होना था। विष्णु खरे उम्र, अनुभव और अध्यवसाय के जिस मोड़ पर हैं उनसे महत्वपूर्ण के



काव्य  
 बार-बार मुझ को दोहराने के सिम  
 अकत करना जो खरी है खुद को,  
 मैंने मुँहा था दुमस  
 मत वा विदेह शोना  
 जैसे सम्भव है ?  
 तुमने कहा था चलो रहो  
 रात-दिन के अन्धेरे-उजालों में,  
 कोष हो जयेगा तुम्हें, सुट्टिके  
 किन्नी दौर पर पुँच कर,  
 कि फ़ोस लिपि में लिखी जाने वाली  
 गिनदगी को कैसे पढ़ा जा सकता है  
 खोले आकारों से, कैसे अकत हुआ सफ़ाई,  
 कामदेव तब निरपेक्षता व  
 सौन्दर्य का सम्मिलन  
 जद से तमाम सच्चाईयों को साफ-साफ  
 छिछायात्रे परिदृश्य के भीतर .  
 = काजदा



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घटित होने की उम्मीद बनी रहती है, और वह निराश भी नहीं करते। उनकी भाषा में जिस तरह की तुर्शी और तेज़ी है वह हिंदी कविता की कमाई है। पीयूष दईया आत्म के कवि हैं और उनकी कविता को सुनने के लिए ठहरना होता है। तेज़ी ग़ोवर ने कविता के कथ्य और शिल्प को बदला है। वे विमोहन की कवयित्री हैं। यह सत्र कविताओं के लिए समृद्ध और बहुविध था। विष्णु खरे के कविता पाठ के दरमियाँ किसी श्रोता के दो बार मोबाईल बज जाने से उनका नाराज़ हो कर हड़काने से भी काव्य परिदृश्य कुछ क्षण के लिए बदला।

त्रिवेणी कला संगम में सम्बन्धित लेखकों के बड़े-बड़े फोटो और उनके परिचय सहित पोस्टर जगह जगह प्रदर्शित थे। हिंदी की दुनिया में लेखकों के महत्व को दर्शाती यह संरचना प्रीतिकर थी और अनुकरणीय भी। लगभग हर सत्र में अशोक वाजपेयी उपस्थित थे और उनकी मौजूदगी हर जगह महसूस की जा रही थी।

आखिरी दिन का पहला सत्र राजेश जोशी, उदयन वाजपेयी, आशीष त्रिपाठी और विवेक निराला के काव्य पाठ से हुआ। ज़ाहिर है सभी स्थापित कवि हैं और पाठ भी उसी अनुरूप रहा। राजेश और उदयन ने कुछ यादगार कविताएँ सुनाई। समवाय की थीम 'तम शून्य में जगत समीक्षा: कविता के

अँधेरे उजाले.' पर परिचर्चा में नंदकिशोर आचार्य, अरुण कमल, अनामिका और अरुण देव को भाग लेना था। अरुण कमल ने मुक्तिबोध की एक कविता के पाठ से इस विषय में प्रवेश किया और मँजे हुए वक्ता की तरह अपनी बात रखी। अनामिका ने एक स्त्री के लिए इस तम शून्य का भाष्य प्रस्तुत किया। अरुण देव का मानना था कि कविता के लिए प्रतिबद्धता कभी भी संकीर्ण अर्थों में घटित नहीं होती है। मुक्तिबोध का 'अँधेरा' इधर आक्रामक और असुरक्षित दोनों हुआ है।

दूसरे सत्र में सविता सिंह, गीत चतुर्वेदी, पारुल पुखराज और उमाशंकर चौधरी ने कविताएँ पढ़ीं। मध्यांतर के बाद 'आज मुक्तिबोध' पर परिचर्चा के लिए विष्णु खरे, बोधिसत्व और विनय विश्वास मंच पर थे। विष्णु खरे ने विस्तार से मुक्तिबोध के पत्रकार को याद किया है कहा कि कवि को राजनीतिक रूप से बहुत जागरूक होना चाहिए। साहित्यिक पत्रकारिता के लिए भी विश्व दृष्टि बहुत जरूरी है जो मुक्तिबोध के पास मौजूद थी। साहस के साथ उन्होंने वर्तमान सत्ता को इंगित करते हुए राजनीतिक कविताओं की जरूरत पर बल दिया।

समापन प्रयाग शुक्ल, ध्रुव शुक्ल, अरुण देव और अविनाश मिश्र की कविताओं के पाठ से हुआ। अशोक वाजपेयी ने आभार व्यक्त करते हुए कहा कि साहित्य के परिदृश्य में स्वर भिन्नता है और अगर सभी तेज़ और जोर की आवाजों की ही सुनेंगे तो जो कविता धीमे स्वर और चुप्पियों में लिखी जा रही है उसे कौन सुनेगा। इसी अर्थ में यह समवाय था गुट नहीं क्योंकि इसमें अलग दृअलग स्वर शामिल थे।

इस उत्सव की एक खास बात यह रही कि प्रतिभागी रचनाकारों के परिचय, फोटो, हस्तलिखित कविताएँ और टंकित कविताएँ पहले से मँगा ली गयी थीं जो उपहार की तरह किताब की शक्ल में सबको दी गयीं जो रज़ा के पेंटिंग से सुसज्जित थीं। इस समवाय के सहयोगी संजीव चौबे हर समय सभी तरह से सहयोग के लिए उपस्थित थे।

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**Venue of program:** Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi, India  
**Date of program:** 23rd-25th February 2018





# Kritya International Poetry Festival



Kritya literary trust celebrated the art of poetry by organizing its 11th edition of 'Kritya International Poetry Festival' in collaboration with Raza Foundation, New Delhi and Bharat Bhavan, Thiruvananthapuram from 9th November to 11th November 2017

Unlike the other literary festivals in India and Europe where film stars, spiritual leaders or celebrities from media are the major attractions Kritya's uniqueness lies in its reach to real common people who inspires the poets & for whom the poet pen down his thoughts and emotions in poetry form. Its aim was to plant a seed of thought in people especially among the young generation. Keeping this vision in mind Kritya festival was a kind of moving festival where the spirit of poetry was taken amidst the people

The noteworthy feature about this festival was that the poetry presentations was just not in the form of recitation but it was in four different mediums poetry through painting, poetry as therapy, poetic performance and poetry in the form of films

The festival was inaugurated by none other than honorable Chief Minister of Kerala Shri Pinarayi Vijayan on 9th of November 2017 at Bharat Bhavan. The theme of the 11th edition of Kritya International Poetry festival was Poetry against Xenophobia and Racism. Shri Ashok Vajpeyi, Poet, writer and Managing trustee of Raza foundation delivered the presidential address. Turkish Poet and writer Ataul Behramoğlu, poet Doris Kareva from Estonia and Bas Kwakman, Director Poetry International, Rotterdam and Malayalam poet Prabha Varma were felicitated on this occasion

The inaugural function was followed by paying a tribute to well known poet Shri O N V kurup via live painting by eminent artist and painter B D Dethan and along with recitation of his poems in foreign languages that is Chinese, Spanish, German, Estonian by well known international poets. In the afternoon three parallel poetry sessions were held at three different venues that is Bharat Bhavan, University College & Sree Narayana Guru College. In the evening Poets visited Central Prison which was an overwhelming experience for the poets as well as inmates of the prison. The theme of this session was Poetry for Freedom of Soul which was first of its kind in Kerala. The positive response and the shining faces of inmates conveyed their happiness and gratitude that the people from outside world do think about them. This was followed by screening of seven poetry films at Bharat Bhavan

The second day of the festival began with the poetry performances at prestigious college of Mar Ivanios Thiruvananthapuram. The occasion was graced by His Grace Most Reverend Dr Samuel Mar Irenios, Major Arch Dioese of Thiruvananthapuram. The session was aptly named as 'Flight of Fancy' as for two hours the young vibrant students were immersed in the world of poetry. The students had an opportunity to interact with poets. In the afternoon there was a poetry recitation by poets at The State Central Library where both the international poets as well as senior poets from Kerala presented their poems. The evening was devoted to poems by young upcoming poets who presented their poems at Bharat Bhavan which was followed by creative musical poetry presentation by

Heike Fiedler where she used a laptop, music and LCD projector and mesmerized the poetry lovers taking them on a musical journey of poetry

The most eventful day of the festival was the last day when poets visited the birthplace of great Malayalam poet Maha Kavi Kumaran Asan Memorial at Kayikkara located on the outskirts of Thiruvananthapuram and offered their tributes. They also presented their poems in front of the villagers along with Malayalam translation for the villagers to understand. Sai Gramam, the shelter home for children.

Ataol Behramoğlu the well known poet from Turkey to encourage and inspire, shared a story of his father who lost his family in first world war as a five year old boy and grew up in an orphanage and the same boy became an environmental engineer and was the proud father of four world famous children, and Ataol Behramoğlu was the elder one. This story encouraged and inspired the children to dream big. They could visualize their own future. All the other poets came up with innovative ideas, where language became useless, and connection got stronger. Poets did not feel the need of a translator as all were connected with each other through emotions and heart

The poets were touched by the beautiful atmosphere of Sai Gramam and the children. As a service to the Sai Gramam the poets gifted umbrellas and gave cash donation. After this poets visited an Old Age home where Ataol Behramoğlu met a 90 year old man, who was writer, and scholar, and was still working on translation of The Bhagvad Geeta

On 11th evening the curtains came down on Kritiya International Poetry Festival with the valedictory function at Bharat Bhavan. Spanish poet Yolando Castano and Ataol Behramoğlu delivered speeches.

The festival also had two extensions program. One on the previous day of the inauguration that is 8th November and the other day after the valedictory function that is 12th November. On 8th Marc Delouze and his team a well known poet from France mesmerized the poetry lovers for one and half hour by his Poetic drama performance. On 12th of November four international poets presented their poems on the theme 'RESURGENCE OF HUMANIST POETRY AGAINST XENOPHOBIC TERRORISM' at Mahakavi Kumaran Asan Smarakam, Kayikkara.

The renowned international poets who graced the poetry festival were Atoal bermanglou from Turkey



Doris Kareva from Estonia, Yu Jiang from China, Bas Kwakman from Netherland who is also director of Poetry International, Enrique Alberto Servin Herrera and Hugo Servando Sanchez From Mexico. Six young generation poets who presented their poems were Yolanda from Castano from Spain, Selahattin Yolgiden from Turkey Gokenure C from Turkey, Lina Ekdahl from Sweden Frank Keizer from Netherland, Philip Meersman from Belgium and Gihan Omar from Egypt. The well known Indian poets who participated in the festival were Sahitya Akademi award winner Ashok Vajpeyi and Jayant Parmar, Marathi poet Hemant Divate, and Punjabi poet Sarbjit Garcha.

The highlight of the festival was the visit to Prison, Orphanage and Old Age Home to soothe the souls with the aim of using poetry as therapy and poetry performances in colleges to plant the seed of thought and in still the love for poems in the young generation.

Thus under the able leadership and guidance of Dr Rati Saxsena, the Director of Festival, 11th edition of Kritiya International Poetry Festival came to an end.

**Date of program:** 9th November- 11th November 2017.

**Venue of program:** Bharat Bhawan, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India



# The Conscience in Darkness



गजानन माधव मुक्तिबोध जन्मशती

13 नवम्बर 1917 – 2017

अँधेरे में अन्तःकरण

Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh is among the most revered, yet perhaps the least comprehended, figures of modern Hindi literature. His poems weave a dark universe of alienated but extremely restless narrators, who also carry immense ethical angst. The dense matrix of words he weaves, marked by a yearning for a better world and an unrelenting search for *abhyavivakti* (an honest expression), resists swift entry into his creative world. He may be categorised as a revolutionary and Marxist poet, his oeuvre nevertheless defies lazy generalizations.

To mark his birth centenary, the Raza Foundation and Muktibodh Parivar organized a two-day symposium, *Andhere Men Antahkaran* (Conscience in Darkness), in Raipur on November 13-14, 2017.

Around 30 Hindi writers from across the country gathered to discuss various aspects of his life and work. Among the prominent participants included Sudhir Chandra, Nand Kishore Acharya, Purushottam Agrawal, Arun Kamal, Vijay Kumar, Lalit Surjan,

Vishnu Nagar, Apoorvanand, Sadanand Shahi, Prem Bhardwaj, Om Nischal, Krishan Mohan Jha, Ashish Tripathi and Pankaj Chaturvedi.

Many members of Muktibodh's family including his sons Ramesh and Divakar Muktibodh also attended the symposium. The sessions of the symposium were creatively named as *Sat Chit Vedna aur Vivek Vedna*, *Kalpna Drishti Aur Srijan*, *Muktibodh Ke Andhere: Ujale Aur Godhuli*.

In a session, *Sachai Ka Sahitya Aur Sahitya Ki Sachai*, veteran critic Madan Soni spoke about the idea of truth in literature and proposed that the cosmos of arts is inhabited by multiple and diverse truths. There is no singular truth as the aesthetics of literature lies in co-existence of contradictions.

While Savita Singh made a feminist reading of Muktibodh's works, Ashutosh Bhardwaj, citing the instances of Sucharita in *Gora* and Chandri in *Samskara*, argued that women characters lend an inevitable counterpoint to the ideas and propositions of male writers, and prompt the writers to reconsider their views. The ruggedness of Muktibodh's poetry could be attributed to the near absence of women and love in his works.

Naresh Saxena located an inherent music in Muktibodh's poetry and demonstrated it by reciting his poems in various meters. Liladhar Mandloi screened his aesthetically shot short film, *Aatmsambhava*, on the poet and his works. Some participants read papers on his famous poem, *Andhere Mein*, while others underlined the contemporary relevance his thoughts. Muktibodh's poems foretold the present political atmosphere marked by intolerance towards opponents.

The first session began with the keynote address by the Foundation's Managing Trustee Ashok Vajpeyi, followed by the release of two books --- *Muktibodh* by the nonagenarian author Krishna Sobti, and *Muktibodh Ke Uddharan*, edited by Prabhat Tripathi. Sobti's work confirms the vitality of the language Hindi is, and the rich legacy it carries. There aren't many instances in world literature of an author, in the 94th year, writing a book on an equally illustrious contemporary writer.

Vajpeyi narrated the incidents leading to, and following, the untimely death of Muktibodh in 1964. Vajpeyi, then in early twenties, was among the few who had witnessed his final moments. He rushed to the Press Trust of India office in Delhi to send out the news, only to be told that the typist had left for the



day. Vajpeyi, with fumbling fingers, typed out the words in the office of a news agency, the words that told the world about the poet's death.

This was the second major conference by the Foundation on Muktibodh. In collaboration with Shivnath-Krishna Sobti Nidhi, the Foundation had held a similar symposium in Delhi in September 2014 to mark the fiftieth year of Muktibodh's death. The Raipur symposium assumed greater significance as it was held in the home state of Muktibodh and saw healthy participation of local writers. His family, a proud inheritor of his legacy, has preserved the poet's belongings at his Rajnandgaon home, which has been converted into a museum of sorts.

The symposium also saw a vigorous debate on the essence of Muktibodh's works. The community of progressive writers in Hindi has consistently termed

him a revolutionary writer, and resisted any other reading of his work. The symposium had strong voices contending that the poet certainly had specific political leanings, but his poetry was not always restricted to his political beliefs. The restlessness in his works confirmed a rooted spirituality.

These differences aside, his immense contribution to the Hindi literature was unanimously acknowledged. He epitomizes the solitary figure of a writer devoted to his art and cause. A writer who refuses to compromise on both external and internal fronts, and thus sets a formidable benchmark for future generations. The symposium remembered and saluted the poet, his loneliness and struggle.

**(Kapil Sharma)**

**Date of program:** 12th-13th November 2017

**Venue of program:** Vrindavan Hall, Raipur, India

# True Inheritors



While Rajeev Janardan showcased his mettle at Uttaradhikar Festival, Pandit Venkatesh Kumar's effortless singing was evident at 5th Guru M. L. Koser Music & Dance Festival

Uttaradhikar Festival of the Raza Foundation showcased talent of young artistes of the Generation Next. They are worthy disciples of eminent Gurus, who have proved themselves worthy inheritors of the classical music and dancetradition, bequeathed by their respective teachers.

The sitar recital by Rajeev Janardan, disciple of Pt. Arvind Parikh and Kathak by Rupanshi Kashyap, disciple of Guru Kumudini Lakhia, presented at the Stein auditorium of India Habitat Centre on the inaugural evening, seemed to have claimed the inheritance with dedication and single minded sadhana or hard work. The three-day festival also presented Hindustani vocal by Saniya Patankar, trained under Vidushi Ashwini Bhide, and sarangi recital by Farooq Latif Khan, disciple of Ud. Abdul Latif Khan.

Rajeev Janardan played raga Yaman with a detailed aalap, jod and jhala followed by a slow vilambit and a medium tempo drut gat composition set to Teentala accompanied on tabla by Ud. Akhtar Hasan. His sitar

had the kind of calm and composure, hardly visible in the cleverness, speed and athleticism of the present generation. Rajeev was wise, knowing and understated, and his presentation was as delicate and fragile as the raga.

## **Maintaining musicality**

The inheritance of 'Vilayetkhani Baaj' and its melodiousness seemed subtly integrated with a probing strategy of working on ragas' melodic points. And this aesthetic approach lasted till the end, where even his concluding jhala maintained the same musicality till the last tihai. This is what the tradition must do and this is the whole point of 'Uttaradhikar', the claiming of the inheritance!

## **Tribute to Guru**

Pracheen Kala Kendra, Chandigarh was established in 1956, by Guru M.L. Koser. As a tribute to the late Guru, the Kendra organised its 5th Guru M. L. Koser Music & Dance Festival at the Stein auditorium of India Habitat Centre recently. The two-day festival featured Pt. Rajendra Prasanna and Pt. Venkatesh Kumar on the inaugural evening and Pt. Bhajan Sopori and Pt. Rajendra Gangani, the renowned Kathak exponent and Guru of Jaipur Gharana of Kathak dance, the next evening.





Rajendra Prasanna, an equally accomplished shehnai and a flute player, gave a flute recital. He was assisted by both his sons and disciples Rajesh and Rishabh Prasanna. Opening with an introductory aachar of the evening raga Puriya-Kalyan, he played the Vilambit composition set to Vilambit Ekatala, etching the contours of the raga with due care. The drut gat set to Teentala had spurts of 8-8 matra taans by Prasanna, where the two sons kept catching up the mukhda.

The ati drut composition in Teentala concluded with the speedy jhala. This was followed by a dhun in Pilu with romantic flavour, but for the jarring effect of the tiny flute, that sounded off-key at times.

Pt. Venkatesh Kumar, accompanied by Pt. Vinod Lele on tabla and Dr. Vinay Mishra on harmonium, took the stage thereafter and opened his vibrant vocal recital with 'Rasia ho na ja...', the most popular bada Khayal of raga Maru-Bihag. His finely tuned, slightly stark vocal timbre and the relaxed, easy-going

style of singing developed the raga in a laid back way, comfortably taking the pace of the raga with the most soothing effect.

Gradually progressing through each note with imaginative vistar, he created a shimmering web of beauty around the Tar Shadja before reaching the pivotal note. After delineating the antara, he started playing the rhythmic patterns and the crystal clear aakar taans. The chhota Khayal in Teentala saw him enjoying varied taans mirrored in harmonium and tabla.

Pt. Bhajan Sopori supported by Ud. Akram Khan on tabla and Rishi Shankar Upadhyay on pakhawaj on either side, played raga Jog on santoor and revelled in the antics that got him repeated rounds of applause.

**(Manjari Sinha)**

**Date of program:** 3rd-5th October 2017

**Venue of program:** Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, India



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दिल्ली। 'भारत में उन लोगों के नाम-ओ-निशान मिटाने की कोशिश की जा रही है जिन्होंने देश निर्माण और विकास में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई है और जो देश के वास्तुकार थे।' यह बात हिंदी के प्रसिद्ध साहित्यकार और आलोचक अशोक वाजपेयी ने 'अल्ताफ हुसैन हाली : एक कवि और एक सुधारक' के विषय पर 31 अक्तूबर, 2017 को दिल्ली में आयोजित सेमिनार का उद्घाटन करते हुए कही।

रजा फाउंडेशन और हाली पानीपती ट्रस्ट के सहयोग से आयोजित इस संगोष्ठी में उन्होंने कहा कि ख्वाजा अल्ताफ हुसैन हाली जैसे महान कवि, समाज सुधारक और देश के वास्तुकार को हम भूलते जा रहे हैं। देश में जान बूझकर उनके नामोनिशान मिटाने के प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं और जो लोग देश को तोड़ने का प्रयास कर रहे हैं उन्हें नायक के तौर पर प्रस्तुत करने की कोशिश की जा रही है। हमारा प्रयास इसी भूलते जाने के खिलाफ है और यह प्रयास जारी रहेगा।

हाली ऐसे कवि थे जिन्होंने उर्दू शायरी का दायरा बड़ा किया, और महिलाओं की शिक्षा और उनके अधिकारों पर ध्यान दिया। उर्दू आलोचना के संबंध में उन्होंने कहा कि हाली ने मुकदमा और शेर-ओ-शायरी तनसनीफ करके उर्दू में आलोचना की नींव रखी और उर्दू शायरी को निर्देशित किया। उन्होंने हाली के हवाले से कहा कि बात तो साझी

विरासत और गंगा जमुनी तहजीब के संबंध में की जाती है, लेकिन कोई भी ऐसा नहीं करता है।

इस अवसर पर बोलते हुए उर्दू के मशहूर लेखक और आलोचक प्रोफेसर शमीम हनफी ने महत्वपूर्ण व्यक्तियों को भुलाये जाने की चर्चा करते हुए कहा कि हमारे शब्दकोश में एक शब्द इतिहास है जिसे बदलने की बात की जा रही है और रूपांतरण भी जा रहा है, लेकिन यह बात रखनी चाहिए कि इतिहास केवल इतिहास होता है जिसे परिवर्तित नहीं किया जा सकता और वो सैकड़ों स्थानों पर सुरक्षित रहता है।

हाली का समय कठिन था, जहां एक तरफ वो गालिब के शिष्य थे दूसरी तरफ उन्होंने गालिब का अंदाज नहीं अपनाया और अपनी शायरी में उनकी नकल नहीं की। मौलाना हाली जहाँ एक तरफ बड़े कवि थे वहीं एक समाज सुधारक भी थे जिस कारण एक तबका उन्हें पसंद नहीं करता था। वह हमेशा स्पष्ट और समाज सुधार की आवश्यकताओं पर बल देने वाली कविताओं के कारण वो कई लोगों के निशाने पर थे।

कनाडा से आए प्रसिद्ध उर्दू कवि तकी आब्दी ने कहा कि हाली एक ऐसे महान कवि हैं जिन्होंने सभी तीन भाषाओं, उर्दू, फारसी और अरबी में कवितायें लिखी हैं और फिर उस समय मुस्लिमों की हालत, और स्थिति की पहचान की।



वह कवि होने के साथ महिला अधिकारों और महिला शिक्षा के पक्षधर भी थे। उन्होंने अपने घर में लड़कियों का स्कूल और अलीगढ़ में लड़कियों का छात्रावास स्थापित किया था।

प्रसिद्ध साहित्यकार विष्णु खरे ने इस अवसर पर कहा कि मुसलमानों ने अल्ताफ हुसैन से नहीं सीखा। केवल वो लोग उन्हें अपना लेते थे जो अपनी परिस्थितियों में सुधार कर सकते थे। हाली ने एक नया भारतीय काव्य शास्त्र प्रस्तावित और परिभाषित किया जोकि उनके समकालीनों में शायद ही किसी भी भारतीय भाषा में ऐसी पहल रखने वाला कोई दूसरा था।

अंग्रेजी के प्रोफेसर हरीश त्रिवेदी ने मुसलमानों के लिए ऐसी महत्वपूर्ण हस्ती को भूलने की परंपरा की कड़ी आलोचना

करते हुए दावा किया कि अगर हाली जीवित हैं तो हिंदी वालों का धन्यवाद, क्योंकि उर्दू वाले तो उन्हें भूल चुके हैं। अगर उन्होंने ब्यादगार गालिब न लिखी होती तो लोग गालिब को इस तरह समझ नहीं पाते।

कार्यक्रम में मौजूद योजना आयोग के पूर्व सदस्य हाली के खानवादे से संबंध रखने वाली सैयदा हमीद यह पूछे जाने पर उर्दू वाले मौलाना हाली क्यों भूलते जा रहे हैं, ने कहा कि उर्दू वालों ने मौलाना हाली को सही तरीके से नहीं पढ़ा और न ही माना है। यदि वो मुसद्दस हाली को ही पढ़कर आत्मसात कर लेते तो मुसलमानों की ये हालात न होती।

**Date of program:** 31st October 2017

**Venue of program:** India International Centre, New Delhi, India

## A collective of young art writers



This year as part of the Raza Utsav program, the Raza Foundation introduced Roop-Aroop, a biennale of art criticism for young art writers. The first phase of the program at India International Centre, New Delhi saw the active participation of important art critics, artists and senior art historians as panelists on all the four days. The seminar designed with special emphasis on the history and future of abstraction began with a session on the importance of criticism by art historian, Prof Parul Dave Mukherji and Hindi poet Ashok Vajpeyi. The Founder of Bodhana, Jesal Thacker presented the works and creative process of the Indian abstractionist, V.S Gaitonde on the first day.

