

MADHURA

MADHURA Paintings by SHUVAPRASANNA

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Cover: The Golden Flute, Acrylic, Charcoal and Oil, 102 x 128 cm

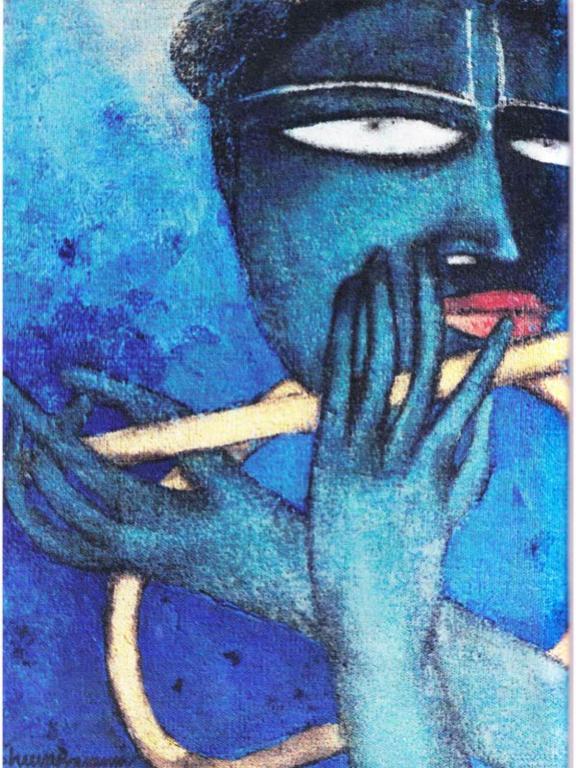
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MADHURA

There are certain words and concepts which are difficult to render into English and 'madhura' is one of them. The simple equivalent would be 'sweetness' but 'madhura' encompasses in its ambit much more than that. In the context of Radha and Krishna it is love sublimated to a romantic ideal unsullied by 'shringara'. It is a pure simple melody, springing spontaneously from the heart. It is the magic melody that flows from the 'mohan yanshi' or the Golden Flute.

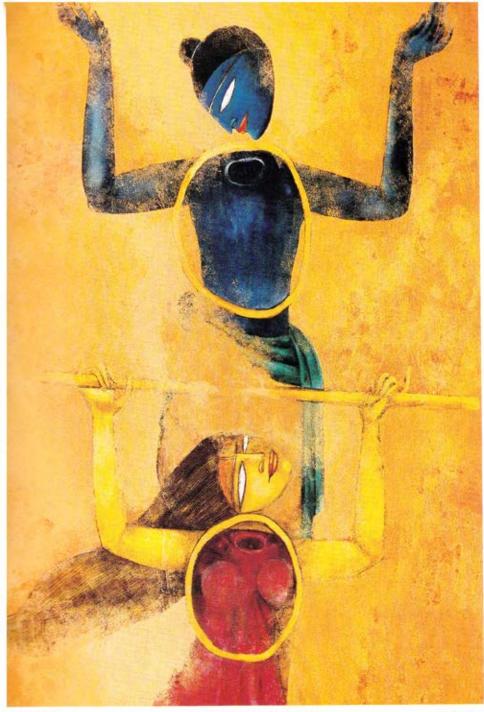
Shuvaprasanna is a contemporary painter, who has been captivated by the myth of Krishna. One may recall that Shuvaprasanna has been painting icons, gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon: Durga, Ganesha, Saraswati, Lakshmi and Shakti in her various manifestations. The Golden Flute, a series based on the story of Krishna and Radha, is softer in tone, and works along a richer narrative line.

As Indians we are all familiar with the story of Krishna, but for those who are not it may perhaps bear repetition. We have a very rich tradition of myths in our culture. Most myths are built around either the act of creation or the eternal conflict between good and evil, gods and demons. When life is overburdened with evil, gods intervene in the affairs of men. They appear as incarnations or avataras to destroy evil in its many manifestations. Krishna is the avatara of Vishnu the Protector and Preserver. And like most avataras, he is anthropomorphic in nature.

Krishna's natural parents were Vasudev and Devaki, sister of the wicked king Kamsa who is a demon in disguise. It was prophesied that he would meet his death in the hands of Devaki's child, so he killed her first six children but Krishna is smuggled out of the palace prison and handed over to Nanda, a cowherd, who with his wife Yashoda bring him up as their own child in the small village of Gokula. As a young boy he performed many supernatural acts of bravery: killing the ogress Putana, suppressing the hydra-headed snake Kaliya, putting out raging forest fires, protecting his people from natural calamities by holding up the Govardhana mountain with his finger. Yet his divine nature is not recognized. He is the natural leader of the cowherd children, resourceful, charming, playful, with some extraordinary powers.

Every aspect of Krishna's life has lent itself to storytelling and mythmaking. As a little child when he was crawling around on all fours he stole butter and curds - for which he had an insatiable appetite - from the cowherd women. Legions of stories have grown around the Balagopala aspect, the pranks of the lovable little Krishna, the stealer of not only butter and curds but the hearts of the gopini women. As he turns into an adolescent this maternal love is transformed into the passionate adoration of the gopinis. He flirts with them, steals their clothes from the bank of the Yamuna while they are bathing. He dances with them in the moonlight, leading each one to believe that he loves her more than the others but remaining forever elusive. His great love is Radha who loves him with passionate intensity. But their idyllic love comes to an end. When he is called to Mathura, never to return; to lead his tribe, the Yadavas, to Dwaraka, in Western India. He later emerges as the king of Dwaraka, a great warrior, an astute politician, philosopher and guide to Arjuna, in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Questions have been raised about the two Krishnas - can the Krishna of Vrindavan and the Krishna of the Bhagavat Gita be one and the same?

