

लक्ष्मण

THE GOLDEN FLUTE

SHUVAPRASANNA



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NOVEMBER 2007

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Shuvaprasanna's earlier works on the Radha Krishna relationship were described by him and also displayed as '*Madhura*.' So what is this '*Madhura*' that sums up the great mythical love story?

It is the sweetness of honey, it is the warmth of the sun, it is the feeling of well-being that comes of being with your beloved, of having been loved by him, and the anticipation, of being loved again - there is a sensual, heavy-limbed feeling in this simple uncomplicated moment. And it is the magical, golden flute that he is playing with its ethereal and eternal melody. It is that golden time when the enchanted world stands still. And at its centre, is Krishna.

But, it is not the Krishna, the avatar of Vishnu the Preserver, born into the world to protect it from calamity. It is not the He who defeated and destroyed the evil of pride and greed and jealousy at Kurukshetra. Nor is it the great teacher who unfolded the mysteries of the Bhagavad Gita. And finally, it is not the great, and when he chose to be, that terrible god which is at the heart of '*Madhura*'.

To find him we must go back to the time when Krishna, stolen away from his parents to save his life, was raised in Vrindavan, the forest of cows, near Mathura, in idyllic surroundings. He was loved by all, but most of all by the women of the forest, who watched over his infancy and saw him grow from the prankful stealer of butter into a youth, full of beauty and charm. This is the Krishna that the Gopis, the girls of the forest, all adored. But most of all he was loved by Radha, and on her he bestowed himself.

These are the bare bones of the story of Radha and Krishna. Many are the myths that surround them, many are the paintings and songs about them and their love; all of them of adoration and desire and its fulfilment, of worship and *Bhakti*. For the act of loving, the surrender of one's self, physically and mentally and emotionally



Golden Flute 5
Acrylic, oil & charcoal on canvas
30" x 30"

at the feet of the beloved, is a step in the path of personal devotion to one's God. This is the essence of *Bhakti*.

But how did Shuvaprasanna get here? What led this man to pour out his talent at these particular gates? Shuvaprasanna, was born of a Brahmin-Bengali family, where these tales and myths were part of his upbringing. But his artistic life and its recognition was born out of the war of 1971, and out of the refugees, and the squalor and the horror of that time.

His great earlier works, were the rooftops of Calcutta, the grey, degenerating mass of concrete and brick and mortar. The steely grey of the sky, the blackness of the soul, are there for all to see. But notice the fastidiousness. He will not go below the rooftops. He will not explore the hopelessness of life below the roof top. He will hint at it as we see his city crumble.

Then there are his crows, black, picking at and tearing at his city, and its flesh, and also at his own. They are not beautiful, but they are themselves. "This is what we crows are," they seem to say, - "like you humans, we will survive, anyhow and any which way."

We felt Shuvaprasanna's pain, but also noticed his need to withdraw from it - put it aside, find a peace that he demanded because he needed to move on to some other, more personal oeuvre.

And so, his 'Icon' series. They are Goddesses he mostly depicts. Awesome they are, and strong. The iconography complete, graphically powerful, they, these goddesses, are present but removed from mankind. They hover like Nemesis, over puny men and their world. He is overwhelmed we feel, by *Shakti*, the power of woman and her many facets – a power that ruled the earliest world before it was defeated by a race of people more comfortable with a male god, that they felt they could understand. This power, this *Shakti*, generally consigned to a secondary role in today's world, is at the heart of his 'Icon' series.



Golden Flute 14

Acrylic, oil & charcoal on canvas
20" x 20"



Golden Flute 10

Acrylic, oil & charcoal on canvas
25" x 25"



Golden Flute 11

Acrylic, oil & charcoal on canvas
25" x 25"

Which brings us to Shuvaprasanna's *'Madhura'*. And to Krishna and Radha and their love - a theme he has pursued on many occasions including this show. But what is it, this love of theirs, that Shuvaprasanna depicts?

Let us start with Radha. You see it in her eyes. You see passion. Passion, both fulfilled and with it, the certainty of love-making yet to come, the re-arousal of their passion and its satiation. You see it in the languidness of her body, the sense of her skin still alive and tingling from the touch of her lover. The angle of her head is yearningly tilted to look, again and again, at Krishna. And her arms, held out to accept his embrace, but also, in the giving of herself, the claiming of him as hers. There is desire, an aching, painful need to not only be possessed but, also to possess. This willing surrender and insatiable desire for him stems from love. This love, an adoration, is a worship, though she might not as yet, see it as such.