The second day of the seminar began with explorations into the history of abstraction by senior artist Jai Zharotia and art researcher Vrinda Agrawal, followed by a seminal discussion on critical writer by senior art critic and historian, Geeta Kapur and Editor of Art India, Abhay Sardesai. Well-known musicologist Deepak Raja spoke about the existence of abstraction in classical music while Parthiv Shah explored the notion in his photography.

The third day was dedicated to Indian masters of abstraction: S.H Raza, Jeram Patel and Nasreen Mohamedi. The sessions were led by art historian Yashodhara Dalmia, contemporary artist Akhilesh, Prof Shukla Sawant, Hindi poet Prayag Shukla and art critic Nancy Adajania. A film on S.H Raza, directed by Laurent Bregeat was also shown during the session on the artist.

Art critics Ranjit Hoskote and Gayatri Sinha presented their readings into abstraction in visual arts. Kumar Shahani talked about abstraction in film making while poet and essayist Udayan Vajpeyi spoke about abstraction in the architecture of Charles Correa. The core seminar headed by specialists and experts from the domain of painting, music, dance and photography concluded with a session on art critic and writer K.B Goel where art historian Geeta Kapur, contemporary artist Vivan Sundaram and Shruti Parthasarthy paid tribute to the senior art critic.

The Roop Aroop Program 2018 aims at creating a complete, comprehensive platform for young art writers to explore the various aspects of curatorial





practice and exhibition making with a firm foundation on research and critical writing. Eleven young art writers from Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Mizoram, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, residing in Delhi, Banaras, Kolkata and Baroda were selected by a jury of art historians and experts to travel to Delhi and attend this seminal workshop on art writing. The Call for applications was announced through Social media and posters that were sent to institutions such as Jamia Milia Islamia, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Alliance Française de Delhi, India Habitat Centre, India International Centre, College of Arts, etc. The selection process took place at the Foundation office in Delhi.

The young art writers for the first time were exposed to an array of narratives, opinions and views of experts on abstraction across the arts in such a comprehensive manner. Young art writer Seethal CP explains the uniqueness of this program: “Usually workshops happen only for artists and not for young art writers, and certainly not a workshop on art writing!

We could see different ways of seeing art and different approaches towards art criticism from eminent art critics from different fields.”

The second phase of this program shall take place in Mandla, Madhya Pradesh, the birth place of the Indian modern master, S.H Raza. Every year, the Raza Foundation, since his passing away, organizes a series of art and cultural programs in his memory.

In the second phase of Roop-Aroop, the young art writers will be presenting their research to a panel of experts on abstraction, a subject that they would subsequently explore in much depth during the course of the program through a curatorial workshop in October and two art exhibitions in February 2019 as part of the Raza Utsav-2019.

**Date of program:** 18th -21st February 2018

**Venue of program:** Conference Room-I, India International Centre, New Delhi, India



**A Tribute to Kishori Amonkar**  
Monday, 9 October 2017 at 6:30 pm

**Hindustani Vocal Recital**  
By Nandini Bedekar, senior disciple of the late Vidushi Kishori Amonkar  
Accompanied by Vinay Mishra (harmonium)  
and Vinod Lele (tabla)

**Venue: Fountain Lawns**

## A Tribute

The exquisitely lit lawns of the India International Centre here resounded with classical ragas rendered with both flair and fidelity by young vocalist Nandini Bedekar in a touching tribute to the life and times of her Guru, the legendary Kishori Amonkar.

Ganasaraswati Kishori Amonkar, who passed away in April this year at the age of 84, was one of the towering figures of the Jaipur-Atrauli Gharana; but she transcended the conventional framework of gharanas evoking various feelings or 'bhaavas' within the ragas in her renditions.

Bedekar picked up the finer aspects of the Jaipur-Atrauli Gharana through her tutelage under Amonkar as per the "guru-shishya" tradition, often accompanying her on the tanpura during concerts.

The concert on Monday evening, organised by the Raza Foundation as part of the IIC's ongoing Festival of the Arts, was a befitting homage to this tradition. The audience witnessed the young, promising vocalist render Raag Puriya Dhanshree in a meditative state at dusk with the tanpura resting over her shoulder.

"The tribute was a reminder that musicians like Kishori Amonkar will remain immortal because of their body of work and disciples like Nandini Bedekar are tasked with carrying forward that legacy," the organiser, Raza Foundation said in a statement.

Bedekar was ably accompanied by Vinod Lele of the Benaras Gharana on the tabla and Vinay Mishra on the harmonium



**Date of program:** 17th April 2017

**Venue of program:** India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, India



To coincide with the 96th birthday of Late Sayed Haider Raza, The Raza Foundation organised a multi-arts festival:

## RAZA UTSAV

Featuring art shows, conversations, poetry readings, art writing workshops, film shows on artists and performance of classical musicians and dancer, a theatre presentation.

## RAZA UTSAV 2018

Sayed Haider Raza, an iconic master of modern Indian art, was deeply interested in arts other than his own, i.e. visual arts. He loved Hindi poetry, music, dance and Indian philosophical thought. He revived in his art an abandoned convention of inscribing lines of poetry in miniature art tradition by inscribing in Devnagari verses from Sanskrit, Hindi and Urdu. His work was a reminder that before modern times the Indian art, music, dance, theatre, poetry were together sharing, more and less, the same aesthetic beliefs, mythic devices, symbolism and imagery, motifs and narratives. The Raza Utsav was conceived as a later day attempt putting the arts together even though for a short while. It is a multi-arts festival featuring two specially curated shows of transnational artists and young artists of Madhya Pradesh, two shows of Raza, one 'Gandhi in Raza' and second, 'Raza and Ram Kumar'; a festival

of 8 films on modern Indian masters made by the well known French director, Laurent Bregat, a young writers workshop, Roop-Aroop; two conversations; one with writer, Makarand Paranjape and the other with the classical maestros, Pt. Rajan Mishra and Pt. Sajan Mishra, two evenings of recitals of music and dance by two young classical performers; a theatrical presentation on Gandhi as seen by women.

A rich and varied fare the Utsav is aimed at creating a 'rasik sampradaya' which would be vulnerable to many arts and poetry. Raza himself was such a 'rasik' and it would be appropriate to carry this legacy further in offering adequate opportunities of it to grow and flourish. The Raza Foundation founded and funded by him is endeavoring to keep his generous and inclusive vision dynamically and imaginatively alive.



## ‘YUGMA’

### A joint exhibition of the artworks of S.H Raza and Ram Kumar

**Venue:** Vadehra Art Gallery, D-40, Defence Colony, New Delhi

**Opening:** 22nd February 2018

**Timing:** 6:00pm onwards

Way back in 1950 when Sayed Haider Raza arrived in Paris for the first time, it was painter Ram Kumar who received him at the railway station, Gare du Nord. Both became life-long friends, lived for a while next to each other in rented apartments in Paris. They are two different painters but they have shared dedication to their art with passion and intensity. If Raza took to exploring inscapes, Ram Kumar explored landscapes, both in unusual and unprecedented ways. Raza got inspired by Indian metaphysical concepts; Ram Kumar has painted Benaras in memorable manner. Both have been interested in literature: Ram Kumar has written fiction in Hindi, Raza had enjoyed reading and listening to Hindi poetry. The two have shown together in some important group shows in Paris, India and elsewhere.

But this is the first show featuring both of them. ‘YUGMA’ (The Two) as the show was called was mounted at the Vadehra Art Gallery and open on Late Saiyed Haider Raza’s 96th birthday as the central part of a multi-venue and multi-arts celebration ‘Raza Utsav’



## KAVI SAMVAAYA

### A festival of Hindi poetry

**Venue:** Auditorium, Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi.

**Date(s):** 23rd, 24th 25th February 2018.

**Timing:** 10:00am to 5:00pm

Contemporary Hindi poetry has an amazing plurality of vision, style, theme and craft. It covers a wide range of contemporary anxieties and tensions, paradoxes and dilemmas, questions and confrontations, experiences and locations, dreams and nightmares. It is being written by poets belonging to many generations, coming from many parts of India.

Sayed Haider Raza, one of the major modern painters of India, cherished Hindi poetry throughout his life, initiated into its range and pleasures by his school teachers in Central India. He used to note down extracts from Hindi poems he happened to like along with poems of Rilke, etc in his personal diaries. He became the only modernist in India who inscribed chosen lines or words of poetry (Sanskrit, Hindi and Urdu, all in Devnagari) on more than a hundred canvases. His personal library contained a large number of books of Hindi poetry.

To coincide with the 96th birthday of Raza Saheb and as part of a multi arts multi-venue celebration of creativity, imagination and courage, Raza Utsav featured a three day’s Hindi poetry festival ‘Kavi Samvaaya’ from 23rd February to 25th February 2018 at the Triveni Kala Sangam.



## AARAMBH-VI

**Hindustani vocal by Shri Aditya Khandwe Bharatnatyam recital by Arohi Munshi**

**Venue(s):** 15th February 2018: M.L Bhartia Auditorium, Alliance Française, 72, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi.

**16th February 2018:** Auditorium, Triveni Kala Sangam, Tansen Marg, New Delhi.

**Timings:** 6:15 pm

Sayed Haider Raza, the iconic Indian modern painter was deeply interested in the possible links and dialogues between the classical and the modern, thus led him to have a lifelong interest in the classical music and dance. Raza was equally concerned about the struggles of young classical performers and always wanted to be of some help to them. The Raza Foundation started a monthly series called 'Aarambh' in Delhi presenting two young performers in two venues namely Alliance Française and Triveni Kala Sangam. The artists are chosen by a panel of eminent experts out of a large number from all parts of India.

'Aarambh', the sixth in the series, on 15th and 16th February 2018 was part of a multi-arts put a 'Raza Utsav'. It shall also be part of the celebrations around Raza's 96th birthday, it would feature a vocalist of Hindustani Music and a dancer of Bharatnatyam.



## GANDHI IN RAZA

**An exhibition of paintings by S.H Raza**

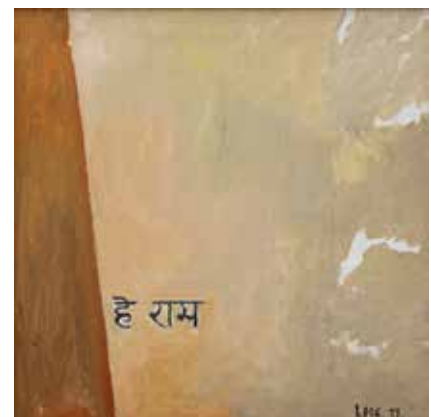
**Venue:** India Art Fair, Akar Prakar, Booth C-7, NSIC Exhibition grounds, Okhla, New Delhi.

**Date (s):** 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th February 2018.

**Timings:** 11:00am to 7:00pm

Sayed Haider Raza, the great iconic Indian modernist, saw Mahatma Gandhi at the age of 8 in Mandla, a largely tribal district of Madhya Pradesh. He lived in France for 60 years. He often remembered Gandhi for inspiration and support in moments of confusion and difficulties. During his Indian visits he would make it a point to visit at least one place associated with Gandhi, such as Sabarmati Ashram, Sewagram, Rajghat, etc. Though his entire family consisting of three brothers, 1 sister and his first wife migrated to Pakistan after the Partition, Raza remained in India and retained his Indian citizenship. He attributed this to Gandhi since he thought that leaving India would amount to betraying Gandhi.

Raza towards the last phase of his life when he returned to India painted a series of 10 paintings devoted to Gandhi. In his multilinguality and multi-faith he followed Gandhian principles. The show was put up again at the India Art Fair 2018 by the Akar Prakar Gallery in Booth C-7, NSIC Exhibition Grounds, New Delhi from Feb 9 to 12 Feb 2018.



*Hey Ram,*  
60x60cms, acrylic on canvas, 2013

## FILMS ON INDIAN MODERN MASTERS

**Directed by Laurent Bregeat**

**Films on S.H Raza, Ram Kumar, M.F Husain, Akbar Padamsee, Krishen Khanna, Krishna Reddy, Rajendra Dhawan and K.G Subramanyan.**

**Venue:** M.L Bhartia Auditorium, Alliance Francaise, 72, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi

**Date(s):** 12th, 13th and 14th February 2018.

**Timings:** 11:30am/2:30pm/5:30pm on all three days.



As part of the Raza Utsav, a multi-arts multi-venue festival celebrating creativity, imagination and courage in our troubled times, a film festival was organized at the Alliance Française, Delhi from 12th February 2018 to 14th February 2018 centered on 9 masters of modern Indian art, directed by the noted French director Laurent Bregeat.

The films are on M.F Husain, S.H Raza, Ram Kumar, Krishen Khanna, Akbar Padamsee, Rajendra Dhawan, KG Subramanyan and Krishna Reddy. A unique selection showed the masters talking, working in their studios and experts discussing their work.

Spread over three days, the festival afforded a rare opportunity to know more about some of our most celebrated artists, their life, their art and vision.

## ART MATTERS-LIII

**Pt Rajan Mishra and Pt Sajan Mishra in conversation with Dr. Sunita Budhiraja**

**Venue:** India International Centre, Seminar Hall 2 & 3, India International Centre, Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi.

**Date:** 8th February 2018, 06:15 pm.



Sayed Haider Raza, the iconic modern Indian painter, used to feel that though we have remarkable art, enduring aesthetics, interesting theories, incredible art practices, we do not often recall, discuss and analyze them.

The Raza Foundation started in collaboration with the India International Centre, a monthly series of discussion, dialogue, conversations titled 'Art Matters' covering a large range of themes relating to culture, the arts, ideas, literature, etc.

The series has already completed 52 sessions and has featured celebrated artists, experts in various arts, writers, academics, activists, etc.

As part of the multi-arts multi-venue festival, 'Raza Utsav', a celebration of creativity, imagination and courage, coinciding with Raza's 96th birth anniversary, 'Art Matters' was held on 8th February 2018 at the India International Centre, New Delhi that featured a conversation with renowned and senior classical vocalists Pt. Rajan Mishra and Pt. Sajan Mishra about their music, life, struggles, vision, anxieties etc



## MADHYAMA



### **An exhibition of young artists from Madhya Pradesh**

**Curated by Akhilesh**

**Venue:** Shridharani Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, Tansen Marg, New Delhi

**Opening:** 16th February 2018, 5:00pm onwards

Artists:

Anup Shrivastav, Arti Paliwal, Awdhesh Tamrkar, Divya Patwa, Durgesh Birthare, Dharmendra Pare, Ekta Sharma, Govind Biswas, Himanshu Lodwal, Monika Sheth, Neeraj Ahirwar, Preeti Mann, Rafique Shah, Somesh Soni, Uday Goswami

Sayed Haider Raza was born in 1922 in a forest village in Madhya Pradesh and received his school education there. Later after learning art in Nagpur and Bombay, he left for France in 1950 and remained there pursuing his glorious artistic career for the next 60

years. He remained very attached to Madhya Pradesh, his home state and visited it many times during his Indian sojourns. He took deep interest in the career and growth of many young artists of Madhya Pradesh.

‘Madhyama’ was a specially curated show of 15 young artists of Madhya Pradesh who are contributing to and expanding the rich artistic tradition of the State through their art, effort and vision. The curator, Akhilesh, besides being a significant artist and a Trustee of The Raza Foundation, has himself been one of those young artists of Madhya Pradesh whom Raza lovingly nurtured.

‘Madhyama’ was on show at Shridharani Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi.

**Date of program:** 2nd-25th February 2018

**Venue of program:** Triveni Kala Sangam, India International Centre, Alliance Francaise, AIFACS, New Delhi, India

# Yuva promises some exciting gatherings ahead



How does the young generation of Hindi writers converse with the masterpieces of its predecessors? Is it cognizant of the creative responsibility that comes with being the practitioners of a language that draws its metaphors and insights from its several dialects and the classical language of Sanskrit? Is it prudent enough to first identify and then confront the threats that now loom over the freedom to compose verses or write novels? To discuss these and many more issues pertaining to literature and creativity more than 45 young Hindi writers gathered in Delhi for a two-day seminar, Yuva-2017, on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> November.

Organised by The Raza Foundation and Krishna Sobti-Shivnath Nidhi to mark the birth centenary of Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh, the seminar saw participants from more than 25 cities across the country, making it a truly representative and inclusive gathering.

The seminar opened with a vibrant session on Muktibodh's seminal poem *Andhere Mein*. Underlining the vivid imagery the poem weaves, Lovely Goswami found that its last paragraphs reminded her of a Japanese art in which flowers were decorated in a way that they directly addressed the spectator. Geet Chaturvedi proposed that Muktibodh fused an existential pattern with the Marxist structure in his work and that marked his greatest intervention in the Hindi poetry.

The next session was on Sobti's epic novel *Zindaginama* in which Samarth Vasishtha aptly pointed out that one must turn to this novel to learn

the original melody of the Punjabi language that has now been vulgarized by Hindi cinema.

In a session on freedom of expression, Parag Mandle pointed out that sometimes free speech is threatened not by an outside authority but by a deceitful or ignorant expression that distorts and decontextualizes the actual text. He cited the instance of a widely quoted statement of Karl Marx that religion is the "opiate of the people".

It is actually preceded by a sentence: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people." A decontextualized expression, as is now becoming the custom of social media, betrays the original text and delegitimizes the speech.

The last session of the first day was on Nirmal Verma's novel *Antim Aranya*. Asteek Vajpeyi proposed that the structure of this novel resembles the masterpiece composition *Tapiola* by the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius. A solitary tune hovers above the entire novel; there is a semblance of a climax but that too converges into the silence of the tune.

Ashutosh Bhardwaj attempted to locate the idea of the god in Verma's last novel and questioned that whether the availability of faith to the characters of a novel necessarily makes it a lesser work. Much of the modern literature has followed the famous proposition of Georg Lukacs that "the first great novel of world literature stands at the beginning of the time when the Christian god began to forsake the world." Verma, who



fiercely questioned the values of modernity, restores this faith in his final work.

Several senior writers listened to them in attention, often throwing challenges and provocations. “Your predecessors were extremely erudite. They were connoisseurs of classics. You must come out of the alluring trap of social media and Facebook,” veteran author and the foundation’s Managing Trustee Ashok Vajpeyi said. Underlining the high yardsticks the Hindi language demands of its practitioners, Vajpeyi noted that many prominent politicians often take to writing verses, whose collections sell in good numbers too. “But if you make a list of even 200 representative Hindi poets, they will not find any space,” said Vajpeyi.

During the first Yuva seminar last November, Vajpeyi had exhorted the same crop of writers by quoting the Kannada master UR Ananthamurthy that “if you cannot write your classic before the age of 45, you perhaps can never write it.”

It was not clear how the young generation would respond to the task. Few of them were concerned about the instant gratification fueled by the online world. They also seemed reluctant to confront the major challenge that while there are a few significant young poets, not a single novel or a work of literary criticism of some worth has emerged from the generation of Hindi writers that began writing in 1990s, a period that has witnessed enormous tumult, an inevitable provocation to creative energies. Do they lack the discipline and intellectual rigour required for these two forms of literature? There were few answers.

The second day saw sessions on the criticism of Malayaj, Ajneya’s poem *Asadhya Veena*, Krishna Baldev Vaid’s novel *Uska Bachpan* and the phenomenon of forgetfulness. Uma Shankar Chaudhary noted that Malayaj placed the human suffering at the centre of his textual analysis, while Mrityun Jay and Monika Kumar presented a sharp analysis of Ajneya’s poem.

Among the other speakers included Siddhant Mohan Tiwari, Rahul Singh, Balram Kanwat, Vipin Chaudhary, Pallavi Trivedi, Shivani, Sheshnath Pandey, Shankaranand, Poonam Arora, Anuradha Singh and Upasna Jha.

This event is significant for a variety of reasons. First, Yuva is the first such annual gathering of young Hindi writers who have now spread beyond the traditional heartland to various non-Hindi speaking states. It lends them a platform to interact with, and know the works of, each other. Second, since it is attended by many veteran writers, Yuva has also become a forum where several generations converge together to jointly dream a future for the language. Third, as the organisers insightfully dedicated the sessions to iconic works of Hindi literature, it prompted the participant writers to engage with their past. What really sets Yuva apart is its absolute bipartisan approach that respects and embraces a multitude of voices representing a variety of ideas and ideologies. Speaking on *Uska Bachpan*, for instance, Jyoti Chawla made a feminist reading of the text and attacked the author for his patriarchal gaze. For Pravin Kumar *Antim Aranya* was an overrated work.

However, when Mandle said that “we can learn from Gandhi as well as Deendayal Upadhyaya,” senior editor Om Thanvi promptly intervened, asking him what could he learn from the RSS ideologue? Mandle could not offer a satisfactory reply.

This year’s Yuva was a remarkable improvement upon the earlier edition. The sessions were better planned and organized, and several presentations offered important insights. However, the papers of some participants reflected their poor preparation. In a heartening sign, this intellectual lethargy did not go unnoticed as they received the rebuke of fellow writers.

The event has made its mark within just two editions. The sessions for the next year are already being discussed. As the organisers sought suggestions from the participants, some of them recommended that a few sessions next year could be based on the classical Sanskrit texts such as Shanti Parv of The Mahabharata and Gargi-Yagyavalkya Samvaad of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. As it goes along, The Raza Foundation is also conceptualizing a seminar of young writers from various Indian languages in a few years, followed by a similar gathering of writers from Asia..

**Date of program:** India International Centre, New Delhi, India

**Venue of program:** 22nd-23rd November 2017



# The most beautiful thing about art experience is the idea of empathy, says vocalist T.M. Krishna



T.M. Krishna, the man who breaks the shackles of social conditioning in the world of classical music, has derided the idea of “language imperialism” stating that all language is “sonic extravaganza” and every one of them “artistically a musical catalyst”.

The Carnatic vocalist, who describes himself as a person from the “inner of the inner circle”, was in conversation with author and professor Ananya Vajpeyi on the subject of “Between the Song and Silence” at the Art Matters dialogue series organised by the Raza Foundation at the India International Center here last evening.

His most profound observation on silence, which is described as an “active idea “that tells us what to do, came as he reflected on collaborations with Perumal Murugan, the Tamil writer who fought and won his battle for free speech.

Krishna said he was often surprised by the “versatile and intriguing patterns” of Murugan’s poetry and the politics of silence contained in them. “Perumal Murugan writes so beautifully because he is quiet,” he said.

The maverick singer, who was initiated into classical music at a very early age, said he wanted more people to come into the field and “explore the silence” within the music. “The idea of silence has nothing to do with whether you are singing or not. It’s about the fact that we always need to be aware of intention, the intention to place yourself.”

As a musician, he said he believed “empathy”, the ability to feel your surroundings without involving you own self, is central to movement.

He said he found this feeling most pronounced in Raga Kambhoji.

Krishna said he was often surprised by the “versatile and intriguing patterns” of Murugan’s poetry and the politics of silence contained in them.

“Kambhoji is empathy; the most beautiful thing about an art experience is the idea of empathy. I interpret it as an ability to feel another person, environment or anything, without you have any stake in it. If I become a factor to that experience, I don’t feel empathy, I feel sympathy,” he said. “Empathy is something that occurs when that element of you being the focus of that emotion dissolves or disappears. Isn’t it that we feel in an art experience?”

As a bonus to the lively session Krishna gave a rendition of his powerful and politically charged Chennai “Purampokk Song” that also brought the intricacies of Carnatic ragas in a song for everyone.

The Raza Foundation’s Art Matters is a running series of panel discussions and dialogues on arts and culture held at the India International Centre, Lodhi Estate in New Delhi. The conversation with TM Krishna was the 47th in the series.

**Date of program:** 8th August 2017

**Venue of program:** India International Centre, New Delhi, India

# LP Tessitori's contribution to chronicling the language and literature of Rajasthan, and to Indian archaeology is unparalleled, says eminent journalist, Om Thanvi



Eminent journalist Om Thanvi discussed how the Italian Indologist and linguist shone a spotlight on the documentation of Rajasthan's rich bardic lore and prehistoric ruins of Kalibangan in dialogue series organised by the Raza Foundation.

What Luigi Pio Tessitori managed to accomplish in his tragically short life is perhaps the work of a lifetime as the Italian Indologist and linguist's painstaking research accumulated a wealth of data on Rajasthan's folk literature and paved the way for the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization site of Kalibangan, according to leading journalist Om Thanvi.

At a talk organised by the Raza Foundation as part of its Art Matters series, Thanvi, known for his travelogues, critical essays and environmental engagements, spoke of "Kalibanga Ka Anveshi", in a biographical sketch that shone a light on the many dimensions of Tessitori's scholarship that gave him a stature beyond that of a mere linguist.

Today not many Indians may be aware of this quiet and erudite young man who developed a fascination for Indian languages during his student days in Italy, came to India early in the 20th century and made extraordinary contributions to academic research in Indology in just over five years of his stay before his unfortunate death of Spanish influenza in 1919, at the age of 32.

Thanvi explained how Tessitori's journey from Italy to India in 1914, was fuelled by his deep scholarship in Indian languages such as Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit, which he had mastered at the University of Florence.

Invited by George Grierson, who had conducted the Linguistic Survey of India, the young Italian undertook the ambitious task of documenting the oral and written chronicles of the states of Jodhpur and Bikaner, as a scholar of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta.

Tessitori's demanding explorations of Rajasthan's bardic traditions were also stimulated by the idea of reconstructing the region's history through them. "It was a mere five and half years that Tessitori spent in the Rajputana region. In this short span, his work in the fields of Dingal and Pingal, ancient languages used in Rajasthan's folk literature, was phenomenal. He worked hard to accumulate and verify several folk manuscripts from remote corners of the region," said Thanvi.