Krishna has been and will always be an all-pervading figure in our cultural and religious history. It is amazing how many different forms and genres it has engendered. In the visual arts we have expressions ranging from the folk



art of Madhuvani to the miniatures of the hill schools to the Nathdwara paintings of Western India. Poets, musicians, artists have given free rein to their imagination. Jaydeva's Gita Govinda was composed around the end of the twelfth century in Bengal. It celebrates the story of Radha and Krishna with fullblooded passion. Jaydeva was followed by Chandidas, Vidyapati, Krishnadas, Surdas, to name a few. They spare no details of the rapturous lovemaking, the anguish of separation, the bliss of reunion. Around the mid-eighteenth century, Satwant Singh, Raja of Kishangarh, devoted his entire life composing poems and commissioning paintings on the subject. One of his own compositions reads like this:

Here is Love's enchanted Zone
Time and Firmament stand still
Here the bride and bridegroom
Never can grow old
Here the fountains never cease to play
And the night is ever young.

There is an obvious obsession with eternal youth and the physicality of life. Yet no matter how frank and sensuous the description of the poets there is a strong urge to anchor it around the divinity of Radha and Krishna's lovemaking. How does one explain the anomaly? Is there a need for licence to write so vividly about the sensual side of love? Or is it the need for a more personalized religion where God is not an abstract concept but an entity to be loved and worshipped with a singleness of heart? One of the ways of ending the eternal cycle of birth and rebirth and uniting with the Godhead is through Bhaktiyoga or the path of worship and adoration. By loving Krishna you receive love. The rapturous lovemaking of Krishna and Radha, Krishna and the gopinis is sublimated to the adoration of the worshipper for the worshipped. Becoming one with the beloved is like



Acrylic, oil and charcoal on canvas

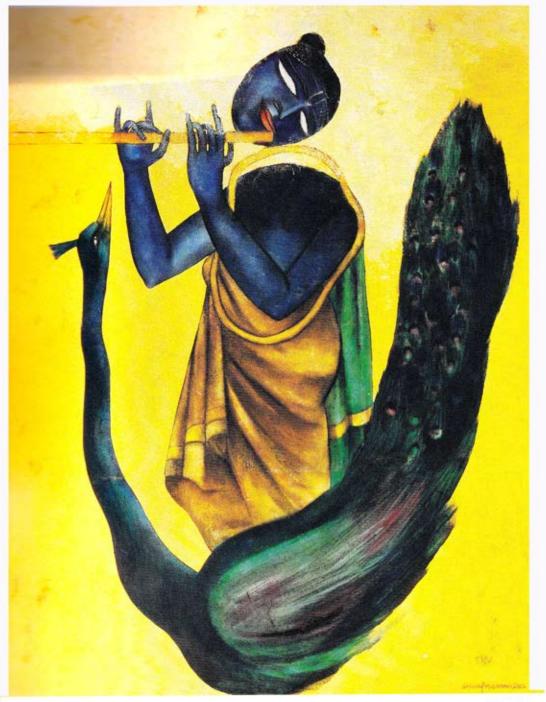
102 x 128 cm

entering the Supreme Spirit, the sensual becoming spiritual. Sri Chaitanya, one of the founders of the Vaishnava religion, based his cult on the path of universal love.

It is interesting to note that in art the emphasis is somewhat different. There was a flowering of miniature paintings around the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the Punjab Hills and Rajasthan: Basholi, Kangra, Garhwal, Kishangarh and Bundi, Mewar Udaipur. These paintings are devoid of the graphic eroticism of the written word. Instead there is a freshness, simplicity, almost an innocence about then. Set in the heart of nature the natural greens, blues and yellows give them a delicacy and tenderness.

Shuvaprasanna comes from a conservative, brahman, tradition-bound family. He inherits a legacy that makes it easy for him to understand and accept the role and position of religion and myths in our everyday life. In Bengal, where Shuva comes from, Jhulan is still an important festival in not only villages but in towns and cities. Kirtan is as important as any other musical genre. During the festival the images of Radha and Krishna are still decorated with flowers and festoons. Shuva has incorporated all this in his visual repertory. He has also retained the simplicity of approach where flowers are the only embellishment. In the present series a single kadamba flower sometimes appears in his canvas, the kadamba being closely associated with Krishna.

If we go back to his earlier works we see Shuva's preoccupations very clearly. The tension in his work stems from his awareness of death and degeneration on the one hand and his awareness at the same time of something higher and deathless. Whenever the world becomes too much with him he recedes into his private sanctum and images rise and find expression on his canvas. At such times he uses myths and stories from the past, not to propagate religion but to transmute them into his own pictorial language.



