

LOVE BYTES

The 12th century classic, *Gita Govinda*, is now available on computer. Geeta Sharma reports

Jayadev, the 12th century poet, had written it to express the love play of Krishna and Radha. But *Gita Govinda*, the love poem, is much more than that. Not only has it evoked the spiritual through the sensual plane on which it operates, but it also left a deep impact on the Indian cultural firmament. Many of the classical dance forms such as Odissi and Manipuri and to an extent, even Bharatanatyam, are influenced by the poem. And in the temples of the South, Radha Kalyanam, (the marriage of Radha), an annual ritual, is based on the *Gita Govinda*.

Now, all those for whom the composition, originally in Sanskrit, has been beyond easy comprehension and access, the near complete multi-media project at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) will make possible to easily understand the classical text and the links between Indian music, paintings, dance and its textual traditions.

The project, which in all probability will be unveiled this year, has taken up six of the 24 sections of the composition. The project, being coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is an attempt to present India's culture through user-friendly modern technology with computers, and seeks to help the audience understand the poem and its linkage to all the art forms.

The spiritual input for it was the contribution of IGNCA's Academic Director Kapila Vatsyayan, who has done nearly four years of research on the poem and was keen to portray the influence of the poem on all the regions of the nation.

The multi-media presentation has six dance forms — Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Mohiniattam, Manipuri, Odissi and Kuchipudi — each presenting the six parts of the poem. The interpretation of the selected portions has been given by Dr Vatsyayan who has interspersed them with those by other experts on various aspects of the dance drama.

The project, when ready, would offer the audience a complete knowledge of the selected portions of the composition, as it is represented textually, in painting and in dance. Each of the images will be available for scanning. For instance, in a painting, the user will be able to scan each and every visible object on the screen while the computer will give details about things like the anklet worn by Radha, the 'dhoti' worn by Krishna and so on.

Interestingly, the total capacity of the project, actual work on which began in 1995, is 38 gigabytes in computer terms; which effectively means that it would run into millions of pages if it were in book form. The software and programme for it is being worked out at the IGNCA lab, said to be one of the most sophisticated in Asia, by a team headed by Dr Ranjit Makkuni, an

A Macintosh system has been acquired for the development work on the multi-media presentations as the project involves integration of the verbal text with pictorial images and music. A sample user interface for retrieving the related information has also been developed with the help of different facilities for tips to understand the Devanagari script, image manipulation, sound editing and special effects.

According to Dr Makkuni, who talks about the project in his article, Museum of the Future, the project *Gita Govinda*, in the book, *Art — The Integral Vision*, the project will create a multi-media electronic database consisting of multi-lingual text, graphics, audio and visual records: recitations, commentaries, illustrated manuscripts, paintings, music, dance, temple rituals, popular festivals, critical analyses and other anthropological aspects of the *Gita Govinda's* role in cultural life, both sacred and secular.

"This multi-media, multi-lingual record will allow experts and non-experts alike to explore this Gita-Govinda world," says Dr Makkuni. What is more, museum-goers will be able to record their explorations and learning in floppies which they can take away with them., he adds.

The project will also design and build electronic analysis and presentation tools that allow scholars to view and interact with the poem. It will also provide a means for getting the Gita-Govinda out of museum and academic settings and into the lives of people.

Little doubt then, as Makkuni points out, the project proposes to fundamentally transform cultural learning in museums. The proposed exhibit will reintegrate the diverse media and dimensions illustrating the unity among the diverse representations and expressions of the *Gita Govinda*.