The Indologist's linguistic investigations led him to come out with the critically-edited and authentic version of the poem Krishan Rukmani Ri Veli by Prithvi Raj Rathod, an important writer of Charan style. "In his commentaries, Tessitori recognised that Krishan Rukmani Ri Veli occupied a superior position in the Rajasthani literary cannon," he said.

Thanvi discussed how Tessitori's work with Sir John Marshall of the Archaeological Survey of India opened new frontiers in the discovery of the Indus Valley civilisation sites in the state, at a later date.

Despite not being a trained archaeologist, Tessitori undertook several taxing expeditions on a camel, across the rough terrains of Rajasthan, notably Kalibangan, to survey its ancient mounds or theris and study inscriptions.

"If one thinks about it, Tessitori had already discovered Kalibangan, an Indus Valley civilisation site, even if he was not able to come to a conclusive decision. He even noted in his report that these ancient mounds contained 'vestiges of a very remote, if not prehistorical antiquity,'" said Thanvi.

Thanks to Tessitori's work, today we know Kalibangan as a major site of the Indus Valley Civilisation characterised by its unique fire altars and the world's earliest attested ploughed field.

**Date of program:** 13th September 2017

**Venue of program:** India International Centre, New Delhi, India

# Mythological stories are not about Gods, they are about human nature, says V Ramesh



Vizag-based artist speak about his style, inspirations, struggles and the stories that his canvases tell in a Raza Foundation event.

Indian mythology and ancient puranas are not made-up stories about Gods; they contain the universal truths about human nature and are timeless in their appeal, according to artist V Ramesh whose works have captured the attention of art aficionados for their distinctive narrative vocabulary rooted in India's sacred and literary culture.

In a free-flowing conversation with author and journalist Madhu Jain on Tuesday at the Art Matters dialogue series organized by the Raza Foundation, the Vizag-based artist spoke about his style, inspirations, struggles and the stories that his canvases tell.

Ramesh is among the rare artists who have successfully married abstraction and realism in their works, and he has distinguished himself in this group by integrating "voices from poetry and imagery culled from mythology".

Madhu Jain referred to the allegory, metaphors and stories as elements that appeared to give his works a time continuum.

"I don't think time is a linear factor or that something should be more relevant to us now because we are living in the 21st century," said Ramesh. "Every idea is relevant to us because they affect us. Mythological stories are not about Gods, they are about human nature and the human psyche."

He referenced a painting of his called "The Thousand and One Desires" in which he depicted the legend of the God Indra after he is cursed to be covered with a thousand eyes for his lustfulness and greed.

"Greed has been around there since time immemorial. We may be advanced technologically and socially, and yet humans still covet things that do not belong to them, that has not vanished; that is what the stories tell you. And it's in all cultures, not just Indian. I don't think the storytellers of old were trying to be moralistic, they were just telling you how things were; it is up to you to take what you want from it."

This timelessness, he said, was what he tried to explore in his own paintings; such as the one of Ashtavakra, whose story depicts the primacy of wisdom over physical beauty; or that of Karaikal Amma, a 5th Century Tamil poet who seeks a boon to be made so ugly that no man should ever desire her, and that she be



freed from the bonds of physicality to roam the earth naked and write and recite her poetry.

Ramesh's liberal use of verses from medieval women poets was another distinct feature of his works that Jain noted during the conversation. Besides Karaikal Amma, he has also referenced the poetry of Akka Mahadevi, a 12th century Kannada poet; Lal Ded, the 14th century Kashmiri Mystic; and Andal, the great Tamil saint.

His extraordinary discovery, he said, upon reading the works of these women separated by both time and geography was that they were essentially saying the same things, the words had the same resonance although the metaphors they used were distinct to their own cultures.

Their stories, experiences and works were fascinating, he said, especially that of Andal, "because it has so much of erotic overtones which people suppress".

"Andal's father was supposedly a garland maker for the temple deity and as a young girl, she would secretly wear these garlands before they were sent to the temple, which was sacrilegious. One day her father discovers the misdeed after finding a strand of her hair in the garland. He makes a new one and puts it around the deity. In the night he gets a dream where Lord Vishnu tells him he misses the garland worn by the daughter because he misses the scent of her body."

"This is beautiful," added Ramesh. "When people talk about devotion or bhakti it has overtones of eroticism and physicality which most people deny. That intimacy with the deity and the truth is evident even in the hymns of Akka Mahadevi. We seem to have lost that in our skeptical outlook to the world around us."

He decried the Indians' general loss of "sensitivity" to surroundings. "We have lost our sensuality, our capacity to be sensitive to the physical attributes of life around us, like a scent or touch. How many children these days would react to the smell of the first rain



falling on dry earth? Many don't even come out of their houses when it rains."

"Sometimes it is astounding," he said, "to see that outer garb may change, but in essence, the way things are the way people are remains the same for centuries. Poetry and painting from ages ago can still be relevant; they have the ability to arouse emotions and move you, if you are open to it. I think we all should be a bit more sensitive to these voices which come from everywhere and let them in."

The discussion also dwelt on Ramesh's evolution as an artist capable of "speaking the languages of both abstract and realism without guilt", his deep spiritual experience from a chance visit to the Ramana Ashram and his difficulties in working without an artistic precedent for including devotion, bhakti or ibadat in paintings in the manner that he has done.

Ramesh, who has also been teaching at the Department of Fine Arts, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, since 1985, spoke hopefully about the artistic spark and the spirit of inquiry among his students.

**Date of program:** 30th October 2017

**Venue of program:** India International Centre, New Delhi, India

# Art is a Powerful Tool to Carry Social Messages: Dr Sonal Mansingh



Art cannot just be for art's sake, it has to raise noble thoughts and ideas and be an instrument in effecting social change, according to renowned dancer and cultural icon Padma Vibhushan Dr. Sonal Mansingh.

In a lively, candid conversation with music and dance critic Manjari Sinha last evening, marking the 50th edition of the Raza Foundation's Art Matters dialogue series, Dr Mansingh talked about her art, her mission, personal and professional challenges, inspirations, and addressed the barbs and criticisms that have come her way.

One of these last has been the accusation that her works are overly religious; Dr Mansingh countered it by saying she draws inspiration from the belief that "Shaastra", the scriptures, are the "Shastra", the weapons or instruments to pierce the darkness of ignorance.

"However, this knowledge has to be supplemented with original thinking and internalize it, or it becomes meaningless," she added.

Manjari pointed out that Dr Mansingh demonstrates exactly that in her seminal work 'Divyalok—Abode of Divinity', a three-part performance that elevates a mundane subject such as cleanliness in everyday life to the level of purity in thought, action and behavior through stories from the Puranas.

For Dr Mansingh it is an important message to disseminate in her capacity as one of the "Navaratnas" nominated for the Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan, campaigning for "Swachha, Swastha and Shreshtha Bharat". "I never found the need to pick up a broom and pose for a photo op. It is through my art, I have to send out the message," she said.

Her choice of stories for "Divyalok" is ingenious; the first part is the "story of creation" where Sage Ved Vyas sees verses of the Shri Devi Bhagvat embedded on the soles of the feet of the Devi, who symbolizes the formless feminine principle from which the universe originated. "He could read the verses because the Devi's feet were clean."

"Mohini Bhasmasura", the second-part of the performance piece, carries the

message that “if your thoughts, words and behaviour are clean, balanced and positive, it does good; if not it can destroy you”.

The third, Krishna’s slaying of the demon Kaliya, is a metaphor of pollution of the Yamuna river, said Dr Mansingh. “When I perform this piece for children in schools and colleges I ask them: Did you see when Krishna destroyed Kaliya the river was cleansed? Who is the Krishna of today, is it the government or the courts? And it is so heartening to see young people, especially girls, stand up and say ‘it is I,’” she said. “I see from it how powerful art is in being able to carry that message. Art is important to entertain and make other’s happy, and but it has to raise noble thoughts and ideas.”

Social messaging has always been at the centre of Dr Mansingh’s work, especially her campaign to bring issues such as gender bias, women’s empowerment and the education of girls to the fore. Her depiction of Draupadi, a piece created in 1994, is still timeless in its messaging, noted Manjari.

“Draupadi is a symbol; the story of her ‘transaction’ and her humiliation reminds us that women and children are the first victims of war,” said Dr Mansingh. “The woman always becomes a pawn in these

machinations, no matter how intelligent and accomplished she may be.”

Manjari also drew the dancer out on her pioneering use of Chariya Geeti, adaptation of mystical poems from the Buddhist tantric tradition, and folk Pala Sangeet; her intense spiritual experience dancing in view of the sacred and mighty Mt. Kailash; her unusual classical choreography to Bollywood music and her work with prisoners in Tihar jail.

True to her journalistic style, Manjari questioned the artist on how she dealt with personal slurs and criticisms; and true to her forthright nature, Dr Mansingh responded with the admission of her challenges as a woman living alone, her professional setbacks because of adherence to principles in dance and in navigating through biased political environments.

She also dwelt on the most inspirational moments of her life: the encouragement from her grandfather the late freedom fighter Mangaldas Pakvasa; and her recovery from a motor accident that left her paralysed and nearly destroyed her career as a dancer — life experiences that have made her, over the years, an exemplary teacher and motivational speaker.

**Date of program:** 15th November 2017

**Venue of program:** India International Centre, New Delhi, India



# A masterclass on music and musicians: Pt Satyasheel Deshpande dons researcher's mantle



Most classical music lovers know Pandit Satyasheel Deshpande for his mesmerising khayal gayaki; many may remember his rare but unforgettable Bollywood forays, like his duets with Asha Bhonsle — Man Anand Anand Chaayo (Vijeta) and Joothe Naina Bole (Lekin)— but few get a chance to see up close his lesser known avatar: that of a researcher and documenter extraordinaire.

The Raza Foundation presented such an opportunity on Thursday evening for a keen audience treated to an hour-long discourse by Pt Deshpande on the comparative styles of various north Indian gharanas, complete with demonstrations, and witty anecdotes revealing his lifelong association with the legends of Hindustani classical music.

The 51st edition of Raza Foundation's Art Matters cultural series was on "Music and Musicians" and Pt. Deshpande began by explaining his interest in exploring the different aesthetics, styles, traditions and

"voice cultures" that lend the immense variety to Hindustani classical music. "The science of music is the same, but the theories that different culture have deciphered, based on this basic science, differ," said Pt Deshpande. "Which is why, you can only understand the music of a culture, by immersing yourself in that culture."

"This is what I did when I undertook the archiving and documentation project. We used to spend up to three months in each of these gharanas, documenting their traditions, learning their styles and recording their great artists. It was then I began to understand why certain kinds of music appeals to certain societies and communities," he added.

The fruits of Pt Deshpande's labour manifest in Samvaad, a project that has archived over 8,000 hours of recordings of Hindustani Classical vocal music and over 3,000 annotated, unpublished compositions. He recalled that as a youngster in Mumbai his own house was a veritable haunt of classical greats



who made stopovers to confer with his father, the eminent musicologist and critic Pt. Vamanrao Deshpande.

Pt. Bhimsen Joshi was a frequent guest and so were Smt. Mogubai Kurdikar, Pandit Vasant Rao Deshpande and Pandit Kumar Gandharva, who was later to become his chief guru and mentor. Pt. Deshpande, a winner of the Raza Award instituted by the Foundation, spoke of the heavy influence of the Kirana Gharana and their greats on his own singing, in their “structural simplicity that was quite predictable for the average listener; but the love of the swaras manifesting itself everytime.”

He recounted, with a liberal sprinkling of his Maharashtrian humour, Pt. Bhimsen Joshi’s wonderfully gentle treatment of hard

consonants, his immersion in swaras that nearly caused his forehead to touch the stage as he sang, and Joshiji’s habit and that of his guru Pt. Sawai Gandharva before him to “pick out one member of the audience and sing for them”; of Ustad Amir Khan’s lengthy explorations of swaras that moved audiences to tears and the musical innovations of his own guru Kumar Gandharva.

He demonstrated the differing treatment of layas and ragas, the infusion of “melodrama” into singing, the distinct philosophy, aesthetics and creativity of Bhendi Bazar, Agra, Jaipur and Gwalior gharanas, among others.

**Date of program:** 14th December 2017

**Venue of program:** India International Centre, New Delhi, India

# Art education ruining the practice and appreciation of art



*Art education has, over the years, resulted in limiting the creative abilities of artists as well as a wider public appreciation of art by formalizing its language and syntax, according to writer and teacher of art Sudhakar Yadav.*

Prof. Yadav, who taught at the prestigious JJ School of Arts in Mumbai for 30 years and has written essays on art and artists, said formal schooling has meant that many artists no longer paint in their “mother tongue” with free-flowing sensibilities, but do so in an academic language that draws their work farther away from the lay person. He said it has also resulted in the elitist notion of art literacy and illiteracy, with the so-called art illiterate deemed unable to judge or appreciate good artwork.

Prof. Yadav was speaking on the subject of “Figures In and Of Paintings” at the monthly Art Dialogue series organized by the Raza Foundation in partnership with the Civil Services Officers' Institute here last evening. The discussion also featured poet and art critic Prayag Shukla and was moderated by poet and film-writer Udayan Vajpeyi. “The visual language, like verbal, has its own grammar. But we cannot appreciate it through a prism of logic, you need a certain innocence and naivete to see its true beauty, because all figures depicted in a painting are lies, there are no realistic images,” he said.

“An object exists in its own space and surroundings, and a painting exists on a surface. Between the space and surface is the act of transformation. An artist transforms his experience of an object in its physical

space to an expression on a surface; and the truly great artists are the ones who lend truth to their experience and sensitivities in this act,” he said.

He also noted that people often tend to ask about the meaning of a particular artwork. “It is like asking what does ‘2’ mean. Words have meanings, numbers have values. The colours in a painting have values, not meaning. Anyone can extract a shape, form or pattern from nature, the value you add to it is what makes it a work of art.”

Prof Yadav said this is what differentiates art from mere ‘colourcraft’. “An artist’s job is not to show colours but the truth. A painted canvas has colour, a length of saree also has colour, the differentiator between the two is the value...We see an object in three-dimensions through our senses, when we paint it, we add the fourth dimension of our own experience to it which makes it distinct and beautiful.”

Prayag Shukla echoed the sentiments in saying that, “a painting has a truth of its own, it is not always about something”. “A great work of art provides a feeling, through its colours and contours, of endlessness; which is why we can go back to it over and over again,” he said. “The works of (Sayed Haider) Raza Saheb for





instance, are all colours and geometry, but they are not limiting. Each work appears these have been given so many forms you can come back to it every time and see it in a new light.”

Shri Udayan Vajpeyi, in setting the tone for the discussion, recounted Sage Vatsyayana’s enumeration of the ‘Shadanga’, the six elements of Indian painting. Rupabheda (the appearance and its variations), Pramaana (proportions), Bhaava (feelings and expressions), Laavanya (that which holds a viewer’s attention), Saadrishya (Similitude) and Varnikabhanga

(the distinct use of colours) depict the nature of each element and their significance to the whole. They are best represented in the miniature paintings of India for example, which has both figures and abstraction, he said.

Raza Foundation’s Art Dialogues features expert practitioners from the world of ideas, literature, visual arts, performing arts and various other disciplines.

**Date of program:** 6th August 2017

**Venue of program:** Civil Service Officers' Institute, New Delhi, India

# Linear perspectives appropriate the entire space into one formulation



*Scholars discuss how a lot of work has been done in cinema and painting to break the lock of linear perspective in dialogue series organised by Raza Foundation*

Individual freedoms of objects are surrendered to give rise to the reality of linear perspective, leading lights of cinema, art and poetry have said, giving a thoughtful insight into the fascinating issue.

The scholars and creative professionals addressed 'Linear Perspective in Painting and Cinema' at a talk organised by the Raza Foundation's Art Dialogues, at its sixth edition held here last evening. It featured artist and geologist Manish Pushkale and cinematographer Piyush Shah on the panel, with poet and film-writer Udayan Vajpeyi as the moderator. Noted filmmaker Kumar Sahani was also present at the event.

Art Dialogues, a monthly series of discussion on various aspects of art, is organised in partnership with the Civil Services Officers' Institute.

Pushkale, whose solos include 'Unveiling' at Bodhi Art, Mumbai (2007), 'Japa' at Bodhi Art, New Delhi (2006) and Galerie Edition Characters, Paris (2006), explained how vanishing point is an important term in linear perspective and a key element in works of art. The artist-geologist also discussed how vanishing point is a physical property, as opposed to the emerging point,

which is something that emerges within the viewer.

He urged viewers not to focus solely on the vanishing point which exists outside him. Rather, he made a case for turning the gaze to the emerging point which occurs within the viewer in response to the vanishing point.

"Linear perspective creates an optical illusion of objects converging to a fixed, single point," Pushkale said. He elaborated on the subject of perspectives by citing Arjuna's response to Dronacharya, when the military arts teacher asked his ace pupil what he actually saw before aiming. "Arjuna could only see the eye of the bird. As an artist, I find the scenario very interesting. What Arjuna visualised was the bird's eye and he used his own eyes to accomplish that," he said. "Was the bird's eye a vanishing point in Arjuna's own eyes?" questioned Pushkale.

Udayan Vajpeyi, introducing the panelists and the subject, noted that there is both the act of locking and appropriation through linear perspective in art and cinema. But there are various ways in filmmaking and painting in which unlocking is being done.



“Kumar Shahani in his film *Kasba* unlocks the space into floating realities through colours and movements,” he said, adding: “In Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s works, there are multiple, ethical dimensions, which interact with each other.”

Cinematographer Piyush Shah said perspective generates reaction in cinema and a majority of films still use single point perspective. That’s because the guideline for most filmmakers is the frame, as opposed to the moment, a product of space-time. “Very rarely does a filmmaker engage in a multi-point perspective,” he said.

Shah discussed how Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane* is a good example of the use of forced perspective where the foreground object is very large and the background

object is small. “Through the movie, Welles defined the inner space of a person,” he pointed out.

However, Shah noted that there are some filmmakers who moved away from the tradition of the European single-point perspective and tried to create their own dialogue with the Western concept of perspective. They have introduced the multi-point perspective in their works by deflecting away from perspective “One example is Japanese filmmaker Yasujir Ozu. His films are always shot from ground level. Ozu deflects from the eye level perspective by taking the camera down and looking at the world from there,” he said.

**Date of program:** 3rd September 2017

**Venue of program:** Civil Service Officers' Institute, New Delhi, India



# Kolkata's old woodcut artists remain unknown to all, but their art will survive



*Lithography in the 19th century was perhaps one of the few art forms which catered to both high and low art markets, and the artists of Kolkata who specialized in it did much to bring art to public consciousness and hold their interest, according to leading researcher and artist Ashit Paul.*

At a talk organised by the Raza Foundation, Paul, editor of the well-regarded book *Woodcut Prints of Nineteenth Century Calcutta*, investigated the various aspects of the popular urban art traditions of woodblock printing and lithography and how they flourished in the Bat-tala area of north Kolkata.

The talk, a part of the monthly Art Dialogues series organized in partnership with the Civil Services Officers' Institute, addressed the topic, 'Popular Prints of 19th Century Calcutta' in a lecture on north Kolkata's vibrant indigenous art activity scene which had a deep influence on the evolution of Indian art prints.

Paul, who has recently documented the native arts of Chitpur and allied areas of Kolkata, explained how the first relief printed images made their appearance as textual illustrations in the first half of the 19th century.

"Annadamangala was the first Bengali book with illustration, published in 1816. Its publisher Ganga Kishore Bhattacharya advertised the launch of the book by

announcing that it had six illustrations," said Paul.

The surge in popularity of woodblock printing in Kolkata was also fuelled by the huge upswing in demand for scandalous content, narrative fantasy and romance. Public interest in the Tarakeswar affair, an act of impropriety involving Elokeshi, the wife of a government employee Nobin Chandra, and the Brahmin head priest (or Mahant) of the Tarakeswar Shiva temple, compelled Bat-tala relief print makers to turn it into a subject of their art.

"The work of woodcut artists was in tune with the rising trend of salacious literature, which dealt in subjects ranging from the interiors of homes and the Baiji Para (red light area) to escapades of the wealthy and sexual adventures of the babus," said the noted curator.

Paul also detailed how lithography started gaining prominence in the indigenous market of 19th century Kolkata, owing to its low price and the contribution of Government School of Art students in the city's commercial printing



activity. “According to Indologist Rajendralal Mitra, markets were flooded with lithographs and oleographs in 1888,” he said.

What also made the voice of lithographic prints ring loud and clear at the time, was the proliferation of different contemporary newspapers and journals, foremost among which was the art journal *Shilpa Pushpanjali*. “*Prabasi* and *Modern Review* were the other periodicals which featured a lot of lithographs by various painters,” said Paul.

According to Paul, the importance of lithography in its initial days as popular representations of art was manifold. “Lithography made the general population aware of the importance of art as an integral part of life,” he said.

**Date of program:** 1st October 2017

**Venue of program:** Civil Service Officers' Institute, New Delhi, India

# Protectionism is a killer of excellence in art



*Dance in India is increasingly being affected by narrow-mindedness, an easy acceptance of mediocrity, complacency among artists, and in training and academia the tendency to value knowledge is far more than imagination, says renowned kathak exponent Aditi Mangaldas.*

Mangaldas, who is encouraging artists to question, explore and find their own voices in the pursuit of excellence was speaking at a discussion titled “Non-recognition of Excellence: Artistic values in Dance” organised by the Raza Foundation and moderated by poet and film-writer Udayan Vajpeyi. She also spoke at length with eminent poet Ashok Vajpeyi on the current state of dance training and dance criticism in India.

Mangaldas, who has often been criticised for straying from the purist kathak traditions, lamented about narrow-mindedness that was stifling the creativity of dancers.

“Protectionism is a killer of excellence, it is shrouded in fear and no great art can exist in an ambience of fear,” she said.

“Conservation and exploration are two simultaneous processes. Artists who explore become the tributaries that feed the river of tradition, rejuvenating it in the process. I have great respect for our history and culture, but I have not been bogged down by it,” added Mangaldas.

She also cited the “easy acceptance of mediocrity” and the tendency of artists to become complacent about their own art as obstacles to achieving excellence.

“We have to be ruthless with ourselves, physically, intellectually and emotionally, only then can we burn in the art. ‘Knowing’ is a nail in the coffin of creativity; ‘doubt’ is what enables you to question, and without this ruthless pursuit there can be no excellence,” she quipped.

The overemphasis on knowledge over imagination in dance training was also problematic, she said. Her dissatisfaction with the limited literature of kathak, the distaste for what she described were ‘regressive’ concepts such as “ched-chad” expressed through the dance form and a growing awareness of social issues were some of the things that prompted her to explore creative vistas outside of traditions, she maintained.

Ashok Vajpeyi, who recalled some of the ‘magical’ performances of dancing greats such as Odissi’s Kelucharan Mohapatra, Kuchipudi legend Vedantam Satyanarayan Sharma, Bharatnatyam dancer Balasarawati and Koodiyattam guru Mani Madhava Chakyar, said artists today often tend to take to the stage to perform ‘items’ without an awareness of the full weight of their responsibility.

“When an artist is on stage they are not dancing in isolation, an entire culture is dancing with them. They





may be a worthy or even unfit inheritor of this culture, but they are carrying a responsibility; this sense is lost upon the dancers, 'that we are here because of others before us'," said Vajpeyi, the Managing Trustee of the Raza Foundation.

He also lamented the "obsession with the idea of success" and to be "successful at any cost" pervasive among artists today.

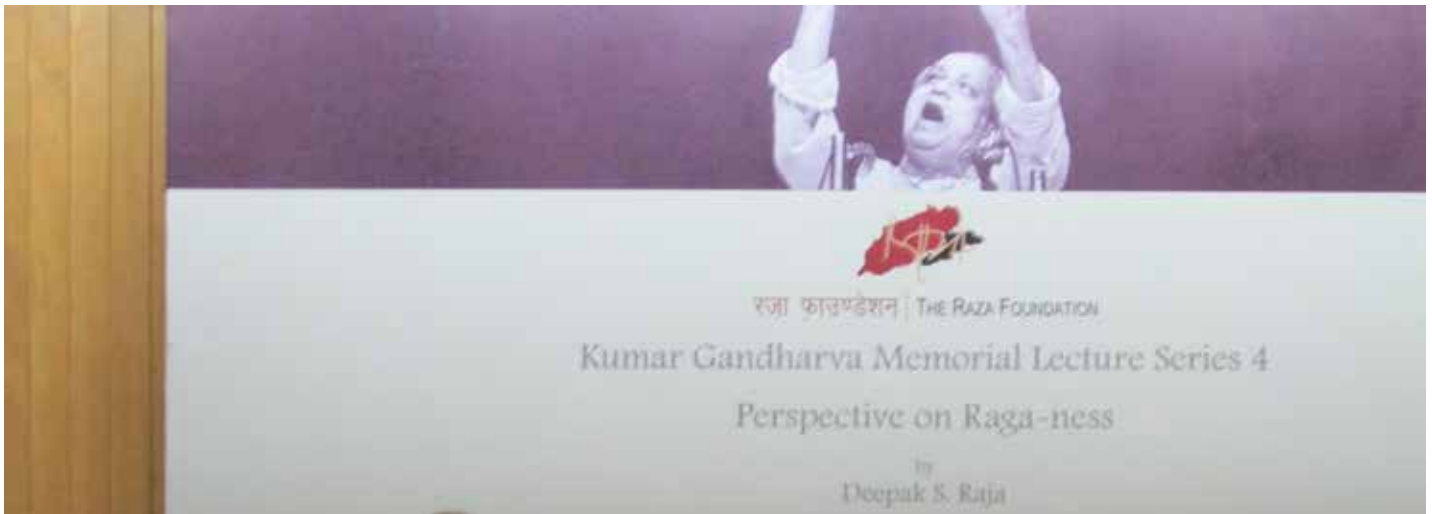
"The world has been changed by people who would largely have been considered failures in their personal lives, for instance Marx, Gandhi or Buddha," he said.