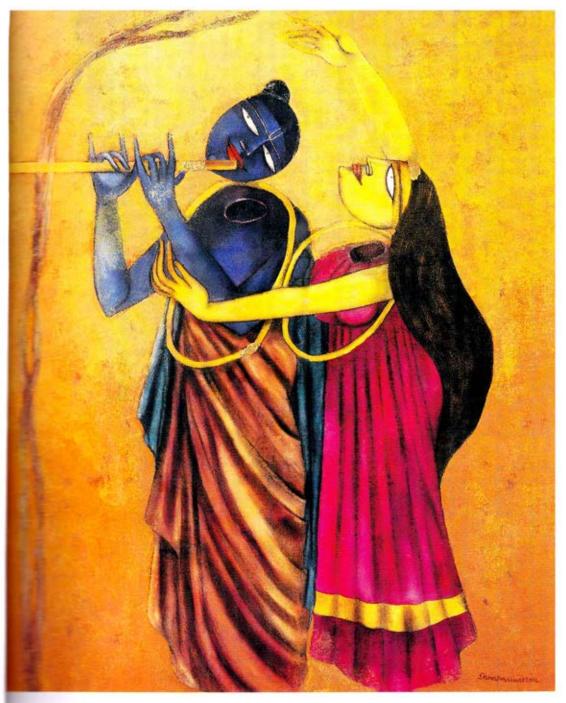
Acrylic, oil and charcoal on canvas

This is nothing new. Myths have a way of seeping deep into the collective imagination and taking root in the simplest of minds as well as the more sophisticated of intellects. They transcend time; perhaps because they alleviate unhappiness, pain and hardship through an imaginative explanation of the human condition. And gradually these ideas get transformed into symbols. Our pictorial tradition has never replicated reality. Instead it has refined reality into a kind of abstraction that finds expression in symbols. Everything in our rituals and worship are symbolic and connote meanings that transcend the obvious. Such examples abound in our popular culture. Mini temples spring up under banyan trees by the roadside; stones are smeared with sindur. The worship of the lingam is another such example. It is not object worship but idea worship. However ridiculous it may seem to another culture it has a compelling reality of its own.

Shuva's present series consists of the dual images of Radha and Krishna, some of Krishna alone and a few of Sri Chaitanya, regarded as an avatara of Krishna. Each figure has a hollow cylindrical body, the head is separate but loosely held together by a garland or girdle. The cylindrical pitcher - like bodies bring to mind the potter's wheel in the villages. One remembers how Jamini Roy, a product of the occidental school of painting, changed his course completely and experimented with the ethnic 'pat' form. Sri Krishna and yes, Jesus Christ, were two of his favourite subjects.

Shuva's hollow open-mouthed torsos suggestive of pitchers evoke a kind of darkness in human life. This image has been recurrent in Shuva's visual vocabulary. They appear earlier in his apocalyptic landscapes as pitted holes. They are recast here and in the Icon series and counter-balanced with the sense of a higher verity.

The Golden Flute and the Icon suites are almost simultaneous but one can see a slight shift: the deities of the Icon series display a kind of detachment



Acrylic, oil and charcoal on canvas

and power. The Golden Flute gives the impression of a greater self-absorption, a kind of meditative quality where the subject seems immersed in an internal world. Perhaps Shuva is trying to translate into pictorical form the notion of 'ananda' or bliss. A difficult idea to translate, 'ananda' springs from the total surrender of self into another being, another plane. It is a kind of high, an intoxication that could be the culmination of physical love.

Shuva uses various compositional elements to achieve this effect. The dual images of Radha and Krishna, the male and female principle, are contained in this canvas, sometimes in a bower-like structure. He plays with the angle of the heads, the mudras of the hands, fingers, the lips. The eyes are fish-shaped with pointed pupils that recall folk motifs. And of course the flute beckoning you to forget the sorrows and hardships of everyday life. Golden does not denote the colour of the metal but it is the colour of what is precious and desirable and hence to be sought after in life.

Shuva has remained constant to the method of creating his base when he paints. He draws on the canvas, using colour. He then pastes a sheet of rice paper over it to give it a texture and a kind of frisson. He then finishes his work with charcoal, oil and acrylic. Not always nor necessarily in that order but he is a practitioner of multimedia. The total effect is that of density and depth. This is a technique that he discovered and chose for himself through various experimentation. And he has used it to the fullest effect.

His use of colour also displays constancy. He has always been heavily biased in favour of black. It has a richness which comes from the many hues that go into making black. This is ideally suited to the present series. Krishna is always painted black or a variation of black – blue, dark brown, green, mauve; hues of the natural palette that suggest a dark skin. Krishna was born at midnight, 'black as a thundercloud'. Krishna is an avatara of Vishnu whose colour is blue. The ocean is blue as is the sky, the giver of light and



Acrylic, oil and charcoal on canvas

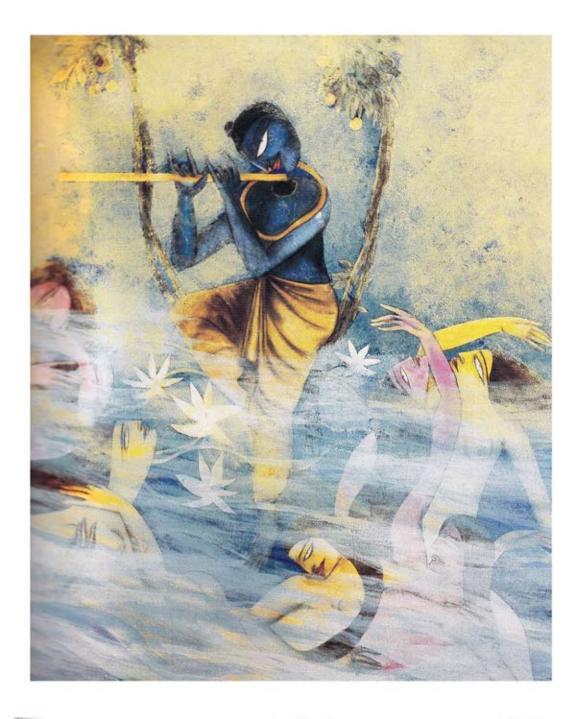
life. In a more far-fetched interpretation, the word 'kal' stands for time or eternity; Krishna who is timeless and eternal is painted kalo or black.