Then there is Krishna - dark of colour but emanating light - a god who cannot and must not give himself to one person for he was born to belong to all. Why then is his head separated from his torso? Is it because in the separation it can be replaced at an angle not otherwise physically possible? An angle which suggests enquiry, thoughtfulness? Is it an inward looking Krishna seeking and also finding and nurturing the strength and wisdom and divinity which will be his in the years to come? Is he seeing that this idyllic time is just a moment, a lovely interlude, in his mortal life? A moment to be enjoyed not just in the taking, but in the gifting of happiness? Or is this separation of head and torso a wilful act to take away from the body, that embodiment of sensuality, his head, his intellectual centre? But if so, then why is it tied, however loosely, this head, to his torso by a thread - a *'Janayu'*. Is it to say that there can be no absolute separation of the body and the intellect and that, on the recognition and acceptance of this, a spiritual completeness can be found?

So his eyes, so pensive, are always looking into the distance whilst he embraces and accepts the embraces of Radha. And that distance - is it a distance of time, or of space, or is it the growing awareness and a search of his inward awakening,

a great depth yet to be plumbed and then raised to the surface? Into that conundrum Shuvaprasanna lets us fall and leaves us to decide for ourselves.

Then, along with this conundrum there are the other artifices that Shuvaprasanna uses. Whilst Radha is the embodiment of adoration and worship, Krishna's every pose seems to emanate from dance. Is it the dance of life that he is showing us? Is it the inevitable Fate to which he is pointing and then leading us with his stylised 'chaal'!

Or is he just dancing to his flute? If that is so, then what is it, this flute, this Golden Flute? Listen to its sounds. Hear it playing, perhaps in the distance, not plaintive as much as wistful; is it reed-like in its quality, has it a huskiness in its tone? Then why the golden colour? A colour suggestive of tonal richness. And yet there is in its haunting melody, a searching. Is it just for a lover, or is it for something quite different - a search for a direction to travel, a path to follow and with it, a heart-breaking fare-well to '*Madhura*'? So you see the flute wielded by Krishna, not only as an instrument of loving sound, but also as a barrier separating him from Radha. For, whilst he sometimes encloses her with his arms and his flute, he more often, uses it to distance himself from her, whilst he plays his Song of Life.

So there, as we see it, is the uniqueness of Shuvaprasanna's works on the theme of Krishna and Radha and '*Madhura*'. How he achieves it, what iconography he uses, are but stepping stones to the final result. Has he achieved what he set out to do? Has every stroke of his brush added to his own sense of what was the original thought? That only Shuvaprasanna can tell us. To us, we must enjoy both the visual aspect and the inner, thought-provoking part of this show.

And we could ask, where will Shuvaprasanna take us next? For there has always been a progression in Shuvaprasanna's Art journey. Will he find a different idea to worry and tease into a visual treat? We cannot say, but we look forward to whatever he next brings forth.

- Kamal Bhagat



Golden Flute 2

Acrylic, oil & charcoal on canvas
36" x 36"



Golden Flute 12

Acrylic, oil & charcoal on canvas
20" x 20"