"An artist too must have the courage to fail or not enter the world of art. This is not some romantic notion; you will only have the courage to seek truth and ask questions if you are ready to accept failures on the way," maintained the eminent poet.

**Date of program:** 9th December 2017

**Venue of program:** Civil Service Officers' Institute, New Delhi, India

# The Raga-ness of Ragas: Ragas Beyond the Grammar



I have chosen to discuss various perspectives on Raga-ness. By “Raga-ness”, I mean every idea that makes a Raga a Raga. In Sanskrit or in Hindi, we would call this the राग त्व or रागत्व. I am restricting my observations to Hindustani music, because that is the only music I have studied.

The eminent musicologist, Prof. Ashok Ranade held that there is something uniquely Indian about a musician’s relationship with his art. He encouraged me to explore how, and to what extent, this relationship is shaped by the phenomenon of the Raga. I am sharing my explorations today, despite the limitations of time and context.

The subject is worth discussing because of its centrality to Hindustani music, and to Kumarji’s music. The various perspectives are undoubtedly related. But, I am drawing upon several disciplines to explore the territory. A sequential flow of ideas is therefore not possible. The best I can do is present a collage of perspectives in the hope that the connections between them remain transparent.

## **Raga as a melodic entity**

A Raga is a set of rules governing the selection, sequencing, and intonation of swara-s. (Here, I need not deal with all the dimensions of intonation relevant to Raganess) This definition validates several derivative descriptions. The eminent aesthetician, Prof. SK Saxena has referred to a Raga as a melodic matrix governing composition and improvisation. Some Western scholars have referred to a Raga as a partially composed melody. Defining the Raga as a melodic entity, however, does not encompass its aesthetic dimensions. The Raga phenomenon is inseparable from its emotional potency -- the notion of Rasa. However, Rasa is, in itself, an inexhaustible subject, and is better handled separately

## **Raga as a Melodic Representation of an Emotional Idea**

Interestingly, the word “राग”, in itself, has no melodic meaning at all. It is derived from the Sanskrit verb “रंजन” to color or to tinge. It is rarely encountered in isolated usage. It is generally encountered as a part of



emotionally potent words like अनराग / वैराय . Matanga in Bruhaddeshi (800 AD): A Raga is born from the act of colouring or delighting: this has been said to be its etymology. That which colours or delights the minds of the good (emphasis mine) through a specific swara (interval) and varna (intervallic transitions) or through a type of dhvani (sound) is known by the wise (emphasis mine) as Raga. These observations have two implications: Firstly, that a Raga is a melodic representation of an emotional idea. Secondly, that the melody delivers its emotional charge through the artistic prowess of the musician, and is accessible only to the “Good” and the “Wise”. In this context, Prof. Saxena observes that the “goodness or excellence that is needed for being delighted is aesthetic sensitiveness and not moral purity”. The Raga’s communicative efficacy is thus attributed to the receptivity of the listener, as much as the competence of the performer. So, a Raga is a rule-based system of sounds, used by its adepts for communicating emotional ideas to those who are cultivated in the interpretation of the sounds as emotional stimuli. When a medium of communication restricts its usefulness to a well-defined community, it qualifies as a language. For various reasons, experts in linguistics will not grant the status of a language to music. This is understandable because we are looking at a different kind of language -- a specialist language for the pleasurable communication of emotional ideas. If it is a different kind of language, it can have its own conceptual framework, which need not conform to the framework applied to spoken and written languages such as English or Hindi.

### **Raga Music as a language**

For the purposes of this presentation, I will focus on those features that permit us to consider music a language, and a Raga as a particular kind of linguistic statement. A language is a voluntary means of interaction between members of a community.

Being voluntary, it is used for a purpose -- eliciting a response. In a rather simplistic formulation -- the response to any communication may be in the nature of (a) accepting/ rejecting information (b) confirming or altering belief (c) activating a feeling (d) triggering action. In this context, Raga music may be considered a specialist language for activating an emotional trigger amongst those capable of interacting through the medium of Raga music.

A language can support several genres of literature (e.g. short story, novel, poetry etc.).

A user can create entirely novel genres/ structures and yet be understood. This is true of Raga music.

The precise process by which a user learns a language is one of the inscrutable areas of cultural anthropology. Despite this, a language can be analyzed in terms of its own conventions of usage. Hence, a person who knows one language can learn another. I state this feature with some caveats.

Languages are, by definition, “parochial” or “Vernacular”, in the sense that their knowledge defines a distinct community – even an identity. Likewise, all



art music traditions are considered “parochial”, though some traditions may be more “parochial” than others. Languages do function as barriers against unwelcome cultural intrusions.

Likewise, it appears to me that the phenomenon of Raga-ness has been an access barrier to the essentials of our musical culture for the music community cultivated elsewhere.

To paraphrase Noam Chomsky, an immensely influential voice in linguistics: A language fulfils its communicative purpose through statements of finite length (sentences/ statements) incorporating a finite number of patterns (vocabulary) assembled from a finite set of sounds (alphabets/ phonemes), arranged in a predictable sequence (syntax).

In this sense, every Raga may be defined as a “statement”, because it uses a finite set of swara-s to construct a finite set of patterns, and arranges them in a consistent and predictable sequence to fulfill its communicative purpose.

Where, then, is the problem with recognizing Raga as a linguistic statement? The issue concerns the theory of meaning.

A language is an arbitrary system of communication, relying for its communicative function in the “habitual” association of sounds with their meaning. Linguistics theory recognizes four levels of meaning for a statement: (a) Acoustic/ phonetic meaning – the meaning delivered by the sounds (b) lexical meaning – sound patterns (words/phrases)

(c) Syntactical meaning – the meaning delivered by the arrangement/ sequence of sound patterns (d) Referential meaning – meaning derived by implicit/ explicit reference to statements other than itself. These criteria are sufficiently met by Raga-s.

The main hindrance to the acceptance of music – any music -- as a language rests largely on the proposition that music does not support the notion of “lexical meaning”. In the present context of Raga-ness, this objection can be questioned. Each Raga qualifies almost entirely as a linguistic statement, and is understood by the members of the Raga music community – just as a statement in any spoken language is understood by its “native” ethnic-linguistic community.

Having said this, we can still accept that a dictionary of the emotional meaning of Raga- s is not even a remote possibility, while the dictionaries of English or German are useful guides to meaning. But are they more than guides? Any dictionary provides a number of meanings for each word, which may, in different contexts, have different communicative intent. So even lexical meaning cannot be said to deliver 100% correspondence between a communicative intent and its comprehension.

I am suggesting that the difference between lexical meaning of a spoken language and

Raga music is probabilistic in nature. A statement in English made to an English- knowing person may have, say, 80% chance of being understood precisely as intended.

In comparison, a Raga, performed competently for a Raga-knowing audience may have a far lower chance of achieving its communicative intent. This “far lower” has to exceed

50%; otherwise, it cannot remain in circulation.

In scientific language, a high probability relationship between cause and effect is called a

“Theory”, while a moderate/ indeterminate probability relationship describes a “Hypothesis”. Therefore, a statement in English or Spanish is the product of a psycho- linguistic “Theory” of communicative efficiency. Even a pre-composed piece of music is a “Theory” of communicative value. But, a Raga can only be considered a “Hypothesis”.

This brings us to the consideration of a Raga as a “Psycho-acoustic Hypothesis”.

### **A Raga as a Psycho-acoustic Hypothesis**

The Hypothesis is plausible because it represents society’s accumulated and collective experience of associating certain sound patterns with certain emotional ideas. Even in an exact science, a hypothesis is not arbitrary. It is supported either by critical observation or astute speculation. In science, every hypothesis invites/ attracts conclusive evidence of predictable outcomes and aspires to become a theory. A Raga, however, never intends to become a theory. It remains perennially a hypothesis, tested uniquely each time it is performed.

The question then arises – from where does a Raga accumulate the evidence to accomplish a high probability of an emotional response? A simple answer is – he draws on the cultural memory. My view is that, the associations of the sound patterns of a

Raga with their meaning reside in the collective unconscious, just as the associations of words in a spoken or written language reside in memory of the culture in which the language has evolved.

### **What, then, is a performance of a Raga?**

A Raga is a Formless Form -- formless because it represents only a possibility of an aesthetically coherent and emotionally satisfying manifestation. And, a Form because it has distinct and recognizable contours. A performance of Raga music is an attempt by the musician to draw upon the “Formless Form” of the Raga resident in the cultural memory, and translate it into a communicable form with the aim of maximizing the

probability of eliciting the emotional response latent in its melodic structure.

Each time such an attempt is made, the total inventory of melodic ideas within the recognizable boundaries of a Raga is being altered – some ideas are added while some are deducted. Thus, while each performance is governed by a Raga, it also shapes/reshapes the Raga. From this phenomenon, we derive the notion of a Raga as a dynamic consensual melodic entity.

### **A Raga as a Consensual Entity**

The consensual personality of a Raga is the sum total of the melodic ideas that have been deployed in the attempt to communicate the emotional charge latent in the Formless Form to listeners. It is like a bank from which a musician draws while performing, and which he replenishes in the process of performing.

It is interesting to compare this feature of Raga-ness to the behavior of the stock market. The investment value – the price -- of a stock is being determined and re-determined constantly by the trading activities of individual investors. However, the investment value – as reflected in the price – is also constantly determining and re-determining the trading decisions of individual investors. This is a circular argument; but it is true to the behavior of the stock market, and of the melodic personalities of a Raga. One of the world's most influential investors, George Soros, describes this as "Auto-reflexivity".

"Auto-reflexivity" is a phenomenon characteristic of interactions between a multiplicity of independent intelligent beings. We have often heard it said –"the market has a mind of its own" and, indeed, it does. The market is credited with an independent intelligence despite being merely a collective expression of investor trades. Likewise, the Raga can be seen as an independent intelligence, despite being a collective expression of individual melodic interpretations of it.

The dynamics of a Raga's consensual personality are also driven by the economic interests of the participants in the process. A musician is an economic being. He draws upon, and contributes to, the consensual personality of Raga-s in a manner that enables his music to remain aesthetically relevant to contemporary audiences. This is comparable to the economic interests of an investor, who wants to remain relevant as an investor.

The metaphor can be stretched farther. But, it is not necessary to do so in the present context.

There is, of course, also a divergent view– that a Raga is an autonomous entity. This view is reflected in the "Commanding Form" proposition favored by Prof. Susheel Saxena with reference to Hindustani music.

The proposition draws on the work of Prof. Susanne Langer, the American philosopher of art.

### **Raga as the Commanding Form**

In the context of Western art music, Langer accords the status of the "Commanding Form" to the composition, because it is the composition which determines the entire process of invention and elaboration. Prof. Saxena argues that, in Hindustani music, the Raga rightfully occupies this status.

He denies this status to the composition (bandish) because, even the composition has to be in conformity with the Raga. In terms of the musician's attentiveness, too, the Raga shapes the totality of performance more comprehensively than the specific detail of the bandish.

This idea invites some reservations. There cannot be more than one "Commanding Form". So, the "Commanding Form" proposition has to choose between the Raga and the composition. Without detailing the reservations, it is unlikely that the music community will accept such an Either/ Or proposition relating Raga-s to Bandish-es. A reconciliation of these divergent views emerged during my conversations with Ustad Vilayat Khan.

### **The Raga as a transcendental entity**

I once prodded Khan Saheb into sharing his vision of Raga-ness. "A Raga is much bigger than the collective imagination of all the musicians who have ever lived and will ever be born. We struggle all our lives to catch a glimpse of a Raga. May be, once in a lifetime, on a day when God is smiling upon us, we may get a fleeting glimpse of it. And, on that day, we can feel that we have validated our lives as musicians".

### **If a Raga is so vast, where are the boundaries of each Raga?**

"The limits of a Raga's personality are drawn only where the boundaries of another Raga are breached". In these observations, Khan Saheb makes the connection between the consensual melodic personality of a Raga and its Formless Form. The Formless Form has an autonomous, and virtually divine, existence which a musician constantly aspires to access by penetrating/transcending the consensual personality of a Raga. A Raga performance is thus a contemplative act, and the relationship of the musician with the Raga is essentially reverential.

The influential German composer, Karlheinz Stockhausen probably refers to this feature in his book "Towards a Cosmic Music", when he says: "When a musician walks on stage, he should give that fabulous impression of a person who is doing a sacred service. In India..., when a group of musicians are performing, you don't feel they do it to entertain you. They do it as holy service. They feel a need to make sounds, and these

sounds are waves on which you ride to the eternal.”

Stockhausen describes the sense of awe with which the Indian musician undertakes the task of performing a Raga. The spirit of reverential surrender is articulated in the Ragavibodha of Somnatha (1609 AD): “That is called Rupa (form) which by being embellished with sweet flourishes of swara-s brings a Raga vividly before one’s mind. It is of two kinds – Nadatma (one whose soul or essence is sound), and Devamaya, one whose soul or essence is an image incarnating the deity), of which the former has many shapes, and the latter has only one” (5.11) Being a “formless form”, and the object of contemplation, the Raga is viewed as a Divinity to whom the musician prays, entreating it to descend into its melodic form. This idea is entirely consistent with Hindu thought – that humans can access the नराकार / नगुण (Formless/ free from attributes/ the Divine) through an intense engagement with the साकार / सगुण (the manifest form/ the one possessing attributes). Raga music can thus be viewed as a form of melodic polytheism. The notion of a Raga as a transcendental entity, possessing an autonomous existence in the cultural memory, encourages us to consider the notion of archetypes in modern psycho-analytical thought.

### Deities, Raga-s, & Archetypes

I was intrigued by a recent news item that archeologists had discovered a 3000 year old sculpture of Lord Vishnu in an ancient temple in Cambodia. The immediate question that arose in my mind was – how did they identify Lord Vishnu? I found the answer in the same news item – the image had four hands, respectively holding Shankha (Conch Shell), Chakra (Rotor blade weapon), Gada (Mace), and Padma (Lotus).

I infer from this that a four-armed human-like form with Shankha, Chakra, Gada, and Padma, has constituted the identifying feature of a Hindu Divinity for at least 3000 years. He may have had different names in the past – we do not know.

Over these 3000 years, millions of artists have portrayed Vishnu with these identifying features, adding to them their own notions of other attributes. The idea of Vishnu has a

1000 attributes (वी सहनाम ). But, Vishnu is not Vishnu without these four attributes.

Vishnu is a (probably) timeless image deeply embedded in the Hindu psyche, which elicits a predictable response appropriate to the associations which are etched in the cultural memory. Vishnu is an archetype in the sense in which Carl Jung expounded the idea. And, so are other deities, with their identifying physical attributes, and personality traits.

Like deities, Raga-s possess identifying features which connect with their emotional associations



embedded in the cultural memory. Raga-s in Indian classical music exhibit similar characteristics, and can be viewed as archetypal entities in the Jungian sense.

Superficially, it might seem that deities and Raga-s are different because one is visual, while the other is aural. This is not a significant issue. Firstly, the Archetype is formless, and can manifest itself aurally or visually. Secondly, there is a well-established phenomenon in Hindustani music of Raga-s being “visualized”. And, these tendencies may well have some universal/physiological basis – modern neuro-science is tending to suggest that, the visual and aural faculties are intimately connected.

In confirmation, we have Raga-Dhyana verses; we have Raga-mala paintings, and we also have articulated linkages between the aural and visual contemplations of Raga-s. Ustad Vilayat Khan often said – “There is an eye sitting inside a musician’s ears, and ears sitting inside a musician’s eyes”. Ustad Vilayat Khan:

“A Raga should be so performed, that you can see it standing there, right before you”. (Quoted by Namita Devidayal in “The Music Room”)

### What are archetypes?

The word “archetype” derives from the Greek noun “archetupos”, meaning that which is “first molded”. It signifies a model or a type after which other similar things are patterned. The idea of archetypes goes back to Plato. The cultural ramifications of the notion



have entered academic discourse since Carl Jung dealt extensively with them.

In Jungian thought, archetypes are collectively inherited ideas, or primordial images, patterns of thought that are universally present in the human psyche. They may manifest themselves as recurring symbols or motifs in dreams, literature, painting, iconography, music, mythology, and legends, sharing similar traits. Jung treated archetypes as psychological organs, analogous to physical ones, in that both are morphological constructs that arose through evolution.

Archetypes do not have a well-defined shape, but acquire a definitive form “from the moment they become conscious, namely nurtured with the stuff of conscious experience”. Basically, an archetype is an empty nothing, pregnant with an innate tendency of shaping things.

The usage of archetypes in art helps the work to win widespread/universal acceptance.

This is because audiences can relate to, and identify with, the underlying themes both socially and culturally.

The features of the archetype I wish to emphasize in the present context are:

- (a) They are primordial images
- (b) They are formless forms
- (c) They manifest themselves variously without losing their identity
- (d) They are collectively inherited by a culture/universally
- (e) Their “meaning” is understood unconsciously/intuitively

These characteristics of Jungian archetypes permit us to view Raga-s as archetypal entities.

### **Archetypes as cultural forces**

Literature on Archetypes is not unanimous about whether Archetypes are universal or culture-specific. With respect to Raga-s, my view is that they are, essentially, culture-specific archetypes. Here I draw upon the crucial distinction between the Raga as a “Consensual Melodic Entity” and the Raga as an “Archetypal Entity”.

For their aesthetic coherence and elegance, the consensual melodic entity can appeal to musically sensitive persons cultivated in other cultures. But, the entire gamut of associations inherent in the Raga Archetype is accessible only to persons rooted in Indian culture. When you take either a cultivated North Indian musician or a cultivated

North Indian audience out of the picture, there is a substantial “De- contextualization” taking place, and the communication loses some of its access to the cultural memory. The result is some loss of meaning.

I would support this view with some examples:

Easily understood examples relate to Time Theory of Raga-s. In this I include the concept of seasonal Raga-s. It has adequate textual support in classical musicological literature. The theory has often been dismissed as fanciful and arbitrary by Western musicologists. It is essentially a musical expression of our relationship with nature as experienced in Northern India.

It is interesting that Carnatic music has no sympathy for these prescriptions, and for good reason. Being closer to the equator, the Peninsular South does not experience as marked a fluctuation in temperature and humidity across different parts of the day/night, or between the different parts of the year as the Sub-Himalayan North does.

Extend this logic to a musician or audience in Japan or Sweden, and the entire notion becomes meaningless. But, it remains meaningful to Hindustani musicians because they infuse into their music that something -- tangible or otherwise, consciously or otherwise -- which connects with the cultural memory.

First, I consider the example of संध काश Raga-s -- those prescribed for performance around sunrise and sunset. The defining feature of these Raga-s is the use of Komal (flat) Re (2nd) and Komal (flat) Dh (6th). This family of Raga-s is treated as solemn by the Hindustani music community. Why?

The sun remains the primordial deity in Vedic religion -- the all-powerful Gayatri

Mantra is to be recited at sunrise, noon, and sunset. In a rural-agrarian society preceding the advent of electricity, every facet of life was governed by sunlight. The traditional Indian family gathers around the family temple at sunrise and sunset for the Arati. In several Indian languages, these time zones are called गोधरुल बेला-- the time when the cows kick up clouds of dust on the village roads, going out to pasture, and returning home. Sunset is the time when homes in several parts North India light a lamp near the earthen water pitcher in the kitchen with the sentiment that the spirits of departed ancestors could be thirsty and might visit home to quench their thirst. The lamp indicates the location of the pitcher and is a symbol of welcome. The cultivated Indian musical mind is unconsciously attuned to these associations of Raga-s like Ramkali or Shree. These ideas are uniquely Indian.

Consider the associations related to particular melodic phrases. I cite the example of नी ध नी सा (komal Ni, Shuddha Dh, Shuddha Ni, Sa) both deployed – though slightly differently – as the signature phrases of Bahar and Malhar. I find it significant that Bahar is a Raga of spring, heralding relief from the severe North Indian winter, and Malhar is the Raga of the rainy season, heralding relief from the oppressive North Indian summer.

In both these seasons, nature renews itself, and justifies expressions of euphoria. What explains the euphoric connotation of this phrase? Nothing, except that a Raga is our language, and statements in our language mean what they mean – only to us. Any musician or listener in the world can relate to the consensual melodic personality of Bahar or Malhar. But, Indians effortlessly imbue this phrase with the entire community's experience of the seasons.

Examples of a different kind are Raga-s named after deities. Consider Shankara or Durga. Both are formidable deities. Their consensual melodic personalities are easily accessible to any musician or listener anywhere. But, only a Hindustani musician can visualize and communicate the awesome attributes of the Archetypal Shiva or Durga with an appropriate treatment of poetry, melody and rhythm.

According to an impeccable source, Ustad Naseer Ameenuddin Dagar stated at a seminar many years ago, that a good Dhrupad singer has to be a devotee of Lord Krishna. Dhrupad poetry, as you know, is replete with the mythical romance of Lord Krishna and Radha. We do not need to agree or disagree with this statement. But we can appreciate the point he was making.

In my view, Raga-s are culture-specific Archetypes. What is accessible to musicians and listeners outside our culture is, at best, the consensual melodic entity and its aesthetics.

We may concede that the Raga-s possibly have a component that is universally appealing. But, their archetypal associations have a cultural meaning, which is not accessible in its entirety to musicians or listeners nurtured in a different culture.

I consider it appropriate to contrast the Archetypal notion against the strictly melodic notion with which I started my presentation:

### **Melodic versus archetypal notions**

I find it impossible to imagine that a mathematician sat down one day, worked out all the permutations and combinations of 12 swara-s, derived an astronomical number of ascending-descending patterns, and called them Raga-s. If this was so, there would have been at least 5000 documented Raga-s, even if not all were performed at some time or the other.

The evolutionary history of Raga-s suggests an organic evolution. Without going into the history, and quite independently of it, it seems fair to assume that Raga-s evolved from Songs.

I define a song as a stable construct incorporating poetry, melody, and rhythm, which is a self-sufficient piece of music, requiring no validation beyond its direct appeal to a listener's heart. Songs are not composed. They are spontaneous emanations, which "compose themselves".

The primordial sources of Raga-s, the Songs, acquired this appeal by achieving a perfect congruence between the emotional suggestions of the melody, the cadences of the rhythm, and verbalized thematic content of the poetry. And perhaps by accident, more than by design, this congruence connected the music with cultural Archetypes, and activated the cultural memory of pleasant emotional experiences.

Over a period, learned people observed that many of these songs were "more or less" similar in their melodic patterning and emotional appeal. They clubbed them together, extracted from them the features that unified them as aesthetic typologies. The purpose of so doing was to make their aesthetic appeal replicable by all musicians. The cultural archetypes, the formless forms that we recognize today as Raga-s, owe their evolution to such progressive abstraction. This abstraction gave Raga-s a stable anchoring in the "primordial image", the "archetype".

I now have the conceptual foundation for relating Raga-ness to Kumarji's music.

### **Kumarji and Raga-ness**

Under the patronage of Mughals and, later the Princely States, Raga-ness had become abstract enough to impart to Hindustani music a definite intellectualism – what the distinguished critic, Mohan Nadkarni called a "Formal Aloofness". I break down this phrase into two components – Formalism, and Aloofness. With the arrival of the microphone, the radio, and the gramophone recording, the time was ripe for Hindustani music to shed its intellectualism. Kumarji achieved this by rethinking Raga-ness, and reintegrating it into the cultural process.

He took Hindustani music closer to its origins in the Song (with a capital S) -- The

Song in all its facets: the poetry, the melody, and the rhythm. The Song as the origin of Raga-ness, and the most direct access to the Archetypes that populate the Indian consciousness.

By circumventing the Raga as the "Commanding Form" of performance, he freed his music from the "Formal Aloofness" of the major Gharanas, all of which were the products of the colonial-feudal-elitist

era. Kumarji's "Song-orientation" was also significant because it restored poetry to its place in Hindustani music at a time when the ascendant Gharana-s of his era – primarily Kairana -- were tending to relegate the lyrics to musical insignificance. When he performed a Khayal in a mature Raga, he treated the Bandish like a Song. Here I draw, once again, a distinction between a Song and a Bandish. A Song is a self-contained piece of music which requires no validation outside of itself. A Bandish, on the other hand, is composed as an enabler and facilitator of the Raga Vistar protocol established in Khayal vocalism. His Khayal renditions did, indeed, respect the consensual melodic personality of Raga-s; but not always. His renditions did indeed feature the improvisatory movements typical to the Khayal genre, but not necessarily in the orthodox sequence. He did not permit the appeal of his Song to become subservient to the demands of Raga grammar, or to the intellectualism of Khayal architecture.

He found greater freedom to express his music as a Song in the Raga-s he "discovered" from the folk/regional melodies of the Malwa region. Here he was re-enacting the process by which Raga-s came into being, and making direct contact with the Archetypes which imparted a soul to those melodies. In his "Dhun-Ugam Raga-s", he was bound neither by established notions of Raga-ness, nor by traditional compositions in them, nor by established architecture of Khayal presentation.