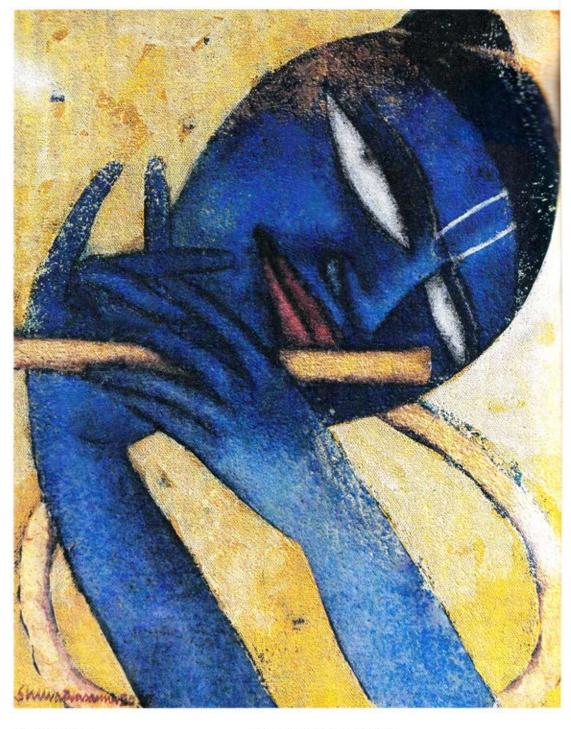
Shuva's Krishna is predominantly blue. He mixes various shades, cobalt, prussian blue, ultramarine and touches of mauve or green to give it the effect of the peacock feather that always nestles in Krishna's crown. He also uses gold to evoke moonlight. And the shimmer of silver to conjure the stars.

If we look at Shuva's work in its totality we find that he has had many phases. His early works were predominantly expressionist. He has veered towards abstraction but somehow steered clear of it. His imagery has also varied quite considerably. But what is interesting is the fact that there is a thread of continuity both in his thinking and his style. His thought process and his rendering of it have reincarnated and been recast but there has not been a departure. In the present phase he seems to be at peace with himself. To quote a poem by Sacheverell Sitwell:

Rain falls and ceases, all the forest trembles
Mystery walks the woods once more,
We hear a flute.
It moves on earth, it is the God who plays
With the flute to his lips and music in his breath:
The God is Krishna in his lovely youth.

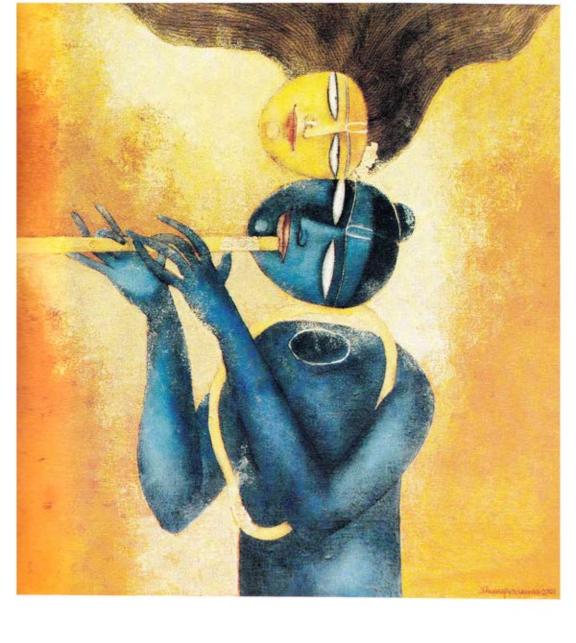
It seems that Shuvaprasanna can hear the flute. And it is the flute that plays silently through these paintings.

