Sayed Haider Raza was one of the greatest Indian painters of Modern Indian art. Majority of his life was spent in France, where, he also met his wife Janine Mongillat who was a fellow art student with him. He was born on 22nd February, 1922, to Sayed Mohammad Razi and Tahira Begum in Babaria, Narsinghpur district of Madhya Pradesh and it was here where he did his formal schooling. He moved on to Nagpur School of Art and later on to Sir J. J. School of Art, Bombay. Sayed Haider Raza was also the founding member of the Bombay Progressive Group.

As a young boy who grew up reading the Bhagavad Gita and Ramayana, one can see the inspiration and ideas in his works. Once when he was in school, his teacher asked him to stare at the bindu/dot drawn at the white wall to check his restlessness and this exercise stayed with him, which later on became a dominant design in his works. His love for art started early at the age of 12. He moved to Paris in 1950 after securing a French government scholarship and went on to study at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts from 1950-1953. It was here where he perfected his understanding of form and
Paris was his home until his wife died and later moved back to Delhi. He also travelled across Europe and exhibited his works.

His drawings are created from memories of his childhood spent in the forest and inspired by Indian metaphysical thought. He drew of landscapes and geometric representation of French buildings and later on blurred lines and bright colours began to dominate his works. His signature style involved the use of the bindu, or dot, which signifies the One as well as the infinite in Hindu philosophy. A typical painting of S. H. Raza would be the use of heaps of colours in concentrated circles that would brighten up any gloomy room. He explored the themes of prakriti (nature), kundalini (primal energy) and tribhuj (triangle) for his work and also experimented with the western modernism. His interest in abstract form of art had put him in league with the European artists.

Syed Haider Raza, had his first solo show in 1946 at Bombay Art Society Salon, and was awarded the Silver Medal of the society. He was awarded the Padma Shri and Fellowship of the Lalit Kala Akademi in 1981, the Padma Bhushan in 2007 and the Padma Vibhushan in 2013. Raza's work on pictorial research won him the Prix de la Critique in 1956 and he was conferred the Commandeur de la Legion d'Honneur, the highest French honour for his artistic contributions in 2015.

He was a man who popularized the Indian concepts and iconography not only in India but also in Europe through his work. He passed away at the age of 94 due to prolonged illness on 23rd July, 2016. His paintings
were exhibited in individual exhibitions as well as in collaboration with other artists here in India as well as in other parts of the world. He is one of the greatest known contemporary modern Indian painters and also one of the highest selling India artists.

**Activity-**

1) Can you draw a picture drawing inspiration from your childhood/surroundings with a wonderful message in it as to why it inspired you?
2) Find out some museums or art galleries where one can find modern art? What kinds of materials are used by modern art painters to draw?

References:

http://www.contemporaryindianart.com/sayed_haider_raza.htm

http://www.saffronart.com/artists/sh-raza