He freed himself even from the notion of Raga-ness in his Bhajans, which remain in wide circulation even today. A Bhajan is a Song; and he knew how to access the soul of a Song better than anyone in his era. His special contribution to Bhajans was the revival of interest in saint-poet Kabir, with whom he shared a special spiritual connection.

In all his music, we observe a calculated carelessness, which has often been attributed to his involvement with folk music. I see this feature as a conscious primitivism, totally consistent with his rejection of the Formal Aloofness of Hindustani music, and his intuitive connection with its Archetypal nature of Raga-s.

Because of his comprehensive rebellion against the values that dominated Hindustani music at that time, he could have been dismissed as an insignificant maverick. But, it was impossible to deny his musicianship, and the impact he made with his uncanny access to the soul of Raga-s. His music was not easy to understand. His following remained small. But, he influenced the aesthetic values of successive generations.

This is why the notion of Raga-ness cannot be meaningfully discussed without reference to the contribution of Pandit Kumar Gandharva.

**(Deepak Raja)**

**Date of program:** 14th July 2017

**Venue of program:** India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, India



# Reflections From the Very Deep Surface: Mani Kaul's Vanguard Turn



Describing Mani Kaul's uncompromising filmmaking practice as "writing with a camera", noted cultural theorist and film historian Ashish Rajadhyaksha said the late great auteur's singular concern was the primacy of art over storytelling.

"According to Kaul, an object gets into a space before the camera. Whereas realism would have laid out its own world before the camera has even set up, it is important to do a 'de-naturing, de-signification' of that object in order to give a new perception. In this way, Kaul believed one can break the pre-verbal sensation of a semiotic tree," Rajadhyaksha said, expounding on one of the defining characteristics of Kaul's oeuvre.

"This 'simultaneity' was a crucial concept for Kaul to bring out the essential content in a film. He believed filmmakers should acquire simultaneity to go along with existing realism," he added, noting that Kaul's works stand as counter to classical theories of structure, motif and narrative – decrying these as artificial constructs blurring the art.

Over the course of a lecture titled 'Reflections From the Very Deep Surface: Mani Kaul's Vanguard Turn', Rajadhyaksha examined both Kaul's fidelity to his craft and his keen understanding of and inspired 'borrowing'

from Indian folk traditions as well as the other arts like music and literature.

The evening talk, held at the India Habitat Centre, was the fifth edition of the Raza Foundation's annual Mani Kaul Memorial Lecture series. The series features eminent film personalities discuss the aspects and aesthetics of Kaul's practice as well as his enduring legacy as the foremost figure in Indian 'parallel cinema'.

"Kaul changed the 'desk work' of movie-making. He never distinguished recording, editing and drawing as separate activities, but indulged them as though they are one. So, collectively, what he was doing was 'writing with the camera'," Rajadhyaksha said.

Drawing from his experience of curating 'Tah-Satah: A Very Deep Surface', a niche exhibition comprising multichannel video installations that were informed in part by three iconic Kaul works: *Siddheshwari* (1989), *Dhrupad* (1982) and *Mati Manas* (1984), Rajadhyaksha described Kaul's 'curiously reluctant' digital arena explorations and, Rajadhyaksha said Kaul's works transgressed the time he inhabited.

**Date of program:** 11 August 2017

**Venue of program:** India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, India

# Conversations with Gods on the life and works of Manaku of Guler



*'Many people do not believe in the existence of Manaku: they think he is a figment of someone's imagination': Prof B N Goswamy*

Pahari miniature artist Manaku celebrates the world of Gods by providing visual parallels to Jayadeva's Gita Govinda and the Bhagavata Purana, said art historian and scholar B N Goswamy. Goswamy further explains that there is little by way of a biographical account of this 18th-century painter, the son of the famous artist Pandit Seu of the princely state of Guler in the Lower Himalayas and the elder brother of the more established Nainsukh. But Manaku is equally acknowledged as a Master in the Pahari style of painting with a body of astonishingly brilliant works.

"Manaku was a truly thinking painter and his works are characterised by remarkable details. His observation was extraordinary and the living beings portrayed in his paintings display a range of expressions," said Goswamy, who specialises in Pahari art and has painstakingly reconstructed the genealogy of the family of Pandit Seu.

Over the course of an engaging talk, titled, 'Conversations with Gods' on the life and work of Manaku of Guler,' in the presence of artistic greats like Krishen Khanna, Manu Parekh, Jatin Das, Paramjit Singh, as well as critics and fans at the India Habitat Centre, Goswamy observed how Manaku forged a distinctive style and grounded his art in the ideas of divinity.

"I am convinced that Manaku moved to the realm of the Gods at night, conversed with them and came back in the mornings," said Goswamy, who is the author of several books, including *Nainsukh of Guler: A Great Indian Painter from a Small Hill-State*, *Pahari Masters: Court Painters of Northern India*, and *Masters of Indian Painting 1100-1900*.

Punctuating his talk with a slideshow of works by the illustrious painter from Guler, Goswamy noted that there's scant record of Manaku's life or the existence of any biography.

However, he conveyed his certainty of one thing: "Manaku's work will survive. His work demands not only attention but the greatest respect". "This man took leaps of thought in his work, that's sometimes beyond belief," he said.

The one-hour address was the latest in the annual V S Gaitonde Memorial lecture series, which aims to discuss various facets of Indian visual arts. It is conducted as a tribute to V S Gaitonde, one of India's foremost non-objective artists and a member of the Progressive Artists' Group of Bombay.

The well-received lecture series is organised by the Raza Foundation – set up by the late master modern artist Sayed Haider Raza in 2001 and helmed by eminent Hindi poet Ashok Vajpeyi, the Managing Trustee.

Acknowledging the admiration Raza had for the internationally-acclaimed Gaitonde, Vajpeyi said: "Memorial lectures are an attempt to create a body of critical thought by experts. And Prof. Goswamy, who has been discovering the lesser-known masters in Indian art whom we are yet to recognise as masters, has decided to talk about the great Pahari painter Manaku."

Noting how there are speculations on even the date of birth of these invisible masters, Vajpeyi lauded Goswamy's efforts to track down details of Indian Pahari painters.

**Date of program:** 15th September 2017

**Venue of program:** India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, India

# Age of Trump: Intellectuals must speak truth to power, says Prof. Jahanbegloo



*Public intellectuals worth their salt need to question, dissent and speak truth to power by becoming social gadflies in the manner of Socratic traditions as politics across the world is showing worrying signs of xenophobic nationalism, demagoguery and the 'epidemic of conformism' in the Age of Trump, says a prominent political thinker.*

“This is an age of ‘Trumpization of politics’, an age of ignorance, arrogance and mediocrity. This is an age which has brought with it the rise of populist politicians and loudmouth demagogues around the world,” said Prof. Ramin Jahanbegloo, whose brush with fame includes a four-month solitary confinement in an Iranian jail on the charge of fomenting a Velvet Revolution in that country.

However, the rise of the demagogues is the symptom, not the cause of erosion of public trust and engagement. It can be said that citizenry is only realizable through active participation in the public sphere.

“But what is often lost in the debate is the role of intellectuals as agents to transform the public discourse and move the society toward new modes of thinking,” said Prof. Jahanbegloo, who is presently the Executive Director of the Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Nonviolence and Peace Studies and the Vice-Dean of School of Law at Jindal Global University, Delhi. During his nearly hour-long lecture, he traced the role of intellectuals from the time of Socrates, Edward Said and Albert Camus to German Nobel laureate Thomas Mann and the present day world, and lamented how they are now abdicating their sense of humanism and critical responsibility.

“The 21st century represents in general a separation between intellectuals and the public space. Intellectuals are no more described as ‘super heroes of the mind’.... Today’s intellectuals have a fear of the political and it seems as if the political has also a terrible indifference to ‘intellectual’. In other words, intellectuals are losing their public authority and moral legitimacy of speaking truth to power,” he said.

Intellectuals become traitors when they are no more in a position to struggle against the inhumane because they feel too weak to unmask its destructive tendencies, he said. Casting aside the Socratic tradition, a good number of 20th century intellectuals willingly and openly served dictators like Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot, he noted.

Prof. Jahanbegloo, a winner of the Peace Prize from the United Nations Association in Spain, said modern day intellectuals think that all moral truths are relative and there is no need to represent a moral voice in a voiceless world. Also, the intellectuals in the academia and other professional institutions are more concerned about career-making and salary.

“Salaried, tenured and pensioned, many intellectuals find themselves chained to the wheel of a respectable career and profession which grounds their capacity of critical mindedness. Quickly and unrepentantly forgetting their moral and political responsibilities,



many intellectuals in today's world have degraded and abandoned the idea of public sphere evolving into uncritical supporters of mass culture," he said, adding that political and cultural experts and media pundits have replaced intellectuals as the sociological actors.

Taking a swipe at today's media celebrities, he said they are engaged solely in discussing facts, dictated by the economic laws of the market or by the political decisions of governments. The rise of the post-industrial global village, dominated by media networks and technology-driven communication, has drowned critical voices and 'completely paralyzed and rendered impotent' the critical questioning of intellectuals.

"Society for an intellectual is a space of active questioning and unlimited interrogation in such a way that the questions of freedom, justice, equity and equality can always be posed anew and not taken for granted," said the thinker, who has taught at the universities in Tehran and Toronto and has been a fellow at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University,

Citing the instance of Socrates, he said the Athenian philosopher and gadfly questioned the judges

who condemned him to death, and thus began the history of political thought with an act of intellectual questioning. This idea of "dissent" is the key feature to the existential presence of the intellectual in all times.

The acid test for an intellectual is to enter in the public sphere, attacking injustice, prejudice and intolerance. Intellectuals are not only individual thinkers, but also public servants of humanity who must question and reflect to protect societies from turning toward demagoguery, populism and tyranny.

In the age of Trumpisation of politics, intellectuals cannot afford passive intellectualism and intellectual elitism; they must show the appetite for dissent and critical thinking as the society needs Socratic rebels to confront global challenges, he emphasized. "The idea of 'dissent' is the key feature to the existential presence of the intellectual in all times.... Intellectuals will certainly be useful to human societies, as long as humans continue to believe that "doubt" is not a futile word," said the thinker.

**Date of program:** 13th October 2017

**Venue of program:** India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, India

# My Intellectual Journey in theatre



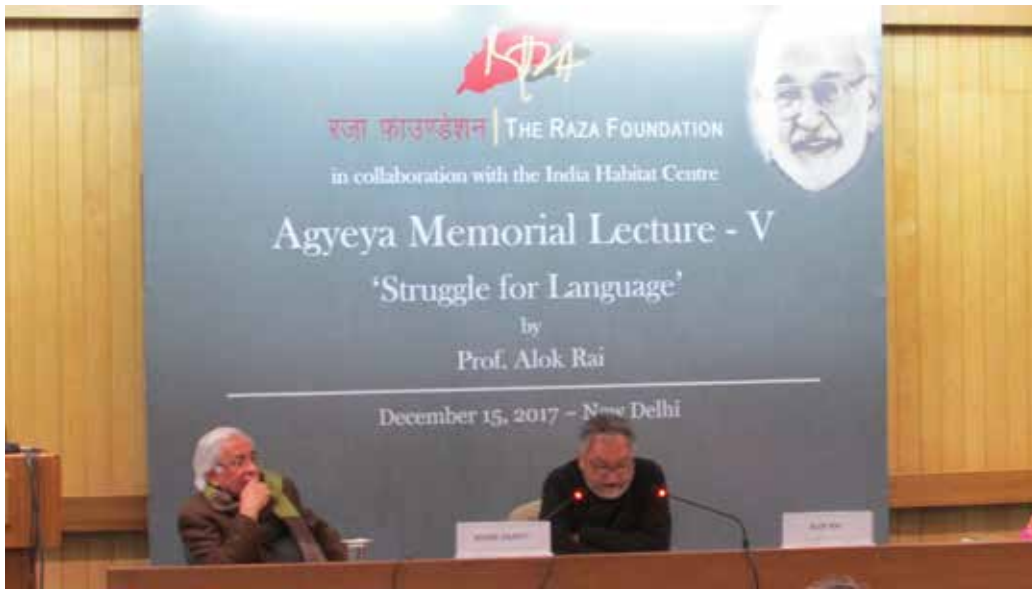
Structured in the form of an informal and improvised talk, Rustom Bharucha thinks aloud on some significant moments and points of departure in his intercultural journey in theatre from 1977 to the present moment. Focusing on a spectrum of examples, drawing on Chhau, Peter Brook's production of *The Ik*, *The Flying Circus Project* in Singapore, his own book project on *Another Asia*, and the *Cluster Project* in Adelaide, Australia, he focused on key issues relating to appropriation, decontextualization, cultural tourism, non-verbalism/

multilingualism and the search for alternative framing principles and critical dialogue in intercultural theory and practice. Drawing inspiration from Rabindranath Tagore's affirmation of universal humanism, he explores ways in which the 'national' can be positioned against 'nationalism' in order to stimulate alternative modes of intercultural thinking, more closely tuned to ecological and indigenous worldviews.

**Date of program:** 10th November 2017

**Venue of program:** India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, India

# Language is a mirror/window into our condition': Prof. Alok Rai



Language is inextricably linked with dynamics of power and resistance and can provide a profoundly unsettling perspective on the distortions, perversities and unjust domination of regimes, according to eminent writer and critic Prof. Alok Rai.

“Language is a mirror or a window into our condition and it is also a strong weapon and tool of resistance. Literature is a good place to register something that is fundamental to the nature of language,” he noted.

Prof. Rai, grandson of the legendary Hindi writer, Premchand was delivering the fifth Agyeya Memorial Lecture on ‘Struggle for Language’ when he remarked “But language itself struggles; it struggles for existence amid the lies and noisy distortions. The struggle for language is, simultaneously and paradoxically, a struggle against language. This happens in at least two senses. In one sense, it is the poet’s struggle against the seduction of language. The other struggle is against the perversion of language, by rampant abuse, by the common traffic in imprecision and lies, in hypocrisy and mendacity.

In his stimulating 45-minute talk, Prof. Rai sought to build a premise for his contention in the Indian context by drawing a cricketing analogy and the rechristening of Gurgaon in Haryana to Gurugram.

“The Gurugram phenomenon – the Sanskrit spicing of smelly old Gurgaon – is merely farcical. Normally, this kind of symbolic politics involves little more than pots of paints, yardage for flags, taller flagpoles, very tall statues. But when this kind of farcical exercise takes over from the real, urgent and neglected tasks of governance, it is time to look deeper. Via language,” he contended.

Describing the renaming of Gurgaon as “our clue to retrograde nationalism”, he said, “Gurugram seeks to return to some imagined monkish moment when Aryan celibates walked the land and punished the apsaras who tried to seduce them...It is dedicated to the recovery of some prior, already-achieved nation, and so is fundamentally different from a future-oriented nationalism – committed to becoming a nation that addresses the needs and desires of all its members.”

As for the cricketing analogy to illustrate his contention that the struggle for language is also a struggle against language and how language is formed and deformed, Prof. Rai cited the term ‘Team India’, a ubiquitous, innocent-seeming phrase, rather than the ‘Indian Team’.

The term ‘Indian Team’, according to him, is specific and can refer only to the specific players who





are part of the squad. But 'Team India' is inclusive and "we are, willy-nilly, a part of it. ... Team India encodes the nationalistic assumption that India itself is a team with harmonious complementarities', conveniently overlooking the diversities, disharmonies and discords of a nation, he said, adding: "Selling this 'nationalism' via cricket is seductive .

However, despite the seductive and treacherous nature of language, it is important to insist that the political struggle must still be a struggle for language – the struggle for a more sensitive, truthful language, a language that is attentive and adequate to the delicate contours of our lives.

"I think of this as the poet's task. But it is also the task of linguist, as also that of the citizen in this time of post-truth and the rising tide of bullshit to insist on calling out lies, even if it is controversial to do so," said Prof. Rai, whose publications include translation of Premchand's *Nirmala* into English and Hindi Nationalism.

There is yet another sense in which the struggle must be for language, he said. "Language is a mode of contention and resolution and a possible useful corrective for the distortions of our times...It is the only civilised alternative to perpetual warring over

our wonderful and/or maddening, but certainly inescapable, differences. Or else, we can all start rolling up our sleeves," he noted.

Literature deploys the magic of language in order to persuade, to widen the circles of sympathy, enlarge the range of human beings. "One thinks of Saratchandra's women, of Premchand's peasants, of Gopinath Mohanty's forest dwellers. But it is important not to romanticize this power, important to remain somewhat suspicious of the magic of narrative and of language. There is an entire literature of colonial glorification, which casts a romantic light on its integral violence by styling it as high adventure and as civilization," said the writer.

Stressing the Intersection between language and politics, he said it is wrong to perceive that literature or poetry is entertainment, escape, indulgence – merely cosmetic stuff, compared with the 'real' world. "This aesthetic fastidiousness seriously misrepresents the seriousness of art, of poetry, of language. It can be a primary means of access to the reality of extraordinary times," he added.

**Date of program:** 15 December 2017

**Venue of program:** India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, India

# Carrying Roots around



Should we finally accept the reality that we are living in the age of neo-violence? With continuous changes in the ambience of uncertainties derived from global socio-political agendas, the nature of violence also changes. Hence the size, shape, usage and packaging of our cutting edge weapons changes too, though their function and the intention behind them remain unchanged.

Global history is replete with violence and death. Today, the identity of a human being in the context of global modernity has been reduced to a mere BODY, like a compressed creature whose presence is no more than a 'living-dead'. In general, whether or not we accept and realize it, we are now marginalized and colonized in the zone of new oxymorons where conflicts are compulsorily meaningful and the meanings are imposed.

The newly etched thought system of modern politics has victimized people from many civilizations. This system flagrantly creates colonies of redundant humans which finally produce many ignored groups from uprooted societies. Overall, this is a well planned process of creating a diaspora of forced migrants. The procreation of the new tools and thought to enhance the process of such polarization is the dream project of this politics. It produces across the globe, persons who cannot be accommodated anywhere, who will develop roots nowhere. The new century arrived with new software to fast-track this global enterprise of dislodgement and displacement.

Globalization is firstly erasing the pre-existing sounds and deleting the pluralities of the tones of

our societies, then rapidly converting the whole world into a monochromatic dullness which is surrounded by a sonance of monolingual cacophony. The 'otherness' of our time is soon going to be completely dominated by an imposed 'sameness'. Specially when our capability and competence to accommodate the radical and respecting diversity is already shrinking at an alarming pace, this thought system which has highly sophisticated and updated new ways of genocide can kill the notions (personal) as well as the nations (Geographies) without any alarm. Sooner or later, because of this, our existing social fabric is going to be in a deep crisis. Zygmunt Bauman, one of the finest thinkers of our times, says passionately, "it supports the construction of our modern narrative which is based on the destruction of our ancient history. It is a genocide of our story as well as of our history".

John Keats once said, "A poem should come out in a manner like a leaf to a tree". Being an artist, I am provoked by this violent thought system to review Keats' metaphor with my aroused concerns and anxieties. We know that when a leaf appears on the hard trunk of the tree in the form of a tiny nub, the trunk has done a lot of quite hard work to make this appear spontaneous. The trunk is the bridge between the nub and the roots.

The tree trunk is a good symbol of interaction and continuum; between the new and the old, self and other, other and another, root and sun, embedded and unstable... In a similar manner, in every civilization, art forms and their pluralities are surrounded and guarded by the trunk of its traditions. The trunk stands firm between the location of the collective memory and the

sense of personal glory, thus protecting the co-existence of its grammar and craft.

Similarly, artists protect and project the roots of their personal point of view and to complement their externalization via art, also create room for their own 'other'. A room, where their conviction defeats concept and art evolves like a bud from the trunk. Firstly, creating this room for artists' own 'other' and converting it into a zone of aesthetics is a creative challenge without which art can't be a holistic experience. The widening rift between the roots and modern life has jeopardized the connect between the two. As a result, to achieve this holistic experience in art is a great challenge for the contemporary artist. When an artist explores possibilities where s/he could be in intimate union with his own 'other', the unfamiliarity with his "personal unknown" is liable to lead to strange temptations. Such seductions also extend an invitation to explore his/her own self.

This exhibition is an attempt to show how an artist explores, examines and finally tries to restore possibilities of finding the 'other', which are gradually fading and becoming almost obsolescent in our personal belief system. This system has become deeply influenced and overshadowed by uncertainties which make everything so amorphous that before one can come to an understanding, the other vanishes.

Visual artist Veer Munshi, forcibly displaced from his homeland Kashmir valley and now living in exile in Delhi, says nostalgically, "Homes don't get demolished. They live inside us". His works present intriguing images. They transcend the average notions of reality and pass into the surreal. He has painted his own experiences of Islamic fundamentalist and terrorist forces in Kashmir and depicts the overall human rights situation in Kashmir.

On the other hand, the photographs of noted cultural theorist Nancy Adajania represent her concern about the ethnic purity of the Parsi community to which she belongs. She says "I would like to subject my birth-community's fear of contamination and obsession with ethnic purity to self-critique by drawing on archival materials that emphasize the community's actual plurality and cosmopolitan connections. Through the formal devices of erasures, rubbings and staining, I shall evoke the narratives and counter-narratives of identity".

Jayashree Chakravarty remembers a hurricane and a simultaneous earthquake which occurred in the 18th century and ruined the place known as Kuchinan. They also destroyed the natural system of the local river Vidyadhari. Later, a place known as Salt Lake came up on that site. Salt Lake is now a posh locality of Kolkata where she resides. With time, slowly the word Kuchinan disappeared from local folklore, and also from the popular recollection of the history of



Kolkata. When Jayashree moved to Salt Lake in 1982, it was a sort of marshland. About the current status of the enclave she says, "we seem to uproot the smaller houses from their very roots.....like rotten teeth... and creating big houses over them. My works are what give me shelter in the space I imagine". The urbanization and resultant ecological degradation of a remembered landscape is the core concern in Jayashree's work.

Atul Dodiya reacts to multiple themes with great sophistication. He coolly superimposes contextually polar images on a common plane and works with metaphors. He enjoys creating new challenges and juxtapositions by placing myth alongside reality and puckishly cherishes the clash between the two which finally results in a big cataclysm of the Image. The aesthetic of his works is composed of a thematic orientation, sociological articulation and an artistic bluntness. He says, "My work tries to weave the past with the present concerns, bringing out the irony of the situation. It's a commentary on the troubled times we live in against the backdrop of values and principles that we, as a nation are so proud of."

Jagannath Panda's art is a study of dichotomy as it exists in modern life. He easily juxtaposes the contradictiveness of two negations or two notions on the common plane and creates a relevant space where they co-exist in perfect harmony. His works are mostly about ecology and since animals are integral to it, they often appear as paradoxes in his works. He says "I represent them mostly in a theatrical way reflecting the human condition. Be it a peacock, a rhinoceros, a deer or an owl, each animal conveys a meaning. The paintings are not about the animals, they are about ecology and how urbanization has affected us all".

V. Ramesh is the crucial divider from whom a sort of paradigm shift begins in this exhibition. This shift is noticeable because from here the pictorial planes of paintings are eventuating towards frangibility and perishable layers. He is keen on the image of the contemporary human being who is in search of the spiritual extraordinaire within his distinctive world. Can we see it as a form of reality of the union beyond the interiorities of the surface? A search for truth that lies beneath the ever-accelerating flux of today's world that became one's own quest? He says, "For quite some time Bhakti or Devotion was singled out as the leitmotif in my work – not merely as an underlying unseen presence, but something that could be felt





as an emotional exaltation. In the beginning when I was attempting to find an appropriate language and devising strategies to find an equivalency to this emotional exaltation, I found there were really no immediate precedents. In a way it was convenient to appropriate the voices of these poets and use them in my work."

One of the epithets for artist Mona Rai is, that she is the one who is in the minority within her own home, marginalized in her own city and condensed in the backyard of her own roots. Delhi is a city of migrants and millions of people in search of life and light have arrived in the past few decades. The character of this city has always been a work in progress. This single factor could potentially lead to an inability to identify the place she comes from. She feels a kind of exile. Her paintings find their sublime origin in this turbulence. She candidly says, "As an artist who negates the obvious image, it is important to encounter the unknown, the resolved, and to be on trial, again and again".

Akhilesh is widely known for his abstract paintings with bold fluorescent colors. In the past few years by applying these colors in a very unique manner he has remarkably de-contextualized their inherent decorative, kitsch appeal and has created a new aesthetic of optical illusions in his paintings. In this exhibition, along with a few of those paintings, he is showing for the first time his sculptures based on still-life. His paintings are illustrative of the infinite journey human beings have been on through ages. For him, images and colors are immediate realities and the reason behind compelling fantasies. He says, " My paintings incessantly astonish me and throw me in wonder. And, familiar colors and tones catch me unaware and press me to communicate their own mysterious being. Thus, everyday encounters with these novel colors, their tones, textures, manifestations, impel me to undecipherable ambivalence. And I just flow..."

Ganesh Haloi is currently in news for showing a wide range of his works at Documenta. In his abstraction, memory plays an important role. His works are pictorial memoirs of his senses where he restores his contact with the forgotten primordial past.

He says "The pain of detachment leads to a reunion with the wholeness that brings a strange delight. I feel that the various sounds, smells and forms that the external world reveals in a kind of grandeur daily, our inner self experiences them internally. The urge was to create a new language, a new way of seeing that will make the soul tremble before the pulsating drama of abstraction-symbols".