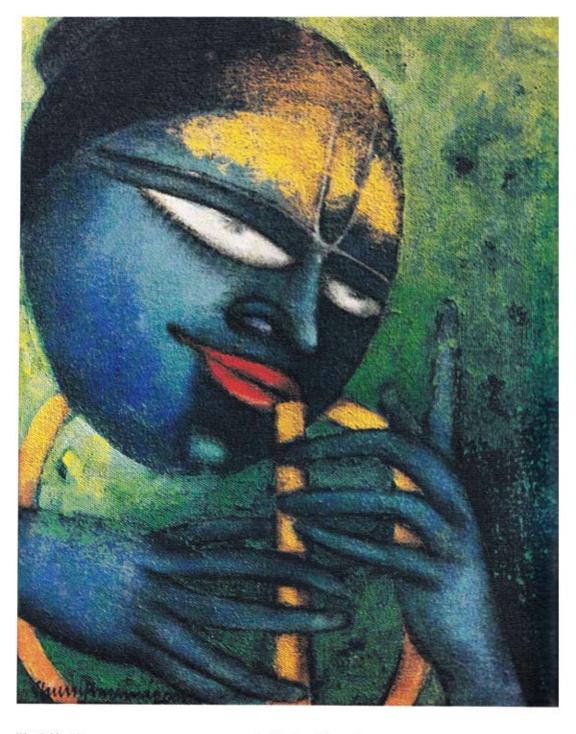




The Golden Flute

Acrylic, oil and charcoal on canvas



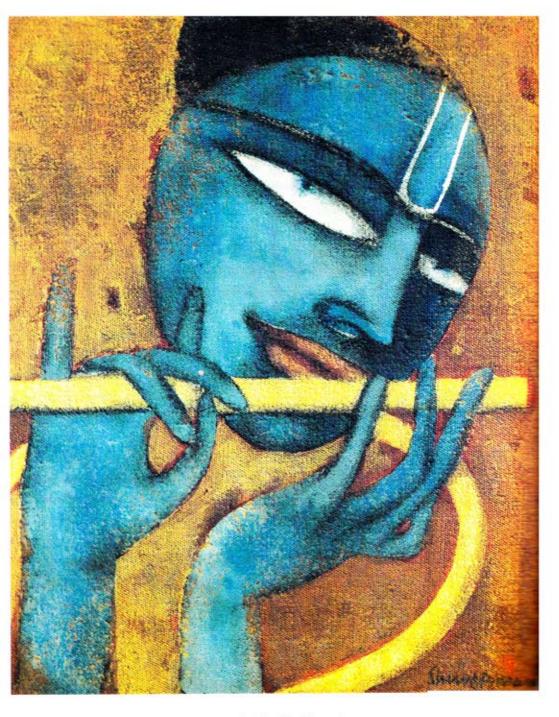


The Golden Flute

Acrylic, oil and charcoal on canvas

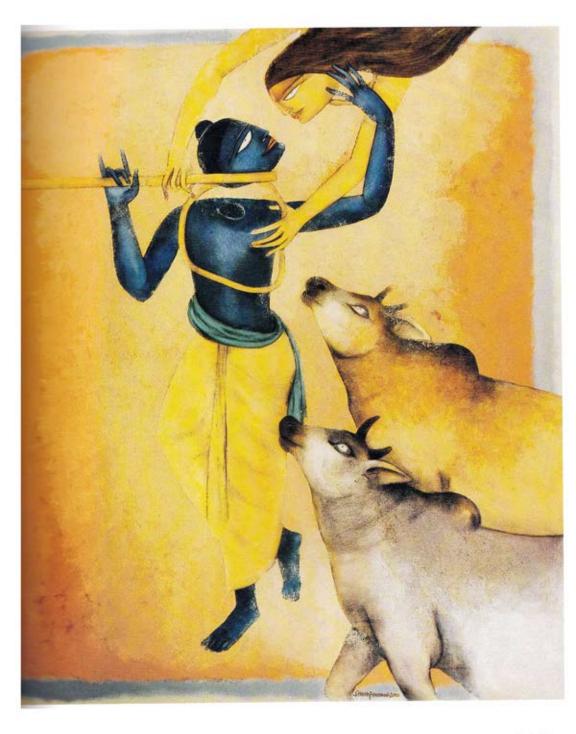


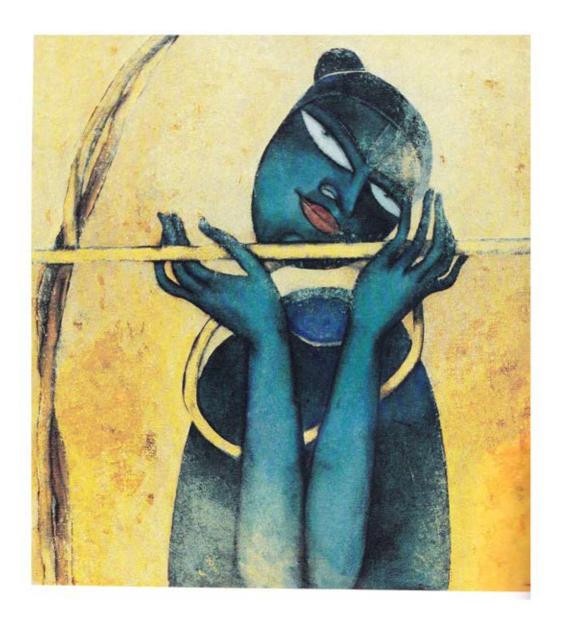
Acrylic, oil and charcoal on canvas

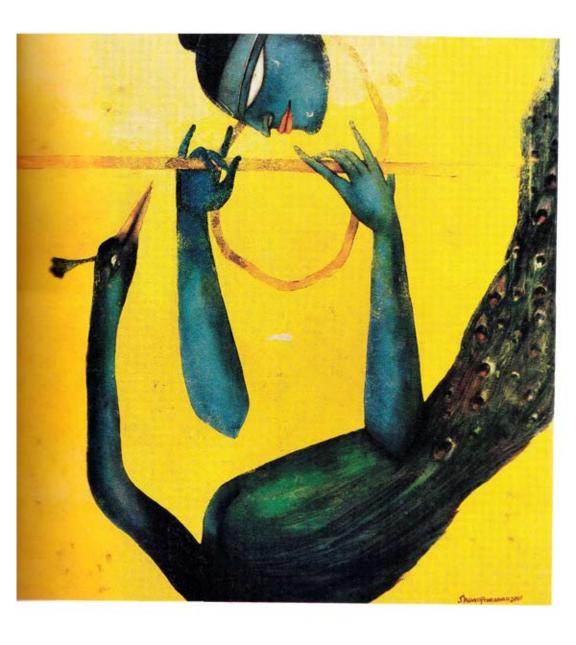


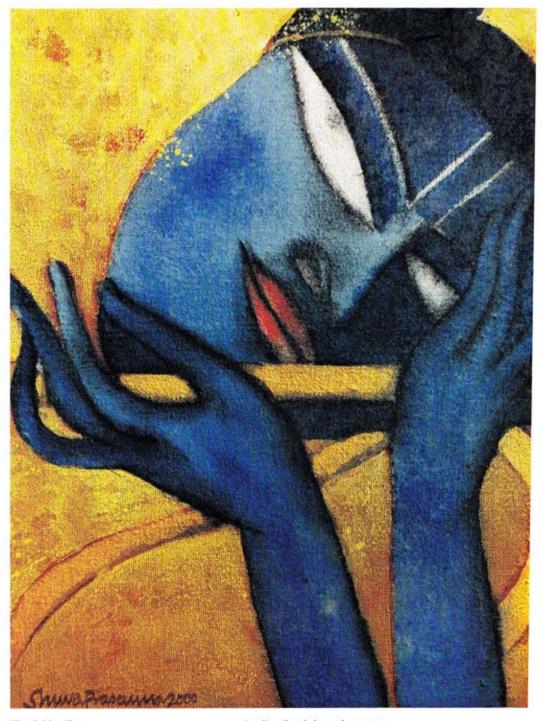
The Golden Flute

Acrylic, oil and charcoal on canvas



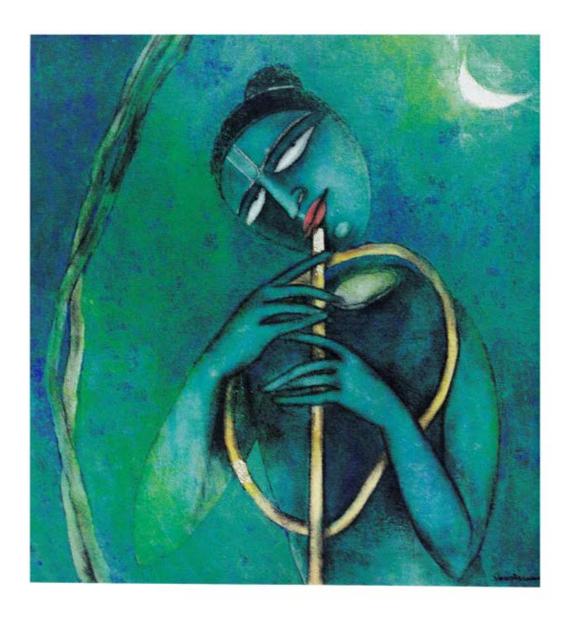


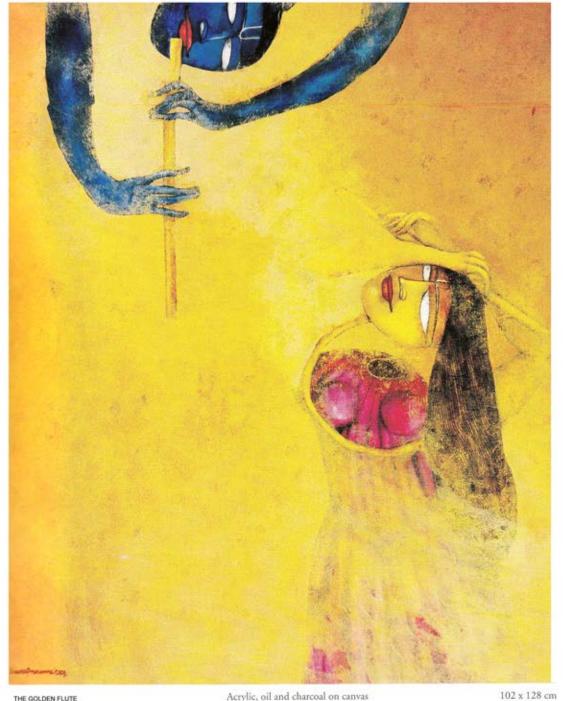




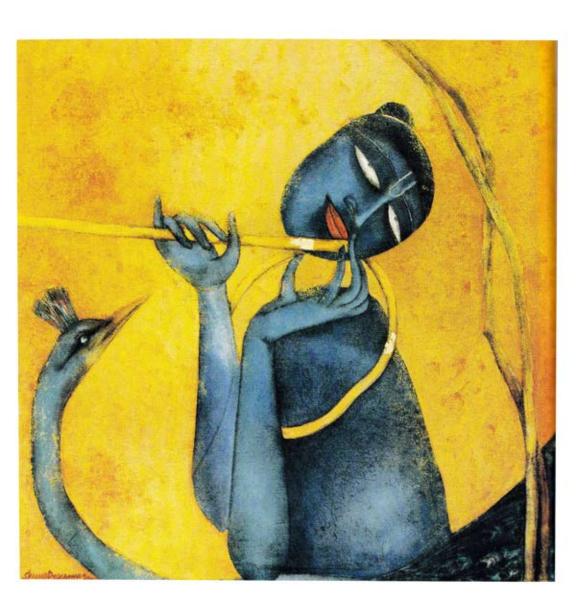
The Golden Flute

Acrylic, oil and charcoal on canvas





Acrylic, oil and charcoal on canvas



SHUVAPRASANNA

0110 1	
1947	Born in Calcutta.
1969	Graduated from Indian College of Art (R.B. University, Calcutta).
Solo Ext	ibitions
1972	Birla Academy, Calcutta.
1973	Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi.
1974	Gallery "Les Hirondelles", Geneva, Switzerland.
1975	Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi; Gallery Atlantis, Aix-En-Proveance, France.
1976	Gallery Denbarg, Geneva, Switzerland.
1977	Décor Art Gallery, Calcutta.
1978	Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi.
1979	Walburgischule, Werl, Germany; Max Mueller Bhavan, Calcutta.
1980	National Museum, Singapore; Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi.
1981	Max Mueller Bhavan, Calcutta; Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi.
1983	Calcutta Art Gallery; Calcutta; Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai; Kreissparkasse, Ludwigsburg, Germany; Volkshoschule, Essen, Germany.
1985	Painter's Home Gallery, Calcutta.
1987	Birla Academy, Calcutta.
1988	IDM Gallery, Munich, Germany; St. Paulus Pastelite, Ludwigsburg, Germany.
1989	Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai; The Gallery, Chennai.
