

Canvas of love

Artist Syed Thajudeen's 'Love and its Many Splendoured Images' exhibition is a repertoire of luminous colours, soft forms and curvilinear lines. **OOI KOK CHUEN** writes.

LOVE is in the air again in Syed Thajudeen's *Love and its Many Splendoured Images*. In his never-ending story of love, lovers flirt, hug, kiss and exchange endearments bathed in the honey-combed yellow glow of the moon.

In the skilled brushes of this incorrigible romantic, the joy and ecstasy of togetherness, longing and consummation are heady canvas Viagra, what more couched in the garden enclave of dance icon Ramli Ibrahim's Sutra Dance Theatre.

When night comes, you half expect apparitions of *apsaras* to appear and prance around the sunken "stage" and tiptoe into the Sutra Gallery confines where Syed Thajudeen's oil canvases on the walls relive the therapeutic elixir of the *Kamasutra*. Vatsyayana's 4th-century tome on love and sexuality. There and then, they seem like gentle reminders of human needs, desires and expressions.

"Love is an everlasting matter. Love is like yoga — you won't get tired, but it's good for blood circulation," preaches the 61-year-old with messianic fervour.

Such choking, gushing profusion of love combine the integrated elements notable of Indian arts, fusing dance, drama, music and art, for a fulsome, wholesome appreciation and experience.

The languid lines have become finer, the expressiveness and gestures more explicit and assertive, the



'JOY OF BEING TOGETHER II': A painting by Syed Thajudeen

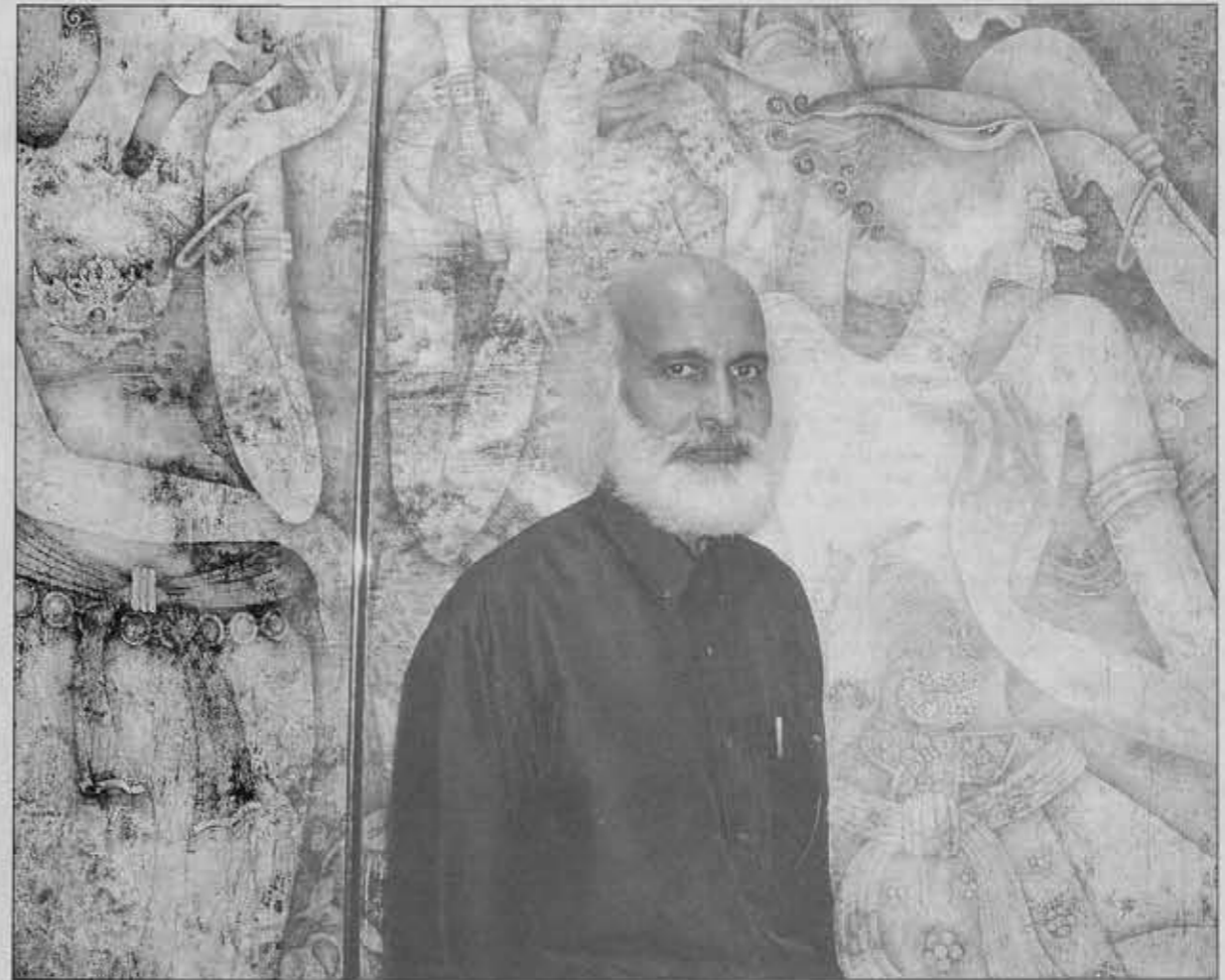
colours simplified but amplified with its senses-lulling spectrum of yellow ochres, sienna, red, greens (olive, emerald, veridien), turquoise and cerulean and a kind of amethyst even.

Probably reliving an unfulfilled childhood ambition of being a filmmaker, Syed Thajudeen plays Satyajit Ray — a director, producer and actor on his canvas with the ideal lady love, his "dream lady", as his paramour, choreographing the ultimate canvas

of love, playing with a repertoire of luminous colours, soft forms and curvilinear lines.

They are a cinematic tapestry of innocence and tenderness, with probably vivid memories of his schooldays at the Madras College of Arts and Crafts (from 1967 to 1974) and his studies of Indian literature including the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* epics.

The sun-bleached colour backdrop is reminiscent of the Balinese



SYED THAJUDEEN: 'One won't get tired of love'

Gauguin, Adriene de Merpres le Mayeur's fugue of cavorting dancers and beauties in repose or the faded murals of the Ajanta caves and Ellora temples, while the cotton-wooled blobs of colours add to the aura of intimacy and the nocturnal.

The colours are bright and joyous, unlike the darker ambient of his historical tracts on the *Ramayana* and also the Malacca Sultanate (which he started in 1975), like in his

new quadriptych measuring 183x512cm, entitled *The Beginning*, which shows Parameswaran, an ornate *keris* tucked in his waist belt, watching in awe at how a mousedeer fights off a snarling hunting dog. The *keris* and the *keronsang* on the mid-ribs of the escorts lend an authenticity to time, while all around the vegetation is symbolic of the fecundity of place.

Syed Thajudeen is noted for three

other series, *Seroja* (Lotus), *The Advent of Islam* and *The Origin Series* — one of which, a triptych, is in the Singapore Art Museum collection.

The exhibition ends at Sutra Gallery (12, Persiaran Titivangsa 3, Kuala Lumpur) on Aug 31. The gallery is open weekdays, from 11am to 5pm. For details, call 03-4021-1092.

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