Manisha Parikh is well known for her experiments in vivid styles. From paintings to sculptures to site-specific installations, she transforms materials into an experience. Carefully detaching them from their existing history, she struggles to explore the re-establishment of the possibilities of updating them with the current available data of her traditions. She says, "I relish working with the purity of a material, narrowing down the boundaries in order to explore in greater depth. Qualities of fiber, surface, opacity, translucence etc. become revealed over time and with regular handling." She beautifully highlights the distance between her own contemporaneity and roots, stitching them together is a part of her process.

In this exhibition, the metaphor of "roots" is highlighted in the context of paradoxes emerging from the existence of violence in life today. What does this metaphor mean to an artist? Root - which represents the idea of Origin, also indicates the Unconscious and the Abiotic to most people in South Asia (where it is called jud); while jud symbolizes Passiveness and Expressionlessness, it can also be described as a Factor in other contexts. Jud has an Embedded sense of Discouragement and Sadness in the context of emotions. It stands for Insensibility and also represents the Dead who are always participants in our lives.....

With this exhibition, we must remember that in Indian aesthetics, art is not subsidiary to concept, as there is no pertinent concept of art. Artistic genius, which we know as "pratibha", is actually the capacity for exploration.

**(Manish Pushkale)**

**Date of program:** 7th-21st October 2017

**Venue of program:** India International Centre Galleries, New Delhi, India

# Coming of Age: South Asian American Artists Today



Curator Arshiya Lokhandawala with artists, Amina Ahmed, Bari Kumar and Shelly Bahl

The exhibition *Beyond Transnationalism: The Legacy of Post Independent Art from India* undertaken at the cusp of India's 70 years of independence seeks to understand the many positions of artists of South Asian descent living in the United States. The artists in this show assert new and complex aesthetic and geopolitical propositions that question, complicate and travel far beyond conventional notions of home, nations, and belonging. This exhibition seeks to question the relevance of the terms *diaspora* and transnationalism and their attendant significations. The term *diaspora* derived from the Greek word meaning [to disperse or to scatter its geography, or its complex geopolitics] has been a default frame used to understand and signify the mass migrations, and exoduses. But today, a new generation has come of age, and another, since the term was first being used widely. And with the onslaught of

globalization and migration now, in every direction, a new framing, or no framing needs to be considered, that calls this default into question. The exhibition unravels the multiple subjectivities of each of the individual artists as palimpsests of varied lived experiences; interactions and relationships no longer unnecessarily tied only to nations. This exhibition asks questions about new ways to articulate this new beyond.

Post-independent India did witness several progressive artists emigrate to Europe and the United States of America. Amongst them was S. H. Raza himself who left for Paris as early as 1950, with his colleagues F. N. Souza leaving even earlier in 1949. Examining Raza's work, India was ever present in his mind and as he always carried the nation with him. In a similar way, manner two artists Zarina Hashmi and Krishna Reddy participating in this exhibition also



Zarina Hashmi  
New York : Cities I called Home, 2010  
Woodblocks printed in black on Handmade Nepalese paper and mounted on Arches Over buff paper  
26" x 20", Edition of 6/25

left India early. Reddy left India in the same year as Raza to study in London and then moved to Paris in 1951, finally settling in New York in 1974. Pioneered the art of color, much of Reddy's viscosity prints such as *Life Movement* embody various experiences inspired by nature that are primordial and organically inspired from his early days in Shantiniketan. Zarina Hashmi, born in India left as early as 1958 never to return. Her work *Cities I called Home*, includes her journeys through Aligarh, Bangkok, Paris, Tokyo, and New York seeks to re-visit these places through an imaginary map. Much of Hashmi's work is about home and belonging maybe as she says "because 'home' is a notional entity that perhaps exists only in memory.

Speaking about home, Pakistani born Hamra Abbas, currently living between Boston and Lahore seeks to find an individual expression within a changing society addressing notions of cultural history, sexuality, violence, ornamentation, devotion, and faith. Her work *Kaaba Pop*- a series paper works reminiscent of Kaaba provide a kind of (spiritual) home where one is able to have more than one home.

Jaret Vadera born in Toronto, Canada to Filipino and Indian parents and currently living in the New York, is part of many cultures, and feels an affinity

with multiple homes. In his work he actively questions binaries of *us's* and *them's*. In his work *No Country*, 2014 from his Pangea series, Vadera redacts all of the names of that appear on a world map. Countries, now undifferentiated, become a world connected as one landmass. His video *On Kings and Elephants*, 2015, where a robotic voice narrates the tale of the *Four Blind Men and the Elephant* focuses on translation as a main theme. At the heart of this timeless story is an enduring reminder against the trappings of the ego, religion, and state agendas still looking to divide and rule.

Priyanka Dasgupta's video *Another*, 2017, recounts an absurd circuitous journey of a personal narrative of grandfather Prodosh Dasgupta sculpture *Remorse of an Egg* that disappeared in New Delhi in 1991 and re-appeared on an "Antique Roadshow" episode in Tucson, Arizona, in 2016, masquerading as a planter.

Her work explores the transformative journey of the sculpture that passes undetected, traveling without papers of authentication unlike the journey of people crossing borders and nations.

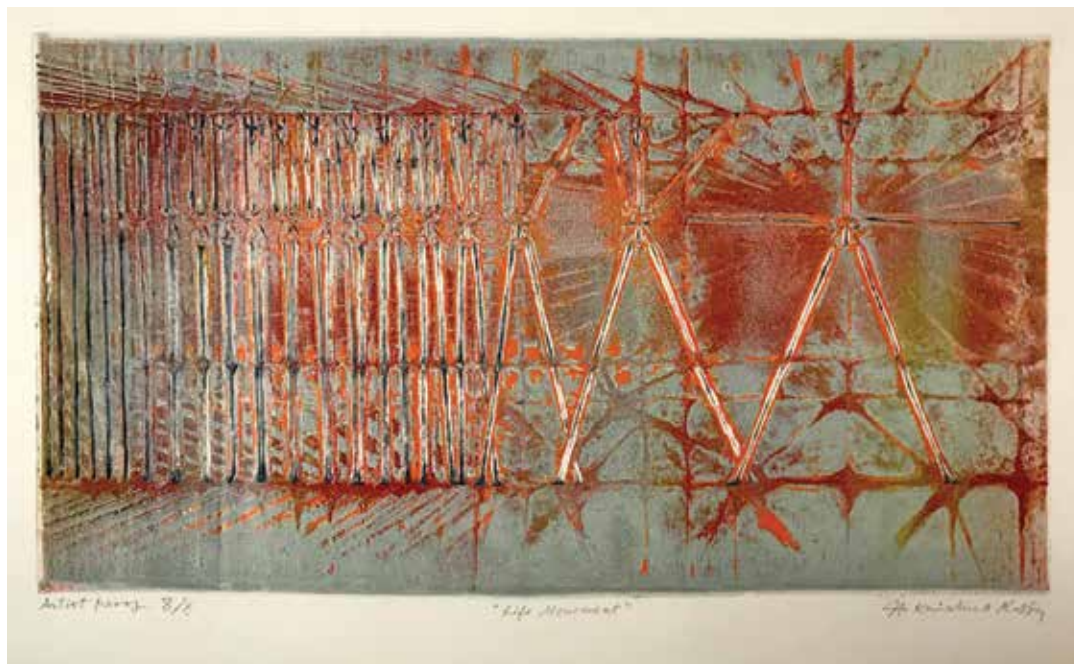
Shaurya Kumar's work is informed by ancient Indian and world history that addresses fallen forgotten objects and monuments, architectural ruins and transient ephemera that highlight displacements revealing notions of presence and absence. Born in Delhi and living in the US since 12 years, Kumar in *If* in a sacred land a traveler, a series gold leaf, Shaurya responds to travels and memories of places through a mark left by a pilgrim at a religious site, as an act of reverence or devotion. Each mark draws on different and poignant journeys that are distinct from any other.

Amina Ahmed, born in East Africa 1964, of Kutchi Turk Indian heritage, growing up in England, having lived in Iran and the USA since the last 10 years, in *Pitch 1* or *Prieta* seeks to re-connect herself to her nomadic roots from her native land. Her meditative, repetitious and rhythmic works are reminiscent of tattoo marks on skins that tell stories of folkloric traditions, at the same time reverberate an ad infinitum with the universal.

On the contrary, Vandana Jain's digitally produced *Mandala Logos* undertakes nothing less than a critique of global capitalism. Located in New York, the headquarters of world commerce, Jain being an artist of Indian origin, draws on her immediate environment filled with multi-national conglomerates, consumption and the spirit of corporate personhood. In *Logo Mandala*, Jain explores her relationship with India and the connection with the corporate and spiritual world.

Chitra Ganesh born in New York, to Indian parents draws her inspiration from several points including, Hindu and Buddhist iconography, and mass-mediated visual languages of comics, science fiction, news photography, and illustration. In her work *Depths of her Abyss*, 2016 she presents a nonlinear narrative of unforeseen desire and untimely loss" that occur in an alternate world in an imagined past and a distant





Krishna Reddy  
Life Movement, AP  
Viscosity on Paper  
20" x 26"

future. For Ganesh, these retro-futurist bodies, like time, are fluids that explore bodies, space, and history. Speaking how she feels about the term diaspora, she considers it less useful to her now, particularly as earlier articulations of the South Asian diaspora were tied to nostalgia and longing, that became a way in which narratives of the homeland or home were often frozen in time in a diasporic subject's imaginary. Her attempt is to free this space and keep it fluid.<sup>[1]</sup> Ranu Mukherjee's, *Today is a surprise*, 2018, part of *Shadowtime* project addresses the complex physical experience of colliding time frames marked by cultural and ecological change. For her, *Shadowtime* (a neologism coined by her) is a process of "living simultaneously in two distinctly different time scales" or the acute consciousness of the possibility that the near future will be drastically different than the present," <sup>[2]</sup> addresses the complex nature of vision, witnessing and responding as a physical body within a social environment. Here her painting becomes a time-based work that embodies the way critical events seem to oscillate between the concrete and abstract, and between visibility and obscurity though we may not be able to see them all at once.

Sreshta Rit Premnath born Bangalore, India, moved to the USA in 1997 in his work *Cadere/Rose* recounts his physical likeness to the Bangladeshi immigrant flower sellers selling roses in the squares of Rome, where his exhibition in Italy took place. The artist purports "If I were holding a bouquet of roses, I too would disappear."<sup>[3]</sup> The invisibility of the immigrant in his/her new surrounding, the effacement of individual identity the places and its perceptions impose-these conditions not only extend the displacement of authorship in Polish conceptualist André Cadere (1934, Warsaw - 1978, Paris) who acquired a reputation of a crank in the Paris art world of the 1970s, allow the artist to reflect on his own immigrant condition of invisibility of whose identities that continue to remain

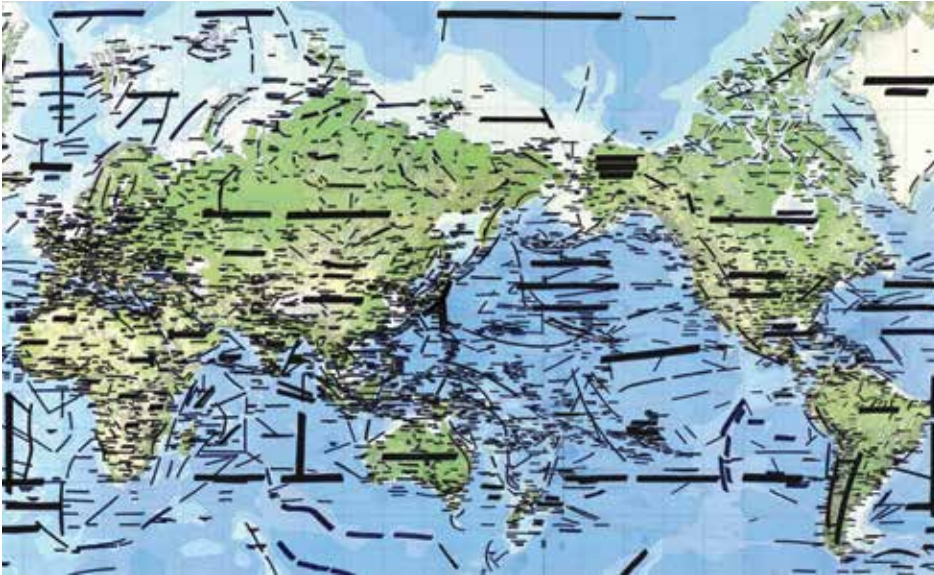
invisible to us even as they circulate in our midst.

Shelly Bahl, an artist born in Benares, India, raised in Toronto and currently based in New York City draws on *International Woman of Mystery II: Amru Sani*, a mixed-media installation explores the fictionalized life of a Indo-Caribbean jazz singer, and actress who performed in the 1940's-60's, and who, at the peak of her career disappeared. Bahl appropriates the enigmatic personality of this woman who created different persona's that allowed her to negotiate and transition between these varied challenging spaces and worlds inhabited by her.

Bari Kumar born in Andhra Pradesh and currently living in Los Angeles since 1988, in his suite of 5 works *Organic Sensoria*, 2013: *Eye Yoni*, *Silence is Golden*, *Opinion of taste*, *Smell of fear*, *Mera Haath Jagannath* (my hand is supreme), represents the various senses



Amina Ahmed  
Pitch I, Prieta(Detail), 2017  
Drawing on Carbon Paper  
24" x 33"



Jaret Vadera  
 No Country, 2014, from the Pangea Series  
 Black marker on world map  
 20" x 30",  
 Courtesy of the artist

that are tied to our physical body and the psychological state of being. This series of cloth constructions made in his hometown Hyderabad are inspired by his visits to sari matching centers as a child. The artist notes the color arrangement of these shops and the significance of the fall that stabilizes the sari, yet always remains invisible. Using these myriad colored falls he makes a pixelated work in fabric revealing the unseen that often is the backbone of things.

Finally, the works of Jaishri Abichandani and Annu Mathew both address the future and the life we can anticipate. Abichandani moved to NYC in 1984 (being born in Mumbai) and her video Happily Never After uses imagery of a female fortune telling robot seen in street fairs in India or Chowpatty beach in Mumbai. This absurd story is drawn on a story of AK Ramanujan, based on ancient legends of the lives of Indian women saints. Leaving us disoriented and the viewer perplexed as to the anticipated outcome of their future the robot slips from the subject of the work to addressing and subjugating viewers with archaic rules of an unidentifiable society.

Annu Mathew's video, To Majority Minority - Moon (from Bangladesh), examines the history of immigrants in the US, which according to the artist in 2050 will become majority population. Born in the UK and currently living in the US, her work points to the usual question "where are you really from?" Using personal stories of immigrants from family albums she

allows the viewer to understand America's immigrant history through these pictorial representations that reveal the complexity of migration that cannot be revealed as one single image.

Beyond Transnationalism doesn't seek to answer, but rather to ask timely questions. The experiences and journeys lived by each of these artists is immeasurably varied. Which makes it impossible and unnecessary to address the complex issue of home, belonging and identity within a single reductive meta-narrative. Zarina and Reddy born in pre-independence India, as well Bari Kumar and Shaurya Kumar have a different relationship to India and their identity at large. The second-generation artists, who were born abroad, have different relationships to their place or their places in the world and how they visualize themselves in it. All of the artists have moved past the oversimplified notion of as scattered, or somehow incomplete, and were arguably never there. They travel through multiple narratives of different nations, and feel at home in the world moving in relation to, and often beyond their transnational roots. They can be viewed as more fluid, multi-local and transient, working through a liberated space that they are constantly shaping.

#### (Arshiya Lokhandwala)

**Date of program:** 10th-21st February 2018

**Venue of program:** AIFACS Gallery, 1 Rafi Marg, New Delhi, India



# The Material of Memory



**Rajendar Tiku,**  
*Stupa,*  
Bronze with gold gliding,  
8" x 5.5" x 3", 2008

Rajendar Tiku pays homage to the beleaguered craftsman and invokes the long-suffering state of Kashmir in his sculptural works, avers Shruthi Issac

Rajendar Tiku is a chronicler of a forgotten past. Regarded as one of the more versatile contemporary sculptors in India, Tiku's art is a meditation on the austere landscape and silenced voices in Kasheer (Kashmir) or the land of the mythical lake, Sati Saras. This internalization of the unforgiving terrain and politics of Kashmir, upon reaching a precipice within the artist, finds itself manifested onto the surfaces of sculptures and drawings in the form of nail marks, abscesses, knobs, bulges and scratches.

Pain and suffering have been explored and expressed with great sensitivity in Indian art. The *Famine* series of Somnath Hore, the pencil drawings of Himmat Shah and the haunting paperworks of Amitava Das come to mind. In the hands of these artists, form contorts to such an extent that it no longer bears resemblance to any tangible structure. It metamorphoses and moves beyond the figurative towards the abstract.

Tiku excels in placing form in between the realms of the real and the metaphysical. The viewer finds himself suspended for a brief moment, between the

imaginary and the actual, where the work seems to echo objects from memory while excavating and reinforcing the unknown.

His solo exhibition, titled, *The Womb and the Sprout* at Gallery Threshold, New Delhi, from the 25<sup>th</sup> of October to the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2017, preserves these sensibilities. The visitor is drawn immediately to the abstract installations and drawings, placed strategically across the sparsely lit gallery. Each work extends every other, suggesting a few lines of a story, egging the viewer to move on to discover the next. The luminous *Moonwashed bridge and the Mystery lake* memorializes the birth of Kashmir from the fabled Sati Saras lake. The bridge, a stark construction of white marble pays homage to the land of the sacred ice linga of Amreshwara. The waters of the mythical lake have long ebbed away.

Tiku's *Stupa* recalls the history of Buddhism in Kashmir. As one walks towards the sculpture, it grows from a distant holy shrine on the horizon to a real, scarred and marked spiritual entity—a symbol of peace and non-violence, marred by time, violence and politics. *The Broken Oath* is a monument to hollow promises made and shattered; only the scooped out, empty shells remain, glistening in time and in the memory of the living.





**Rajendar Tiku,**  
*Memoirs of a Cobbler,*  
bronze, wood and jutethread,  
13" x 17" x 15.5", 2013.

*Memoirs of a Cobbler* tackles ideas related to time and tradition. While the work could be read as an effort to give new meaning and urgency to an ancient craft practice within the context of migration and globalization, its true objective requires a deeper understanding of the artist.

Tiku studied stone carving, clay modelling and other traditional crafts at the Institute of Music and Fine Arts, Srinagar. His feelings about the dismal state of crafts in India are quite fathomable. In *Memoirs of a Cobbler*, the artisan is absent; he is present in his tools. The tools bear marks of the ravages of time. The work hints at a pair of old and tired, blackened hands, bearing scars. This artisan's hands have fought against the onslaught of industrialization and globalization and have lost the battle. *Memoirs of a Cobbler* immortalizes the craftsman who is a victim of the dementia that mankind suffers from in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

While Tiku's abstract expressionist creations explore the relationship between volume and space, they are firmly rooted in the landscape drawn from memory. The artist explains his creative process: "Verbalizing



**Rajendar Tiku,**  
*Extension of a Triangle,*  
bronze. 21.5" x 4.5" x 4", 2013.

sculpture is difficult, especially the kind where one does not have direct, particular and recognizable references. It is here that one needs to be more focused so as to arrive at a form that transcends its own material and dimensional limitations and attains a sufficient formal autonomy". *Extension of a Triangle*, for example, celebrates this aspect. With a complex vocabulary, developed over more than forty years, Tiku combines a range of materials and is able to lend to them, an unprecedented sensitivity. His works, often with hollow, smooth interiors and rough, jagged external surfaces with textures are quite sensuous.

The art of Rajendar Tiku is an attempt to reconcile the paradoxical relationship between contemporary expressive practices and the metaphysical modes of representing the past. Framing critiques of contemporary power structures, alienation and oppression, his works address themes of home, violence, social and political memory, displacement, longing and identity.

**(Shruthi Issac)**

**Date of program:** 25th October- 28th November 2017

**Venue of program:** Threshold Gallery, New Delhi, India

# A Letter from Bhopal



Raza Foundation and the journal Samas organized Raza lecture of the Hindi writer Dhruv Shukla on 22nd September 2017. Dhruv spoke on Adwait ka Vistar aur Samsar (The extant of Adwait and the World). Dhruv felt that the the insight of Adwait Vedant has played a key role in the lives of Indians for many centuries. Samas and foundation organized two lectures of great Hindi writer and scholar Wagish Shukla too on 18th and 21th November 2017. He spoke about the idea of Indian novel in general and on the novels of Amritlal Nagar in particular. His first lecture was on Indian novel where he engaged with a scintillating essay of Nirmal Verma. He spoke in detail about the emergence of novel in Europe with reference to the historical condition there. He was of opinion that the Indian novel will have to take a different form than that of European novel. In the second lecture Wagish spoke on three novels of Amritlal Nagar.

On 18th February 2018 Raza lecture was given by great Indian filmmaker Kumar Shahani on 'My life and Cinema'. In his lecture Kumar spoke on his long journey as a filmmaker. He said he had to wait for around 12 years for his second feature film after his film 'Mayadarpan'. Kumar showed few clipping of his two film, Char Adhyaya and Bamboo flute with his lecture.



His lecture was attended by a big number of young cineastes, writers, artists and theatre persons. There were lively discussions after every lecture mentioned above.

**(Udayan Vajpeyi)**

# Poetry of Doris Kareva

Translated from English version of the original verses  
in Estonian by Hindi Poet, by Hindi poet, Vishnu Khare

मेरे पिता के पिआनो पर  
जर्जाही का बारीक चाकू और ताल घड़ी  
अपने दरमियान एक चुप्पी रखते थे.  
जब मैं बच्ची थी.  
सिर्फ अब, इतने वक़्त के बाद,  
मैंने शुरू किया है  
सुनना, समझना  
उनकी अजीबोगरीब कहानियों को.  
ये वक़्त को एक विरले पतलेपन तक छील देते हैं.

जली हुई कविताएँ  
जीवित हैं तुम्हारे आसपास  
उनकी फुफुसाहट, सरसराहट, तिडकन  
साफ आवाज में कही गई एक बच्चे की प्रार्थना  
एक लम्बी भर्राई हुई पुकार  
मदद के वास्ते

जब मृत्यु का भय इतना विकट हो जाता है  
कि तुममें भागने की ताकत नहीं बचती  
तो तुम उससे मिलने अंधाधुंध दौड़ते हो.  
तुम गर्त में कूद पड़ते हो  
या चूल्हे में सिर दे देते हो  
या आने के आरपार.  
हर आदमी अपने तरीके के.  
सबसे भयानक गुरुत्वाकर्षण है  
भय.

हरवस्तु जिसकी तुम्हें जरूरत है  
इस या उस अवगुंठित रूप में आती है.

जब तुम उसे पहचान लेते हो  
वह तुम्हारी अपनी हो जाती है.  
हर वस्तु जिसे तुम चाहते हो तुम तक आती है,  
तुम्हें पहचान जाती है और तुम्हारा हिस्सा बन जाती है.  
गहरी साँस लो, दस तक गिनो.  
कीमत उजागर होगी  
बस तभी.

जो है वह अभिव्यक्त किया जा सकता है  
उस दूसरी भाषा में  
जिसे हम जन्म लेते समय भूल जाते हैं.  
फिर भी, कभी कभी कुछेक शब्द लौटते हैं दृ  
शायद सागर के किनारे टहलते हुए  
बगैर किसी विचार, बगैर किसी चिंता  
बगैर एक पैसा अपने खाते में ...  
पत्थर उन्हें बहुत धीरे बोलते हैं  
लेकिन बगैर किसी उच्चारण के.

मैं घंटों घंटों तक सुनती हूँ  
सागर के एकमात्र वाक्य को,  
सोचती हुई  
कि वह कैसे लिखा गया है.

याद दिलाना मुझे कैसा है जीवन  
स्मृति के बिना, आग के बिना दृ  
सुबह से पहले की गहरी बेहोशी में एक गुफा  
एक घाव जो दुखता नहीं है



हालाँकि सड़ता है.  
( एक निरर्थक मोलोक,हाँ,  
लेकिन सुव्यवस्थित. )

याद दिलाना मुझे कि मुक्त किया गया जीवन  
कभी तार्किक नहीं हो सकता.

मैंने यह सपने में देखा दृ शैतान  
तुम्हारी आवाज में बोल रहा था.रेंगते हुए विनाश के बीच  
खंडहरों के बीच उसने मुझे एक पात्र दिया,  
एककाँच का पात्र और कहा,"इसे थामो.  
इसमें मृत्यु है."

पक्षियों के मंत्रोच्चार दिन की कली को खोलते हैं.

एक लपक आनंद की तरह गहरी और सशक्त.  
एक उच्छ्वास  
धरती के वक्ष से  
वृक्षों की फुनगियों तक  
पत्तियों को घंटियों की तरह बजाता है.

कोमल,वायवीय उत्कृष्ट  
सुगंध उल्लास टपकाती हुई  
अभिलाषी अनुगूँज से भरी  
जैसे जल पर गिरजाघर की घंटी.

मेरे सपनों के बीच से दौड़ते हैं रेगिस्तान के कुत्ते  
हलके,तेज और चुपचाप  
ईश्वर की हवाओं की तरह य  
सुन्दर और राजसी,रात-दर-रात  
वे रपतार से बढ़े जाते हैं

मैं सूँघ लेती हूँ,बेशक मैं सूँघ लेती हूँ  
मेरा हृदय उनका आखेट है

मैं भला कैसे जान पाऊँगी परिपूर्णता  
यदि मैं स्वयं को रीतूँ नहीं  
रात-दर-रात,सुदूर,भुतहे  
रेगिस्तानी कुत्तों के विरुद्ध  
भागती दौड़ती

जब पतझड़ के बीच से मृत्यु तक  
जिया जा चुकेगा,वसंत आएगा,  
मुझे विश्वास है.