1990	Indian Museum, Calcutta; Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai; Sridharani Art Gallery, New Delhi.
1991	Art Age Gallery, Calcutta; La Gallerie, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
1992	Birla Academy, Calcutta.
1993	Kunstverein Ludwigsburg, Germany; Studio Helmi Precther, Augsburg, Germany.
1994	"Metropolis": Portraits of Calcutta, CIMA Gallery, Calcutta; ABC Gallery, Benaras.
1995	Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi; Gallerie Grewal Mohanjeet, Paris, France.
1997	Painter's Home Gallery, Calcutta; Gallery Sanskriti, New Delhi.
1998	Joint Show with Shipra Bhattacharya, Art Today, New Delhi.
1999	An Appreciation of Ted Hughes, Exhibition of Crow Paintings, British Council, Calcutta, Art Indus, New Delhi.
2000	Shuvaparasanna's Icons & Retrospective, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, organized by Art Indus, New Delhi; Fine Art Company, Mumbai, Gallery Sumukha (Recent & Past) at Bangalore, Artworld, Chennai, Fine Art Company, Mumbai.
2002	"Icons and Illusions" organized by Gallery & Art India at New York, USA February.

Group Exhibitions

- 1961 Arts and Artists, Calcutta
- 1970 Calcutta Painters, Calcutta and Mumbai; Epar Bangla Opar Bangla, Calcutta.
- 1975 Gallery Kunsthaus Stuttgart, Germany; Silver Jubilee Exhibition, Lalit Kala Akademy, New Delhi; Inaugural show, Décor Art Gallery, Calcutta.
- 1977 Gallery 26, New Delhi.
- 1979 Contemporary Water colour Exhibition, Birla Academy, Calcutta.
- 1985 Graphic Art in India since 1950
- 1987 Indian Drawings Today, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1989 Centenary invitees' show of Bombay Art Society; Human Rights by Arts of Bengal, Alliance Francaise de Calcutta and Birla Academy, Calcutta.
- 1990 300 years of Calcutta show by Birla Academy, Calcutta; Contemporary Paintings on War and Peace, Max Mueller Bhavan, Calcutta; Hyderabad; Chennai; Bangalore; Mumbai.