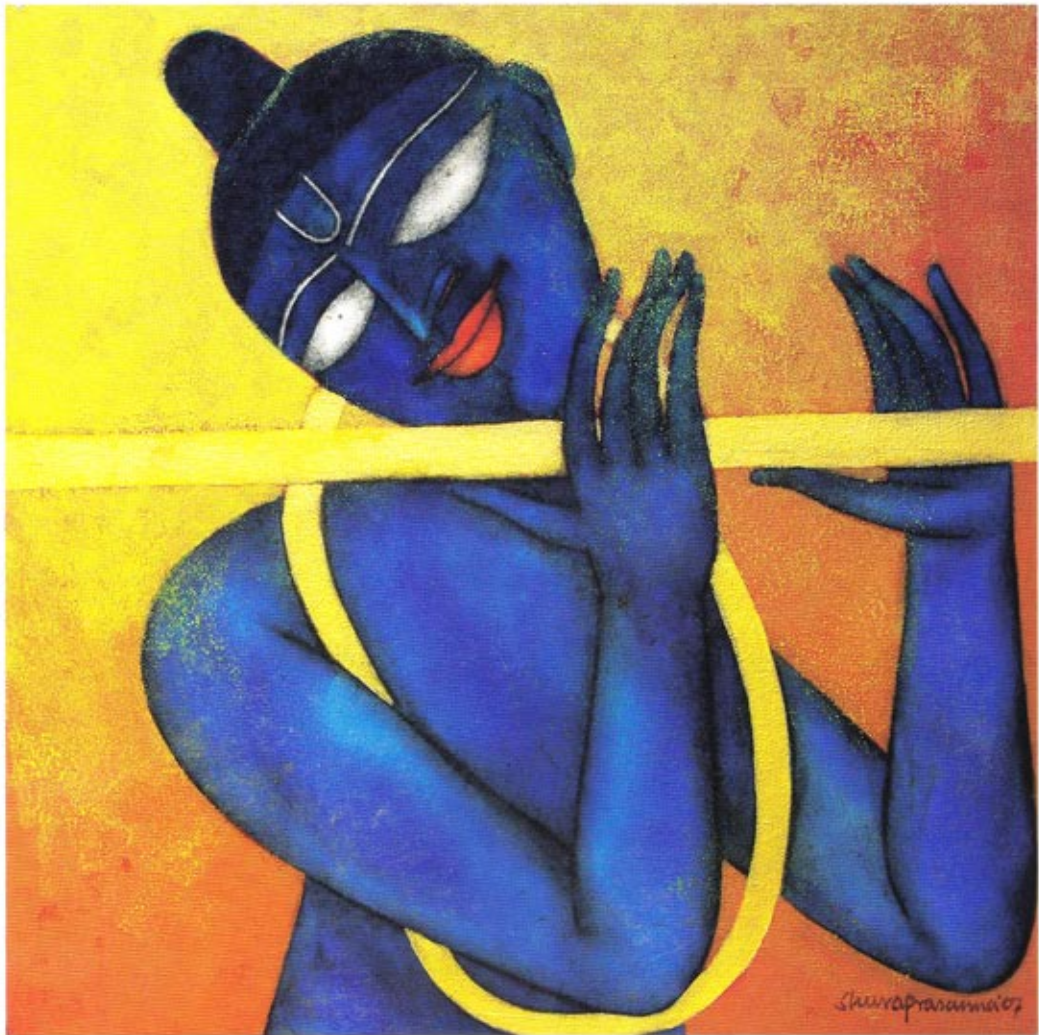


Golden Flute 4 • acrylic, oil & charcoal on canvas • 30" x 30"





Golden Flute 13 • acrylic, oil & charcoal on canvas • 20" x 20"





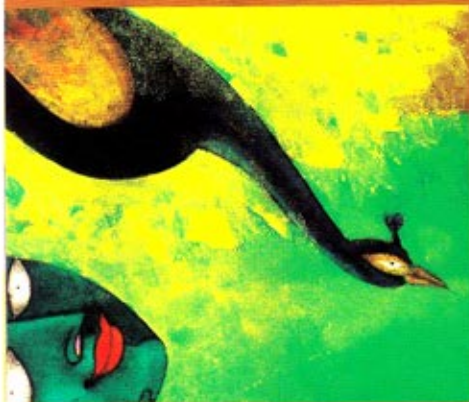
Golden Flute 1 • acrylic, oil & charcoal on canvas • 40" x 50"





Golden Flute 9 • acrylic, oil & charcoal on canvas • 25" x 25"

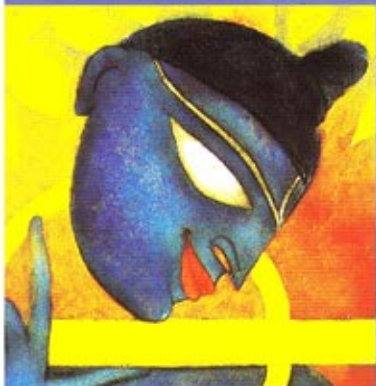




Golden Flute 7 • acrylic, oil & charcoal on canvas • 30" x 30"







Golden Flute 6 • acrylic, oil & charcoal on canvas • 30" x 30"