वे वृक्ष जो अभी हमारे दुःख पर निगरानी रख रहे हैं  
उजाले के चमत्कार के प्रति  
एक बार फिर खुलेंगे.

वहाँ उन बड़ी पत्तियों के तले  
हम फिर मिलेंगे  
मेरे प्यार.

**Date of program:** India International Centre (Annexe),  
New Delhi, India

**Venue of program:** 16th November 2017

# From a Pivotal Bindu to Candid Reflections along the Canvas

If the 'Bindu' series had come to gain a sort of centrality to S.H. Raza works, then the artist was also wary of the viewer easily categorising it simply as an expression of 'nostalgia'—of all things. To be wistful about his colourful past is something the late painter never wanted to be known for, also given his vulnerability to that reputation as a person living in another continent far away from his native place for decades together.

"It is not quite a question of nostalgia," notes the modern Indian artist, who ended up spending 57 years in Paris. "This ('Bindu') is a very deliberate and conscious attempt to go to my sources, as far as possible to my childhood," adds Raza (1922-2016) in one of his notes that begins with a 1981 Delhi landmark art event where he chose to exhibit two canvases. "In fact, one's whole life is formed in the first few years of one's experience," underscores Raza, who was born in wooded Babaria of what is today Narsinghpur district in Madhya Pradesh.

So, what is he trying to explain? Well, in a new book that compiles some of Raza's writings, the author unveils the evolution of the 'Bindu'. What's more, Raza drills deeper into its inspiration and subsequent evolution over time. The famed series, with a fascinating dot to each of its works, did stir up from a distinct slice of memory from his childhood, the artist reveals in *Seeing Beyond*, but to dub 'Bindu' as an expression of nostalgia would be outright simplification if not ludicrous misunderstanding of its nuances.

At the start of the 128-page book, which features his musings penned in English, Hindi and French, Raza recalls his primary-school days in a central-Indian village known for its wild vegetation along the banks of the Narmada. His headmaster, Nandlal Jhariya, found the boy a bad student but took to him kindly. "After the classes, he asked me to stay back. On the white wall of the verandah he drew a blank point, asked me to sit down and just look at this point. I was eight years old then and could not understand the motivations but I obeyed," Raza trails off.

Years later, "I realized that Panditji, as we called him lovingly, wanted to draw my wandering mind to a point, the bindu so important in Hindu Darshan, as a focal point of concentration, a concept which is steeped with potential and wisdom of generations.... The concept has pursued me as a lone star guiding me in life and my work as a painter all through my life."

Down the book (in portions where the reader feels the title is apt), the artist notes that 'Bindu' seemed to open up immense possibilities in terms of painting based on elementary geometric terms: the point, the circle, vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines, the triangle and the square. For Raza, "it opened a whole new vocabulary which corresponded, in a sense, to my training in Paris in formalism.

The first painting so realized was a dark black bindu with grey and white radiation around—within a square frame. In the centre of the circle were a vertical and a horizontal line. "That was the genesis. Slowly, colours started appearing—at first, rather dull, and later, more and more bright." In fact, it was his 1980 painting titled 'Bindu' (in what later began to churn a series) that Raza showed at Delhi in the Indian Triennale the following year.

In an equally interesting string of anecdotes, Padma Vibhushan Raza crisply explains how his quest for a certain stream of art took a dramatic U-turn in the second half of his career. "All my life I have been searching for the logic of Form for coherence in the elements of painting, which can be explained," he starts off. Only to say in the very next line: "Now I am inclined to think that there is no formal logic." As if in a continuing train of thought, he speaks of India's traditional 'ragamala' paintings where music and poetry perform an interplay that evokes a 'rasa' (emotion) that can set the mood of a time of day or of a season so as to be embodied in a painting.

In a pertinent slice of experience from his own contemporary life, Raza remembers a classical Indian dance he happened to see in the French capital that the artist had made his home. He calls the foot-beats of Kathak exponent Prerana Shrimali "perfect" as he watched them to the tabla rolls of wizard Zakir Hussain in a mid-1990s evening. "Even in the hall, I started thinking about paintings that might evoke thus experience. Later, reading texts, I came to realize that the sound that is heard and the bindu that is seen are almost identical entities."

Raza later conceived an expression of this synthesis of music, poetry and painting—on collaborating with Shrimali and writer-thinker Ashok Vajpeyi. That manifested as a programme called 'Reaching for Each

Other' and was presented in July 1995 at the Festival of Avignon in south-eastern France.

Vajpeyi, who today heads the Raza Foundation that has brought out this book, notes in the preface that the late artist had always asserted that he was not a man of words. Raza, being a painter, did speak through his brushstrokes, but then the texts culled from the Raza Archives also prove the artist was immensely capable—even poetic—in his expressions with the pen as well. That becomes obvious in the very first paragraph of Raza's first bit in *Seeing Beyond* that is a compilation of such writings. "The most vivid memory of my childhood is the fascination and the fear of the Indian forest," the artist jots down in 1965 in a note datelined Paris. "The nights were strange, hallucinating, where only sometimes the dances of the Gonds humanized the ambiance," he writes, referring to the local tribal people.

The book, which are handwritten replies to various interviews and texts (some undated) drafted on various art-related subjects, span for a good five decades from 1957. As Vajpeyi, also Raza's close friend, rightly observes they string together "a creative logbook of a master as he forges ahead in his artistic journey." From a bindu—a dot, in its general sense. From a countryside called Amarkantak, where, Raza notes, the day brought the sentiment of security and well-being. "Under a bright sun, the village was a feast of colours on the market day. And then came the night, with all the contrast, grimness and silence."

Notwithstanding his deep love for those splendid childhood days, Raza notes that France (where he spent two-third of his life though the initial plan was a stay of couple of years) provided him "evocative ambience, inspiring confidence in creativity and imagination, openness to ideas and innovation." Indeed, "More than anything else, France made me realise my Indian inheritance in colour and concepts that came alive through my art. Now at the age of 94, I owe a lot to France," he says in February 2016 on the occasion of his birthday that turned out to be his last.

For all his initial village days, Raza does candidly acknowledge the role of big cities in shaping up his perspective about art. Bombay, for one, was where he reached as a budding painter in nascent India. There, amid what "seemed forbidding with all its tall buildings, rush, noise and wealth", the metropolis also baffled him with the erudition of its intellectuals. "Each one appeared to advise, to offer ready-made solutions. Unread and naive, I could scarcely conceal my nervousness." Yet, Raza went on to become a core member of a collective of young painters impacted by French art and German expressionists even as Rajput and Jain paintings appeared more vital than the prestigious Mughal and Persian miniatures. Their Progressive Arts Group sensed dullness in the "insipid imitations of the realism of the European School". This was amid a "laudable" revivalism of the Bengal school, where only Rabindranath Tagore and Jamini Roy looked "meaningful".

Cut to 1952, and into his second year in Paris, Raza—with his Indian and French artist-friends—held their first group exhibition that also featured Akbar Padamsee and F.N. Souza. Raza wasn't contented, for "I was not in France to do Indian miniatures!" From there began his long journey of artistic exploration coupled with great self-realisation.

That trajectory least meant Raza had snapped ties with his motherland. The 1980s India, he notes, "is a flourishing period for artistic creation". All the same, the Lalit Kala Akademi was mired in an art-world of abundant "fractional fighting, arrogance, despotism and very little lucidity" that had cropped up during the country's first triennale in 1968.

Overall, *Seeing Beyond* comes up as an honest prism that tends to take a kaleidoscopic view of the Indian and European art scene over its defining period starting from the early 20th century to the one we live today.

**(Sreevalsan Thiyyadi)**

(The writer is a Delhi-based journalist with Outlook magazine.)



# A letter to Geysers

38, Lansdowne Crescent  
London, W11, 17th August 1949

My very dear friends, alphabetically, Ara, Bakre, Gade, Husain and Raza,

A man takes his character if he has any along, if he goes to any corner of the world, but he never leaves it behind nor loses it there. You must be awaiting this letter very eagerly. I was eagerly waiting to get to London. I had thought that life would change completely on arrival here. And imagining such glorious pictures of the future in the city of Dick Wittington, I had painted such pictures about the possibilities of Europe and the opportunities for artists here, that I was quite disappointed with many of my imagined hopes. Of course I have not much to say for the 10 days I have been here; but I have learnt that life in London is a luxurious commodity to sustain, and elements like water need pennies to be dropped in, and necessities like lavatories need pennies to be dropped in. I was very fortunate to have my good friend Alkazi with whom I could share lodgings otherwise I would get hopelessly into financial difficulties. So, eagerness is a liability. I have learnt my bitter lessons. He, who never hopes, can never despair. But the change in my plans of staying here for long is; on the whole, due to my passport being Portuguese. Such difficulties will not arise in any of your cases, because you will have Indian passports, and Commonwealth citizens have more advantages. It may even be more difficult for my wife to get here, on whose earnings; I was depending after my mother's money which I will have exhausted in about a few months. But I can't say about Maria yet. She may get here. There is always a loophole somewhere...if she is clever, or if I am lucky. She must get here anyhow, or I will be back there anyhow!

I had come with many preconceived notions, practically all of which have been shattered. First and foremost I had supposed that all painting materials, canvases and pencils, and papers would be cheaper here than in Bombay. Therefore, I had planned to do a lot of work here. But my dear fellows, all the stories of artists starving and painting I feel are strange, because one can neither starve here since it is so cold and the metabolism over proteins works faster, that one must eat or die. There is no middle-way starvation. And one can't paint because color and canvas costs more than food. But Europe changed a great deal after this war, for the worse. Each nation is struggling to keep itself together. One of the means is to exploit the foreigner.

All the art dealers are racketeers. More and more books on Picasso and the same 60 year old Paris School, Matisse, Derain, etc round and round about, until I get disgusted. The younger painters are not given a chance. I have yet to confirm this but I don't see any new painter in all the latest art books I have seen here, nor any young painter exhibited in the numerous galleries. There are a few however who are lost side by side with the same old Picasso's, Matisse's and Derain's; which catch the eye because they have been previously widely reproduced.

I do wish to exhibit here anyhow, even if it is only one exhibition which I know will be lost in this great city. I have started painting. Plywood is impossible to get. All wood is exported. I have bought two bits of compressed cardboard for which I paid 8 shillings! More than I paid for the large plywood on which I had painted myself-portrait in Bombay. I have done some watercolors too. But the ordinary sheet of cartridge paper costs 6 pence.

Rent of the room is the greatest problem, nearly Rs 100 a month, which is considered

cheap!!! Yesterday I went to see the Tate Gallery, and it cost me 8 shillings for bus fare, lunch and entrance fee. 8 shillings is about Rs.6.

But with all this tragic rumination over money, I am glad I did get a chance of seeing this side of the world which seems so enchanting from where you are. And I would have always had a corroding regret if I had never taken the risk and seen Europe. You must do the same, all of you. It is worthwhile even for three months. What I have seen in a week, you will never see in all your life in Bombay. And knowledge of how the old masters applied the paints can never be got by seeing reproductions. I have seen six Rembrandts, which gave me an immense joy and understanding, which I didn't get by examining 600 of his reproductions in books. The museums are simply wonderful... how excited Maqbool, Ara, Bakre and I had got over the Baroda Museum, remember? The Baroda Museum is not even the backyard of one of these, to say nothing of our Bombay one. So all the money you can manage to secure is worth trying to get here. The experience is unexplainable.

However, it was a fallacy of mine to think of settling here. Even if I had the money I would never had done so, although I was determined never to return to India. Strange though on arrival I had an acute nostalgia for my birthplace 5,360 miles away, GOA. I felt like an extremely lonely man here. I felt I should have never come. But all this home sickness is slowly disappearing as I am getting used to my exiled surrounding. Goa has always an attraction for me despite the fact that I could never live there for over a couple of months without getting bored.

I remember Leyden's words vividly."You artists are lucky here...In Europe the painters are struggling for existence, and have to take up other work to maintain themselves." But every oriental painter must see Western masterpieces in the original, just as every occidental painter is acquainted with Eastern Art. The reason why European painters don't visit India to study its arts is because the best representative collections of Indian painting and sculptures are in their own museums in Europe.

I have not met any young painters yet and I don't think our hypothesis of forming an international Group will materialize. But I would like suggestions from you. I must have your collective advice. Meet and decide. Are you all coming here? I know that all cannot come together because of different financial circumstances. Maqbool is most certain. In one letter I am informed that he is coming in October. In another that he is coming in December 1949 but that he wants to hold an exhibition in March 1950! I am sure that Ara will be here before anybody else.

It is much, very much cheaper living more than a person. But the rooms here are usually small, for one or two persons and housing shortage is due to the bombdamaged houses. The rooms are small because it is difficult to warm a big room in winter and according to the health regulations, not more than one or two can stay in such rooms.

What are the future activities of our Group? I think you could work on an idea I have. My mother has a small room on Hornby Road, which I think can be converted into a suitable art salon. Of course if we were six together we could conduct art classes there which could bring us quite a sum of money in fees...but I am not sure of such vague propositions and I have always failed in the activities I have undertaken. But you must keep the group going. We had wanted to change its name. Why not call ourselves "The Progs" (rhymes with Frogs) as Simon Pereira labeled us. Were not the modern school of Paris painters called "Fauves" or the "wild beasts" in derision and mockery by a journalist, and then did they not take this name for themselves in pride and make it famous? But of course Vauxcelles who invented the terms "Fauves" and "Cubism" was a much clever man than Pereira.

The exhibition of the Vienna Masterpieces at the Tate Gallery was superb. Tintoretto's "Susanna and the Elders" affected me very much and the three self portraits of Rembrandt. I did not like Rubens much. Titian I liked too. Last night I went to the Open air Theatre at Regent Park, playing Goethe's "Faust". The theatre is situated in a garden, and the atmosphere is more pleasant than a built theatre. I also saw a few plays performed in the beautiful little theatres here: "Tobacco Road" and "The Death of a Salesman" in which Paul Muni acts in person. But for the most part, I am at home cooking and washing and reading

and painting. Roshen i.e. Mrs. Alkazi does the cooking mostly, and alternately Elk i.e. Mr. Alkazi does the washing. But I have to do the reading and painting myself. No one can help me at that. "Landsdowne Crescent" is a very very quite part of London suburb and I can't imagine that I am in London when I am in my room. But the Great City is bustling away in the distance.

Sunday 21st August

I have not posted this letter because I wanted to write more in it. I met three painters. They came to see my works. They liked my stuff. Then I went to their studio. They paint more or less like Robert Colquhoun (pronounced: Cokoon) whose work you must have seen reproduced sometime. But I don't much like the three dauber's works, although Colquhoun is good. Imitations are always bad. But the three guys gave me a tip or two on art-dealers; they charge 33% commission on sales!!! Framing is a terrible nightmare, they said. One of the three painters has three children and his thin shrunk wife is expecting a fourth. He has taken in the two others because they had been haunted by their landlords for rent, their whole day is spent doing I know not what, because only one at a time can paint in their small room. The night is looked forward to eagerly to chat in a pub over a drink they can manage to draw, from anybody. They live in more misery than anyone of us did in Bombay. We have invited them for dinner sometime this week. Ara for instance, lives like a prince compared to these poor fellows.

Did the Bombay Art Society hold its Poona Exhibition? When is Husain going to have his one-man-show? And Ara and Raza? Is Bakre working on the small sculpture pieces with as much enthusiasm as he did for the P.A.G Exhibition? And is Gade thinking of touring India?

I can't say how long I shall remain here, but most probably I shall return to India by next year if my wife finds it impossible to get a Visa, because my stay in Europe depends entirely on her coming here.

I was much intrigued with Bakre's "letter" which he gave me only to be opened on board-the-ship. But I must say to him that I am not as lucky as Columbus, and that the formation of the International Group was a mere dream. I have not met any sculptors yet, I do intend to inquire about Bakre, and I shall also write to him a letter, but at a later date when I am more informed about the sculpture here.

Raza's letter was full of kindness. Thank you very much for it. I have a true friend in you. What about your French scholarship? Try very hard for it. It is no use coming on your own, unless you make a lot of money on your exhibition i.e. if you want to stay in Europe for at least three years.

I was very much touched reading Maqbool's letter. Such a small piece of paper, and stamped with 12 annas postage. You could have written double that on an air-letter paper costing 6 annas. However, thank you very much for your letter, my best friend. I have not much to spend or I would have written to you separately, I hope your wife and children are well. You must have painted a few canvases during the past month, yes?

You will be surprised, but I feel very dull here.... Perhaps it is because I am just new to the place. But Kekoo Gandhi had warned me about London being very dull in the beginning; and then later one comes to love it. One of the most interesting places here is the Hyde Park, where "orators" speak on all subjects and lovers make love in open air.

Don't think I have been discouraging. You must all come at all costs. My disappointment is due to my passport. It is stamped on my passport that I should not engage in any profession, that is, if I have to exhibition my work, it is not as simple as in Hebbar's case. I have to get a permit from the Secretary of State and you know how odious it is to deal with Government servants. But none of you will have such passport troubles as I have. You are all very lucky.

With my love dear friends,  
Yours. Newton  
P.S- Meet, and write me a joint letter.



15/07/1985

When you showed me, on the big white walls of your atelier, your last paintings, each one creating within itself, a space of rare density, I was tempted to answer that they invited more silent meditation and that the writing would not added anymore to the eye.

But, since your exhibition today, responds, to fifteen years of silence, of courageous solitude, of research without compromise and all this in the middle of Paris where so many artists play the role of wanderers, how can one not call attention to your rigueur: a requirement amongst artist that is very rare to find.

Between the Indian term used to indicate the musical note Raga and your name, only a letter differs. But the analogy exceeds euphony. A raga starts slowly. The given keynote, instruments testing themselves to the range until appears, through the attack and the melody, the theme around which, like the world around its axis, all the pieces will deploy their variations. If we transpose the sounds into colors, the harmonies into forms, we see the birth of your paintings.

This is what one could call the path to immersion. But it is in your approach, another complementary path: that of the expansion starting from a central point: expands, germinates, energy first. One thinks of the beginning of the world, not of the initial "bang" but with of the cosmological process, danced perfectly by the Gods.

To look at the results of these two paths, to follow though time, the unfolding, one is struck by the use of the forms: a circle inscribed in a square, four rectangles encircling a black disc, a checker work of triangles between two oblique rays. But each form, each piece is nourished with vibrations, echoes, experiences and understanding.

Whereas our time often combines austerity and geometry, the one, here with you is the showcase of the perceptible, the sound board of the lived.

But it is now the time to keep silent and to look.

Jean Rey Dominique

# Progressive Artist Group



“We were in the full bloom of youth and energy when the country won its independence in 1947. It was a period of immense changes and they affected us intensely. After a triumphant movement of non-violence, quite unique in history, violence erupted again, choking the enthusiasm inspired by national liberation. We lived through many tragic events then, especially the outbreak of communal frenzy and above all, the assassination of Gandhiji. Overnight, everything appeared dark, despairing and empty.

Gradually, we emerged from the void. Gandhiji’s example, his thoughts and actions, has an electrifying effect. For as long as we could remember, we had lived our daily problems with resignation. Now we wanted to understand the forces that shaped us, the destiny that was to be ours. There began a restless period of enquiry into our values, our culture, our art, our life itself. And Bombay offered us its hidden resources.

The city seemed forbidding with its tall buildings, rush, noise and wealth. The erudition of intellectuals, in particular baffled me. Each one appeared to advise, to offer ready-made solutions. Unread and naïve, I could scarcely conceal my nervousness. Yet, I was attentive and determined. I made a discreet entry as an art student. I needed time to understand, to assimilate.

Bought up as I was in the natural reserves of the forests of Madhya Pradesh, I was still living their rhythm. Education in village schools, with teachers wise like rishis, and parental love and discipline at home, has given me oneness of purpose, faith and a sense of direction. From Idjtihad to Bindu was the same lesson: a personal effort towards concentration and reflection.

But there was a radical change of place and climate, of themes and means. Adaptation was not easy. I found it difficult to shift from manushya bodha to the complexities of psychology and psycho-analysis, from religious faith to dialectical materialism, from evolutionary change to a revolutionary one, from folk art and popular imagery to the new trends in modern painting and sculpture. There was much to learn from the rationality then projected on every aspect of family, society, economy and politics, religion and art. These were exciting days and I went from discovery to discovery, open-minded and unbiased, inquiring, yet bent on reaching my own conclusions.

There was a growing effervescence in Bombay’s art world in those days. Many ideas were in the air and these were shared by several painters in the city, working even in isolation. Some had left discouraged, others had come from different parts of the country with their won individual temperaments and obsessions. They aimed at a new and vital expression in art.

Contemporary French art and the German Expressionists had made a strong impact on us. Rajput and Jain paintings Group portrait of artists gathered at Raza’s exhibition in Bombay, 1948, including, from left: Raza, F.N. Souza, Gaitonde, K.H. Ara, M.F. Husain and Tyeb Mehta. 16 17 appeared more vital than the prestigious Mughal and Persian miniatures. We began to realize that the relevance of painting was not only in the subject or theme, but in a newly perceived formal order and colour orchestration. The insipid imitations of the realism of the European school seemed dull and unconvincing even when the themes were religious. At the same time, the revivalist movement of the Bengal school, despite the laudable efforts to instill an awareness of our cultural heritage, seemed to produce ‘literary’ works, sentimental and delicate, unresponsive to the pace and anguish of our times. Only Rabindranath Tagore’s work revealed a distinctly pictorial approach. Jamini Roy too brought about a meaningful revival of

folk art. But it was Amrita Sher-Gil who emerged as the most significant painter of those years. Alas, she died at the age of twenty-eight, in December 1941.

It is in this context that we met in Bombay during the years 1947 to 1950 and formed the Progressive Artists Group with six founder members: F.N Souza, M.F Husain, K.H Ara, H.A. Gade, S.K. Bakre and myself. Francis Newton Souza was the secretary of this group and wrote our manifesto on the occasion of our first collective exhibition. This was opened by Dr. Mulk Raj Anand in July 1948 and was well attended. It received both warm appreciation and adverse criticism.

No one was indifferent. The art lovers lamented the lack of patronage for the arts. Intellectuals propounded elaborate aesthetic theories. Patriots decried modern art! On the other hand, a few art critics and genuine art lovers, both Indian and European, recognized the dynamism of this new beginning and gave us whole-hearted support. The event could no longer be ignored and the group had to be reckoned with as a force.

Our research continued. We launched into a period of intense study and work and held our exhibitions in Bombay and in almost all the big cities in India. Two major exhibitions stirred us greatly then. The first was a vast exhibition of ancient Indian art in Delhi. Once again, the vitality of our sculpture and painting was brought home to us.

The other exhibition consisted of large prints of modern French painters, presented by the French Consulate in Bombay-exposing us to the works of Braque, Rouault and Matisse. Irving Stone's *Lust for Life* revealed the passionate life of Vincent Van Gogh. We were seized by the desire to see the original works in international art centres, and ultimately some of us left for Europe. Krishen Khanna, Gaitonde and Samant joined us to enlarge the group. We kept in touch with each other; our being abroad was no handicap. On the contrary, the first success and recognition achieved in Paris or *Three Women* | Watercolor on Paper | 1940 18 19 London only confirmed the validity of our work and opened new horizons to contemporary Indian painting.



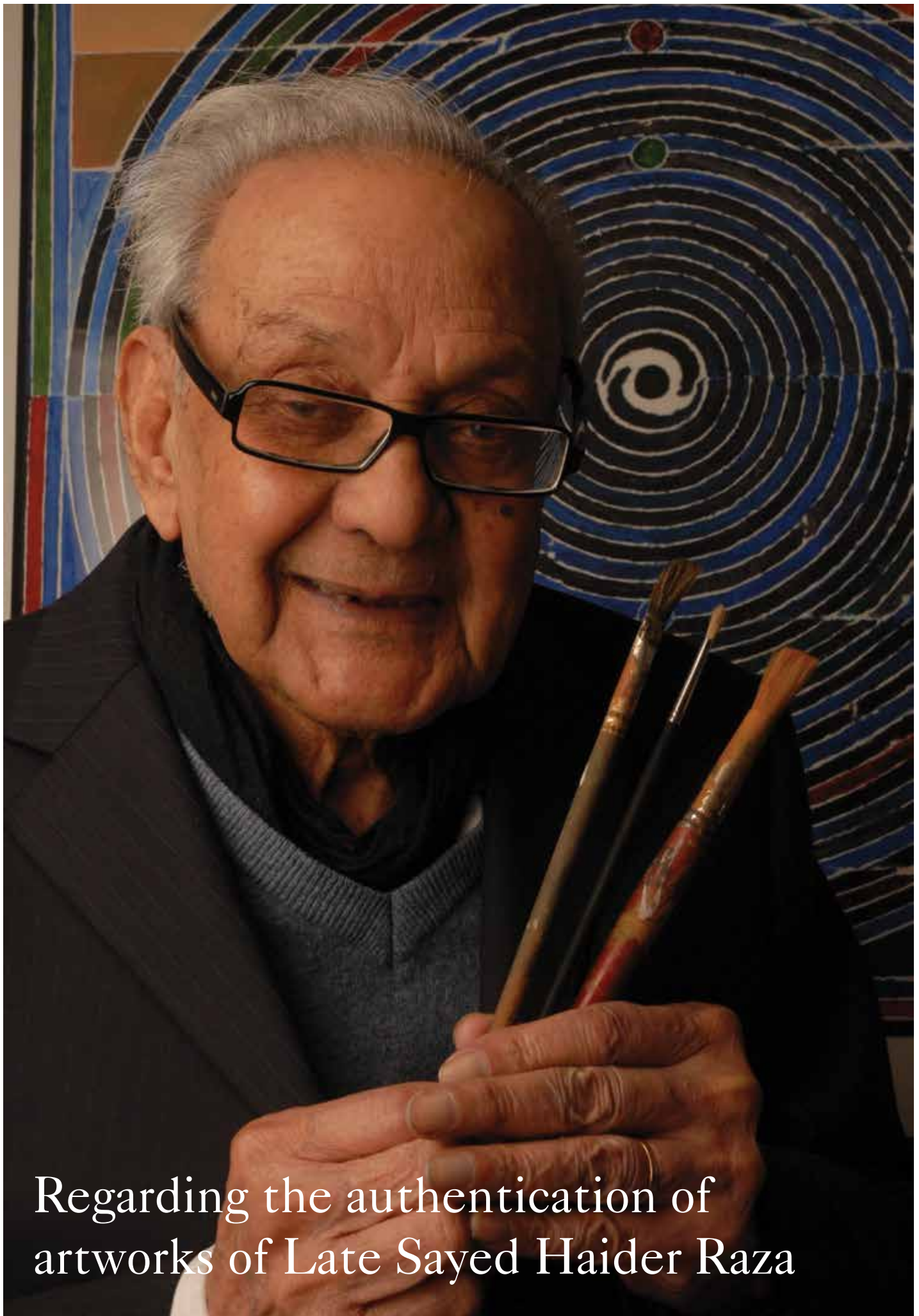
In all artistic endeavors at some point, the artist is eventually alone. The fraternal association, the analysis and exchange of views, so necessary in the formative stage, becomes redundant. An inner dialogue begins. With time, almost every member of the group responded to his own personal yearnings, impulses and intuitions, and followed his own distinct path. The group has outlived its purpose and by mutual agreement it was dissolved in 1956.