- 1991 Art of Spastics Auction, Chennai; "The Downtrodden and We" by Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.
- 1992 Silver Jubilee exhibition of Birla Academy, Calcutta.
- 1993 'Sonar Bangla'; Exhibition of Indian Contemporary Art, Mumbai; Fourth Anniversary Exhibition 'Shraddha': Tributes to the Mentally-ill Downtrodden, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai.
- 1994 From India: 28 Contemporary Artists Present New Graphic Work, Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery, University of Victoria, Canada.
- 1995 'Art from the Heart', Exhibition by the People for Animals, Mumbai, Delhi; 'Bombay An Artist's Impression', RPG, Jehangir Art Gallery; "The Tree of My Life", The Village Gallery, New Delhi; Inaugural Exhibition, 'La Mere Art Gallery', Calcutta.
- 1996 'Autumn', Exhibition by CIMA, New Delhi; H.K. Kejriwal Collection 1830-1995, Karnataka Chitrakala Parishad, Bangalore.
- 1997 'Colours of Independence', N.G.M.A., New Delhi; 'Bengal Show'; Singapore by Apparao Galleries; 'Indian Beast', New Delhi; 'Within the Frame', New York/London/ New Delhi; 'Major Trends in Indian Art', Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi; 'Image Beyond Image', Contemporary Indian Paintings from the Collection of Glenberra Art Museum, Japan, exhibited at the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, Birla Academy of Arts & Culture, Calcutta; Karnataka Chitrakala Parishat, Bangalore; National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai; Heart, 'The Intuitive Logic II', Exhibition: Auction of Modern & Contemporary Indian Paintings, The Park, New Delhi; The Nehru Centre, Mumbai; Kalanjali, Chitrakala Parishat, Bangalore, 'A Tribute to Mother Teresa', Art Indus, New Delhi; Contemporary Art of Bengal, Victoria Memorial in collaboration with Calcutta Metropolitan Festival of Art.