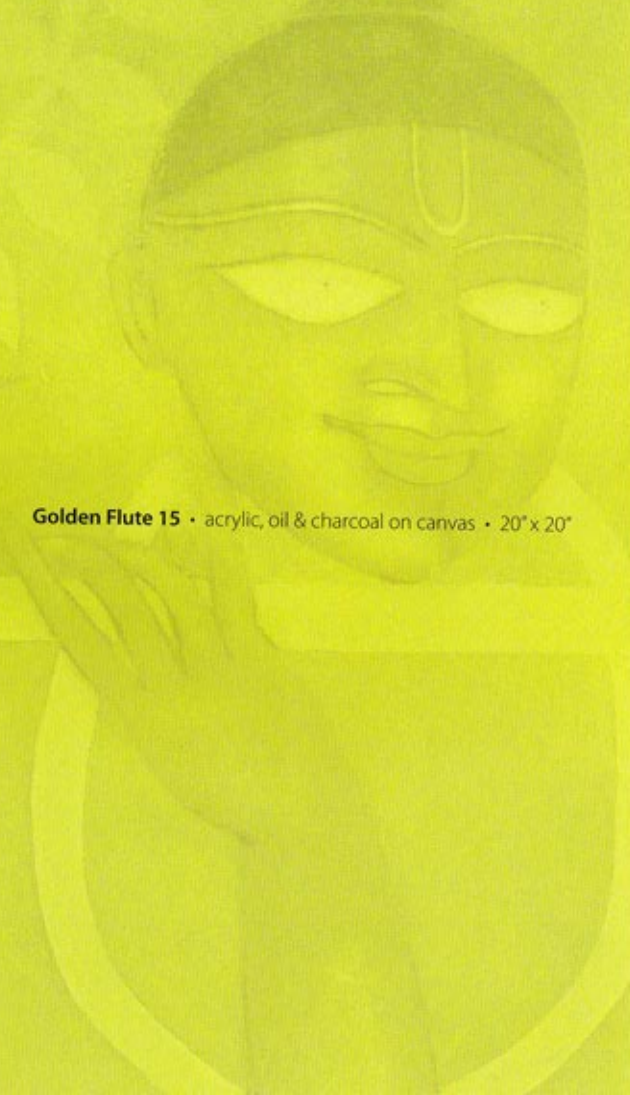


Golden Flute 8 • acrylic, oil & charcoal on canvas • 25" x 25"

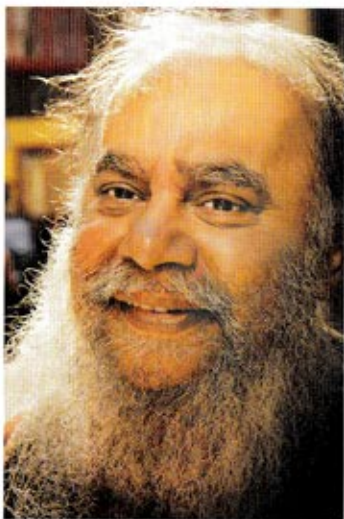




Golden Flute 15 • acrylic, oil & charcoal on canvas • 20" x 20"







Shuvaprasanna

Shuvaprasanna was born in Kolkata in 1947.

He graduated in Fine Art from the Indian college of Art (Under RB University), Kolkata.

He has had over 50 solo exhibitions and participated in major group shows both in India and overseas. He has participated in the III Asian Art Biennial, Bangladesh; II International Biennial, Havana, Cuba; II International Biennial, Ankara, Turkey; VII International Triennial India, New Delhi; III International Biennial of Prints, Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal and the 6th EME Triennale Mondiale D'Estampes Petit Format 2003 in France.

Shuvaprasanna has visited the United States under the auspices of the USIA, England under the sponsorship of the British Council and Germany under the sponsorship of Inter-Nations. He has also participated in a number of International projects, workshops and Art camps, more important amongst which are the Museum of Modern Art, Sitomo, Japan; To Encounter Others at Kassel, Germany; Workshop in Horniman Museum; Art In Nature, an Indo-German Workshop during the German Festival in India. A number of his paintings have been to auctions house like Christies', London; Sotheby's, New York and Osian's, Mumbai.

Shuvaprasanna has edited several books on art & literature and authored a few children's book. He was founder member of Art and Artists, Calcutta; joined Calcutta Painters, Calcutta; was Joint Secretary, Calcutta Art Fair; Member, CIRCA Geneva; founded College of Visual Arts, Calcutta; founded Arts Acre, An Artists' Village, Calcutta.

He received a number of awards including the AIFACS Award, State LKA Award and Birla Academy Award.

Shuvaprasanna's works are in collections at the NGMA and LKA, Delhi; Govt. College of Art, New Delhi; UP State Lalit Kala Akademi; Chandigarh Museum; Punjab University; NCERT, New Delhi; Birla Academy, Calcutta; Air India; Taj Group of Hotels; Times of India Group; WHO, Geneva; Kratel SA Stuttgart, Germany; Glenbarra Art Museum, Japan; HEART, India; Radisson Fort, Raichak, West Bengal; The Museum of Modern Art, Sitomo, Japan; Gujarat Heavy Chemicals, Delhi; Telecom Venture Group, Hong Kong, etc.

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