My stay in Bombay during the years 1943-50 was indeed for me a great experience, both as a man and as an artist. Away from my family and completely independent, I faced the hard realities of everyday living. As a painter, for the first time, I was confronted with the real problems of art and culture. In retrospect, the only merit I can claim is that I was possessed with a burning desire to learn and a determination to find solutions to my problems.

Bombay was generous and I must acknowledge with gratitude the assistance and encouragement given to me during the seven years-the most important formative period of my life-by my teachers, friends, art lovers, institutions and the government."

**(S. H Raza)**





Regarding the authentication of artworks of Late Sayed Haider Raza

The issue of authentication of the works of Shri Sayed Haider Raza needs some clarification especially since there have been, unfortunately, some rumors and deliberately engineered misinformation spreading around.

Firstly, as long as Shri Raza was alive i.e. till 23rd July 2016, he was the sole person, the artist himself who was legally and morally authorized to authenticate his works. This he was doing to the best of his abilities and in keeping with his perception, vision and memory.

Secondly, while Shri Raza was alive and even after his sad demise, the Raza Foundation has not issued a single authenticity certificate to any person or institution about any work of Shri Raza. If any such certificate to any person has been presented or shown or used in any transaction, it is completely fake, unauthorized, illegal and unethical.

Thirdly, during his life time, the Raza Foundation had neither the authority nor any need to do anything with Shri Raza as a painter. The two were distinctly separate. No doubt Shri Raza had founded this non-profit trust, the Raza Foundation and exclusively funded it from his personal income but he did not use nor allowed the Raza Foundation to do anything by way of projection and promotion of his work as an artist. It was absolutely clear that the Raza Foundation was meant for others.

The building that he bought with his money in Safdarjung Development Area, New Delhi was registered in the name of the Raza Foundation and when in 2010 he came to live in Delhi and India in a part of his house, he started paying a monthly rent to the Raza Foundation. Some books published on behalf of the Raza Foundation on Raza including the correspondence with other artists, his notes, etc have all been funded by Vadehra Art Gallery and not by the Raza Foundation.

Fourthly, Raza Saheb authorized the Raza Foundation, in writing the full copyright of his works to the Raza Foundation.

*"I hereby authorize the Raza Foundation to hold copyright of all my works throughout the world. This authorization supercedes, cancel and overrides any other previous authorization that the sole and exclusive holder of the copyright of all my works anywhere in the world is now the Raza Foundation and no other person or body anywhere would be entitled to dispute this in any manner. I am assigning copyright of all my works to the Raza Foundation out of my own free will and with full faith in the Raza Foundation, a charitable trust I have founded, funded and run with many friends for nearly 15 years."*

Fifthly, in his registered will, he bequeathed all his movable and immovable properties to the Raza Foundation:

*"I also bequeath & Will all my other belongings, property (movable and immovable) materials leftovers, furniture, money, artworks (original and prints) etc exclusively to the Raza Foundation and wish to do so without any encumbrance or hindrance in such gift that I make to the Raza Foundation. I wish to state clearly that, none of my distant relative nor my adopted daughter Devina Rughobar, who resides in Paris, shall have any right or claim on any ground whatsoever to any of my personal belongings, materials leftovers, furniture, money, artworks (original & prints). I further wish to clarify that,*

*This is my first and the only Will and I wish to state categorically that I have executed no other Will. In the event any other Will is found to be in existence, the same shall stand superseded by this registered Deed of Will, which I have executed with full mental capacity, without any influence, coercion or any allurements or any pressure and out of my own free will and desire."*

Sixthly, the Raza Foundation now as the sole heir of Shri Raza, considers its moral duty to now set up a transparent procedure for authentication of his works. Consultations with experts, including legal are on and soon the procedure would be publically announced. Thereafter, all requests for authentication would be dealt with by the Raza Foundation in a transparent manner.

# Another Master and other matters

## I

With the sad demise of Ram Kumar it seems the galaxy of moderns is coming to a close. They were true masters who not only innovated, found new ways to explore visuality and reality and, importantly, open the doors for daring and imaginative leaps for the later generation.

Ram Kumar was perhaps the quietest of the moderns. He neither wrote about his art and vision extensively nor felt it was required. For him art was enough and must have the power and skill to communicate itself. He conserved all his energy and time for his calling which was art. Like other moderns. He neither wrote about his art and vision extensively nor felt it was required. For him art was enough and must have the power and skill to communicate itself. He conserved all his energy and time for his calling which was art. Like other modern colleagues he had beginnings in hard circumstances but his determination to paint and be an artist remained undeterred all his life. From early figurative of lone and forlorn humans, Ram Kumar turned to landscapes which also became, in diverse ways, instances. In an age of overstatement everywhere and almost in all forms of articulation, Ram Kumar became and remained, vitally and powerfully, a painter of understatement.

In some ways a painter of silence who was always reticent to say more than the minimal when it suits him in furious, passionate and vibrant colours. But he desists from overloading his shapes and hues with too much meaning. He tended to believe a painting should not mean; it should just be.

Ram Kumar was a close friend of Raza Saheb. Way back in 1950 he had received Raza at Gare du Nord station when Raza first landed in Paris. They were living next doors for a while in Paris. In 1980 Ram wrote to Raza: "... After you left, there was a sort of vacuum which I had not realized while you were in Delhi. During last few years, we have come very close especially after your visits to India and mine to Paris in 1980 and 1985. You seem to be an integral part of our existence in spite of distance.' When Raza shifted to Delhi in 2011, Ram and Raza used to meet once in every few months. Sometimes, they would sit quietly without uttering a word!

It was a dialogue in silence with both holding wine glasses. Raza would take care to send to Ram's place a bottle of red wine on his birthday without fail. Hopefully, up there in some heaven the two friends, must now be sitting together quietly with all words finally becoming unnecessary.

## II

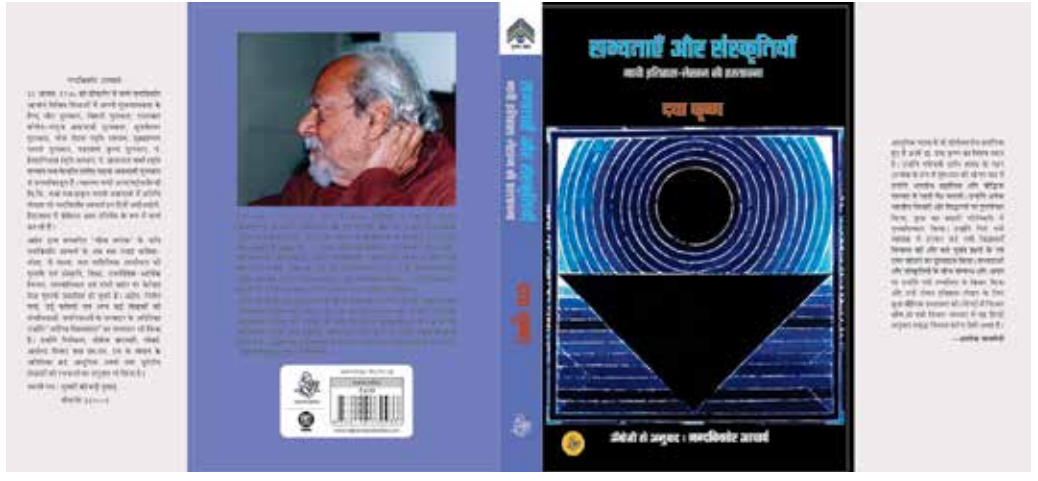
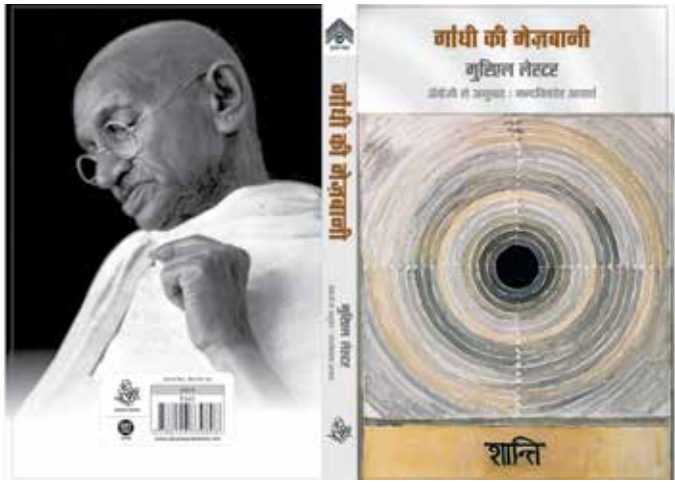
It would seem that our times have started practicing many form of violence: from domestic to communal, from spiritual to physical, from religions to caste-ridden. Violence is appearing to have become a new civic style of expression, assertion and intimidation. In such an ethos arts appear marginal since they are deeply embedded and rooted in dialogue and immanence, in plurality and acceptance, interrogation and empathy. They are in essence and implication non-violent. But in such murderous times they can, from the margins may be, perform the role of both witness and conscience-keeper. A role which requires both courage and innovativeness. The arts also provide a vibrant site for self-introspection and self criticism. In an increasingly inhuman frenzy, the arts provide an interim place for self reflection above and beyond the dichotomies of 'us' and 'others'. A human moment when the experience of being human in spite of all the difficulties and impediments can be quietly asserted and explored.

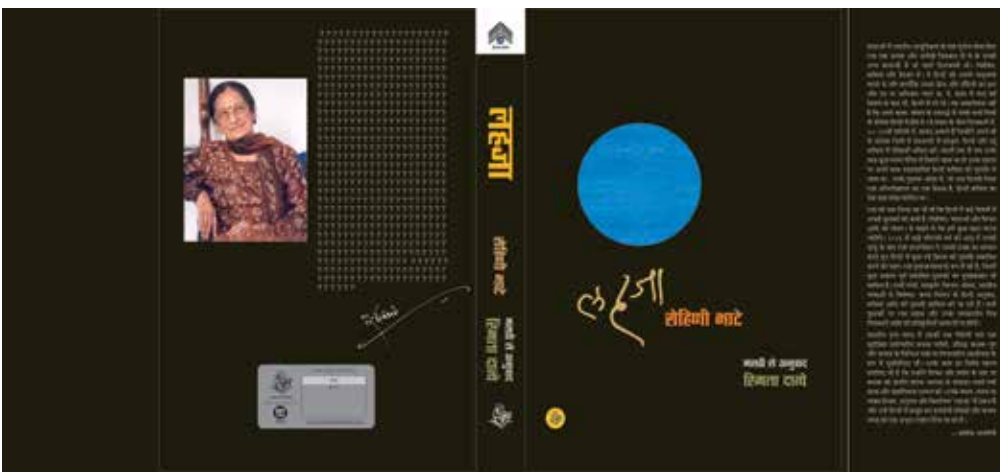
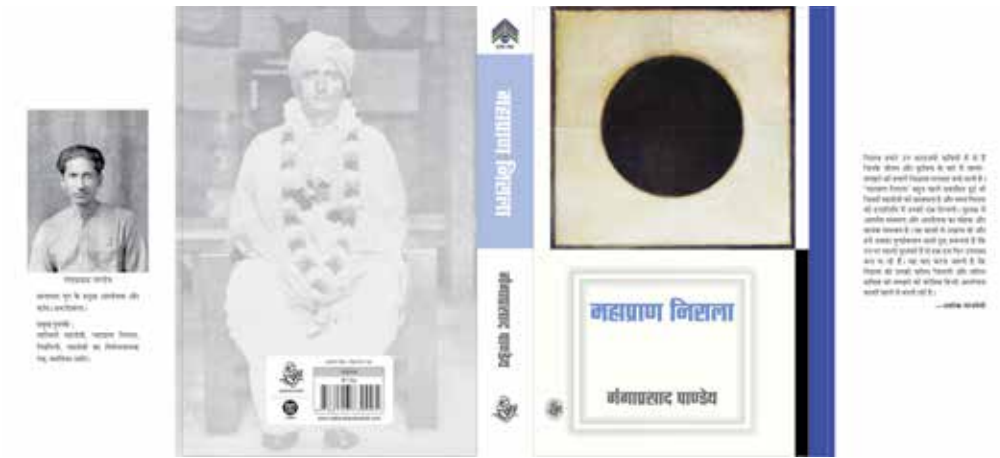
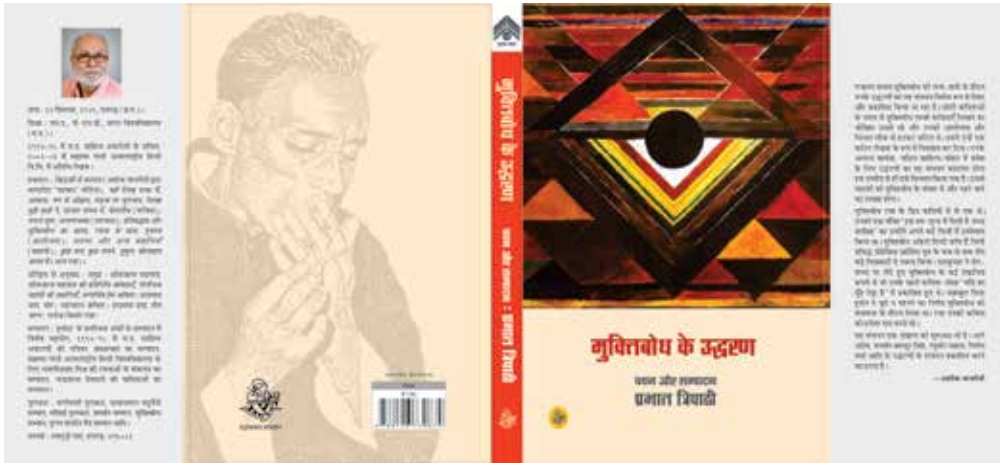
The arts cannot and fortunately do not step aside while the killing and crushing juggernaut of violence, untruth and amnesia comes amidst popular cheers. They watch, register, question and dissent. Yes, there are in the creative community who out of cowardice or willed complicity keep silent. But there are numerous others who speak in arts and public spheres. The arts today constitute a kind of civil disobedience of daily violence which seems to have acquired popular support though it cannot claim any legal justification or moral defense. In such times which are well set to dehumanize or cause severe deficit in our shared humanity, arts assume perhaps a new civic role, that of conscience and humanness. They remind us that the world, inspite of numerous assaults on its ecological and moral existence, remains beautiful and that we have enough beauty of all kinds and truths of noble variety to celebrate and rejoice in.

We, in the Raza Foundation, believe in the humanizing and civilizing function of arts and endeavor to promote them within our limited means. The truth of arts in difficult to grasp but once grasped it is equally difficult to lose it.

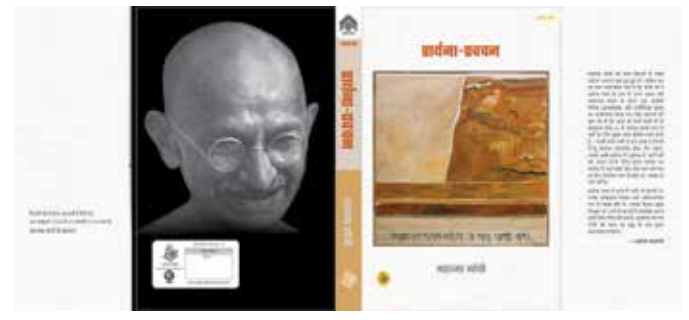
**(Ashok Vajpeyi)**











## रजा पुस्तक माला की 12 किताबों का विमोचन

**Delhi @** रजा फाउंडेशन और राजकमल प्रकाशन द्वारा 'रजा पुस्तक माला' के पहले सेट में 12 किताबों का विमोचन किया गया। जिसमें 'धूल की जगह', 'मुक्तिबोध के उद्धरण', 'टेबले लेम्प', 'खुद से कई सवाल', 'आवाज में झरकर', 'परस्पर', 'अंत और आरम्भ', 'प्रार्थना प्रवचन' खंड 1 और 2 और 'गाँधी की मेजबानी' थी। यहां लेखक व

## रजा पुस्तक माला के तहत 12 पुस्तकों का लोकार्पण

रजा पुस्तक माला के तहत 12 पुस्तकों का लोकार्पण किया गया। इस अवसर पर राजकमल प्रकाशन के अध्यक्ष डॉ. राजकमल कुमार और रजा फाउंडेशन के अध्यक्ष डॉ. रजनीव कुमार ने पुस्तकों का विमोचन किया।

पुस्तक माला के तहत 12 पुस्तकों का लोकार्पण किया गया। इस अवसर पर राजकमल प्रकाशन के अध्यक्ष डॉ. राजकमल कुमार और रजा फाउंडेशन के अध्यक्ष डॉ. रजनीव कुमार ने पुस्तकों का विमोचन किया।

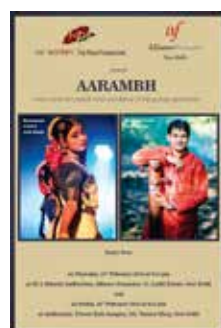
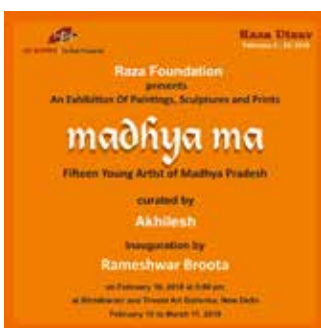
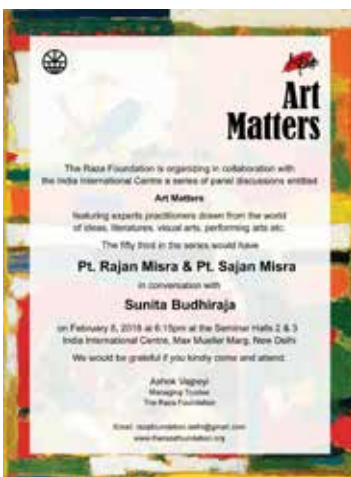
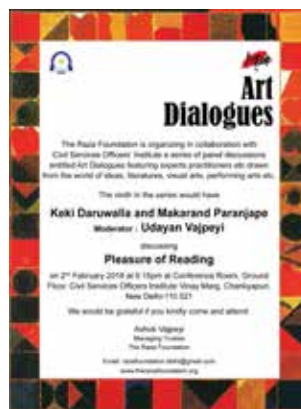
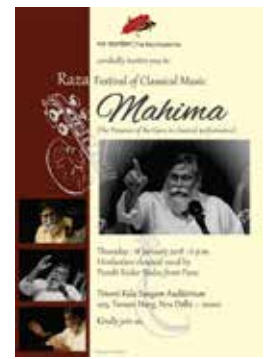
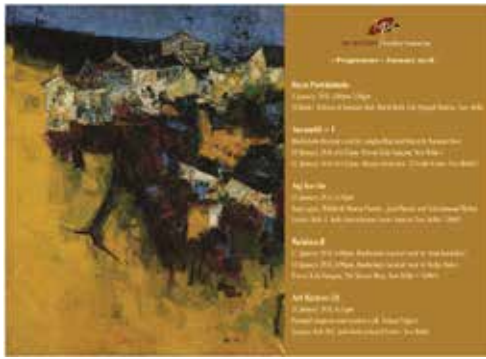
**Date of program:** 8 January 2018  
**Venue of program:** World Book Fair, Pragati Maidan, Delhi, India



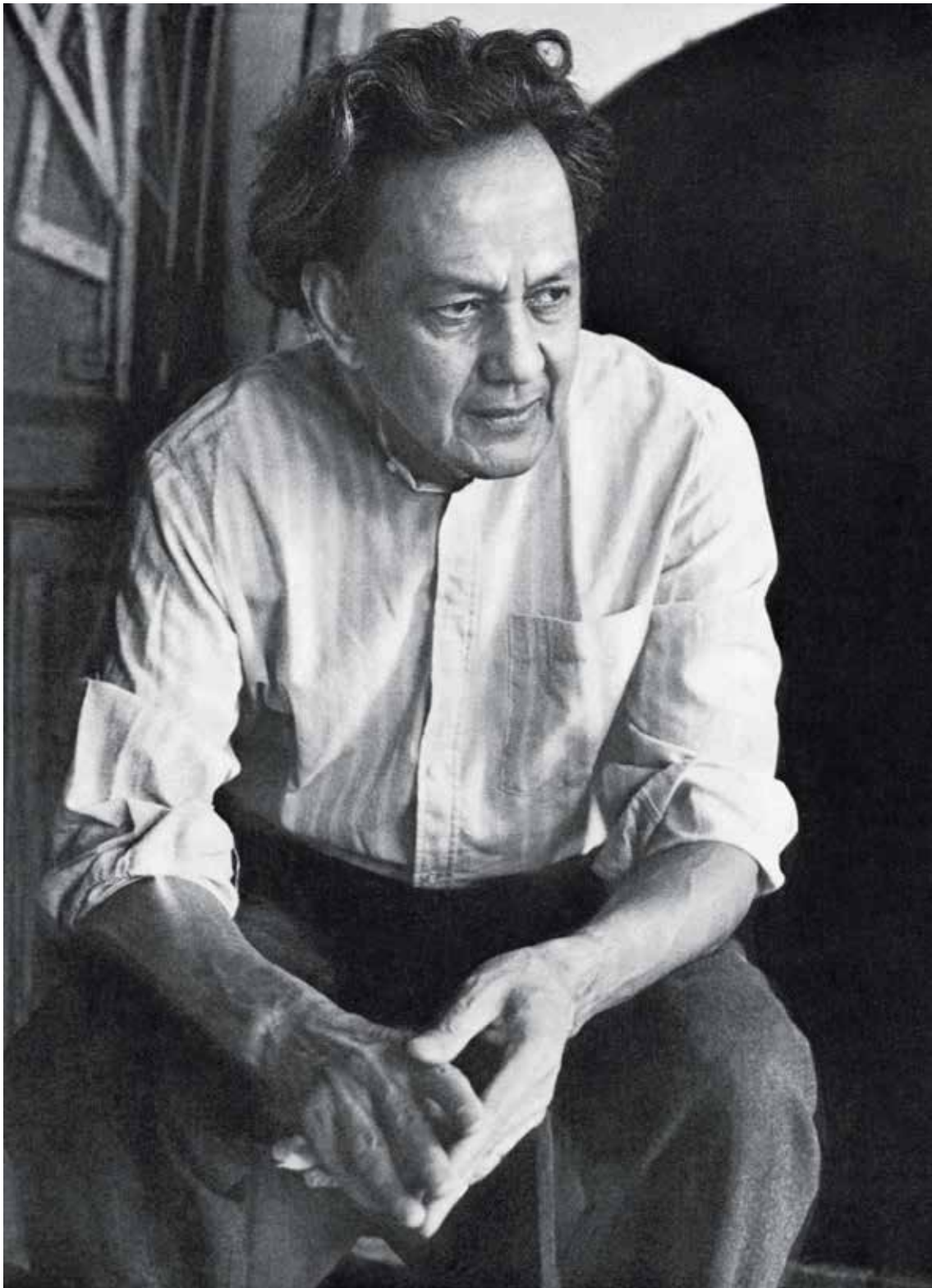












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राजा फाउंडेशन | THE RAZA FOUNDATION

### About the Raza Foundation

Raza Foundation is an arts and culture organization created by the Indian artist, Late Sayed Haider Raza who set an example that fame and glory are not lonesome attainments but things to be liberally shared with the broader creative community. The Foundation has been instrumental in creating spaces for various art and culture programs, publications and fellowships to the younger talent and also carrying a deeper research into the work of the masters.