- 1998 'Krishna', Art Indus, New Delhi; 'Devi', Art Indus, New Delhi; Indian Contemporary Art, The RPG Collection, Bayer A.G., Germany; Confluence, Trends in Contemporary Indian Art, Gallery Sumukha, Bangalore; Art Connoisseur Gallery, London; Gallery Asiana, New York; First Group Show of The Fine Art Company, Mumbai; Exhibition of Modern Miniatures, Gandhara Gallery, New Delhi; Indian Contemporary Art Show/Auction, Singapore; 'Unmaskings', Exhibition of Self-Portraits, Gallery Om, New Delhi; Sister Nivedita Girls' School Centenary Exhibition, Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta; 'The Silent Symphony', Exhibition of Textile Painting, Cymroza Art Gallery, Mumbai.
- 1999 Art for Spastics, at Taj Coromandel, Chennai, Chennai; Contemporary Works of Bengali Artists, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka, Bangladesh; 'Water', Contemporary Watercolour Exhibition, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi; Small Format Works, Art Today, New Delhi; Art and Cinema, Arushi Arts, New Delhi.
- 2000 "Shatabdi", reflection on a century past—Exhibition organized by CIMA at Calcutta and Mumbai. "The Miniature Format Show 2000", Sanstache Art Gallery, Mumbai; The Best of Bengal at Art Today, New Delhi.
- "Art Of Bengal: Past & Present" organized by CIMA at Mumbai in January, the same in Kolkata April; "Scapes 2001" at Hong Kong, April; "The Harmony Show" at Mumbai, April"; "Harvest 2001", Exhibition Of Indian Contemporary Art, August 2001; "A Treasure Trove", at Birla Academy, Kolkata, August; "Art For Heart's Sake" at New Delhi, November; "Works on Paper" organized by CIMA at Kolkata, December.
- 2002 "Ma", Exhibition of Indian Contemporary Art organized by Art Indus in New Delhi, February; "Art For Heart's Sake" Auction, Taj Mahal Hotel, Mumbai, January.

International Exhibitions

- 1985 III Asian Art Biennial, Bangladesh
- 1986 II International Biennial, Havana, Cuba
- 1990 II International Biennial, Ankara, Turkey
- 1991 VII International Triennial India, New Delhi. Visited United States under the auspices of the USIA; Visited England under the sponsorship of British Council.
- 1992 The Museum of Modern Art, Sitomo, Japan; "To Encounter Others", Kassel, Germany.
- 1993 Visited Germany under the sponsorship of Inter Nationes.
- 1995 III International Biennial of Prints, Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal.
- 1997 Indian Contemporary Paintings, Cristies', London
- 1998 Contemporary Indian Paintings, Sothebys', New York

Worksho	ps
1982	Poster Workshop, British Council, Calcutta
1983	All India Painting Workshop, Max Mueller Bhavan, Calcutta
1988	Workshop in Horniman Museum, London
1990	Painting Workshop in Coonoor, Chennai; War and Peace, Indo-German Artist Camp, Max Mueller Bhavan, Calcutta.
1991	Advanced Lithography Workshop with Tamarind Institute, USA, and Lalit Kala Akademi
1992	Gangotsav Art Camp at Riverside, Diamond Harbour, West Bengal
1993	Graphics Workshop in Obergrabenpresse, Dresden, Germany; Druck and Publications GmbH and Kupferdruckerer Lothar Becker in Munich, Germany Painting Workshop of Artists from Bangladesh and West Bengal, at Bangladesh Deputy High Commission, Calcutta.
1995	International Workshop – Art and Nature, New Delhi; Graphics Workshop in Obegrabenpresse, Dresden, Germany.
1999	Workshop on Contemporary Works of Bengali Artists, Bengal Foundation, Dhaka Bangladesh.
2000	Painting Workshop at Taj Bengal, Calcutta; Painting Workshop at Taj Palace Hotel New Delhi
	Painting Workshop at Taj Coromandel, Chennai, Painting Workshop at Myhai Madhya Pradesh
2001	Art In Nature, Indo-German Workshop in connection with German Festival in Indi
2002	"Art Workshop" organized by Sanghi Industries at Hyderabad, February
Awards	
1977	Awarded by Birla Academy, Calcutta
1978	Awarded by State Lalit Kala Akademi, West Bengal
1979	Awarded by AIFACS, New Delhi
Art Orga	nizational Works
1969	Founder member, Art and Artists, Calcutta
1970	Joined Calcutta Painters, Calcutta
1972	Jt. Secretary, Calcutta Art Fair
1974	Member, CIRCA Geneva, Switzerland
1976	Founded College of Visual Arts, Calcutta
1984	Founded Arts Acre, An Artists' Village, Calcutta
Publicati	ions
1976	Edited with Shakti Chattopadhyay, Anarchy and the Blue
1977	Published Artist, a Collection of Woodcut Prints
1981	Editor, Art Today, a journal on movement of contemporary visual arts in India

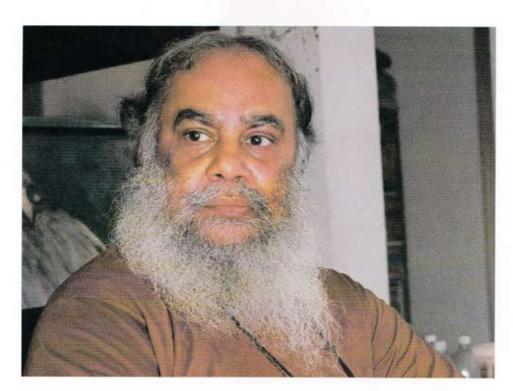
1902	Edited Portfolio The Dream and Reality, a collection of drawings
1983	Edited Portfolio The Eyes of Time a collection of drawings
1993	Published Between the Earth and the Sky
1995	Published Wondering Silence (Drawings and Contemporary Bengali Poems) Published Shuttle, Portfolio of Graphics and Verses by Obergrabenpresse, Dresden and Calcutta.
1998	Published Bishanna Swadesh (Drawings with Poems of Partha Raha)

1999 Published Ma-Nishad (Drawings with Poems of Joy Goswami)

2000 Published Shuvaprasanna: Vision, Reality and Beyond by Chitrotpala Mukherjee.

Permanent Collections

National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi; Lalit Kala Akademi, New 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; Glenberra Art Museum, Japan; HEART, India; Radison Fort, Diamond Harbour, West Bengal; Gujarat Heavy Chemicals, Delhi, Telecom Venture Group, Hongkong, etc.





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