



## ‘Blue & Gold’

by

Desmond Lazaro

The ‘Maharasa Lila’ - Krishna’s great circular dance (Baghavata Purana: Chpt 33, Book 10). Recalls the story of how Krishna appears in multiple forms to the Gopis (individual souls) on the autumn full moon night, in the forests of Vrindhavan. It is one of the most iconographic images in the Indian pantheon, depicting the universal principal of unity in multiplicity – multiplicity in unity - a tenant of all religious traditions.

Having trained as a Pichhavaish artist I had painted a version of this story in 1989 with my teacher and his family in Jaipur. Later, as I moved away from Pichhavaish imagery, the technique remained and the oscillation between the two has been the dialogue within my painting ever since.

In this new work entitled ‘Blue & Gold’, I revisit Krishna’s circular dance although it is to the Sanskrit text rather than visual image that I return. In many ways an extension of the ‘Baptism Series’ works – which also used Gold gilding techniques often associated with traditional Tangore painting. However, this time I turned to the medieval Christian illuminated manuscripts tradition, prevalent during the 12th Century onward. The later technique, allows more freedom when translating texts as it was mainly used for the opening or carpet pages of Christian bibles.

Blue and gold are colours, which resonate in almost every culture both with a secular and sacred identity; from the blue of Krishna, the Virgin Mary, Christian Icons, to Yves Klein and beyond. All have invested a certain history and mythology.

In setting the original Sanskrit form – of the story - as a block of gold paint set within a deep Indigo blue. I wanted to evoke such traditions and see how these relate within today’s world. Again I draw on the Baptism series of works, which were written in the 19th century by an unknown scribe (clerk), found in an inconspicuous church ledger, and yet recalled personal histories and collective narratives.

*Each line (of the ledger) tells of a different life, of people I will never know, will never meet, and conversation I will never have...and yet... and yet...the connection is visceral. When you spend your whole life looking and finally you find something that connects you to place and people the feeling is (and remains) overwhelming.*

It was something in the text itself - where ink smeared pages had turned smudged words into lives and turned lives into histories. The spelling mistakes, quill scratches and stains - the vocabulary of the real – allowed me to witness history, my own history. Until that point it (history) had eluded me, an idea without form, just remnants, shards but nothing tangible. In returning to a universal story, I wonder how tangible we can be, especially when confronted by a sacred (blue & gold) text.

**Desmond Lazaro**  
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**Dimensions:** 8ft x 8ft (96 cm x 96 cm)

**Medium:** Manuscript gilded letters on an Indigo dyed cotton cloth stretched on board.



**Above:** Details of process, transferring the script, applying the manuscript gesso and final Gilding with the gold leaf. Indebted to calligrapher : Dharmesh Jadeja (India) & Icon Painter & Christabel Anderson (UK), for their patience and generosity of skills.