

Multimedia Presentation Experience of

GITA GOVINDA

10th Dec.1997 - 8th Jan.1998

Matighar, IGNCA



The IGNCA and Xerox Palo Alto Research Centre(Xerox Parc) presented a multimedia experience on celebrated text Jayadeva's Gita Govinda, a 12th century Sanskrit poem, from 10th December 1997 to 8th January 1998 at Matighar, IGNCA, New Delhi

The Poem is intrinsically a multimedia composition of India's artistic tradition. The Gita Govinda is a work of infinite beauty, soon after its composition, spread all over India: North, South, East and West. Whereever it travelled it left a deep and abiding influence. It continues to capture the imagination of the people, poets, artists, musicians, dancers and devotees.

The Gita Govinda Experience in multimedia was developed through a multi-disciplinary collaboration involving the expertise of the IGNCA, New Delhi, and the multimedia design expertise of XEROX PARC, California, USA. The Experience's content was conceived by Kapila Vatsyayan, who is also the author of many definitive monographs on the *Gita Govinda*, including those on the diverse painting schools, specially Mewar, Jaipur, Bundi and Assam.

The artistic genres represented in the Gita Govinda experience included the music traditions of classical Hindustani and Carnatic music, congregational singing of the poem in *Radhakalyanam* style, devotional singing in the Guruvayoor and Puri temples. The dance styles included are Bharatanatyam, Mohiniattam, Oddissi, Manipuri and Kathak. Many Museums graciously provided painting source materials. In order to create the content for the Multimedia Experience, Kapila Vatsyayan along with other scholars, particularly V. N. Misra, B. N. Goswamy, Premlata Sharma, Sampath Narayanan, have explained the many levels of meanings of the poem. In totality, these scholars and artists have created approximately forty giga-bytes of digital content. The Multimedia research and design activities underlying the creation of the *Gita Govinda* Experience was led by XEROX PARC Researcher, Ranjit Makkuni, who has developed the internationally acclaimed cultural learning exhibit on Tibetan *thangka* paintings exhibited at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco in 1989. Ranjit Makkuni built and led the *Gita Govinda* multimedia design laboratory, with the following core members; C. Venkatesh Manav Sehgal, Software designers; Papiha Saha, Yatish Jain, Graphic designers; R. Sarath, video producer and Amar Behl, installation designer. Neena Ranjan, IAS, Joint Secretary IGNCA and XEROX PARC's Information Sciences and Technologies Laboratory Manager, Per-Kristian Halvorsen, provided the project management required for the *Gita Govinda* laboratory to manifest their creativity.

The Physical and Virtual Multimedia Spaces



The Experience consisted of a network of 13 physical and virtual multimedia spaces that interpret the songs of the poem spatially, laid out across two circular rings. Arranged on the circular axis are the songs of the poem, showing various emotional situations of Radha and Krishna in love. The two rings represent the poem's meanings through diverse media:

The outer ring presents the interpretation of the songs by artists, painters, musicians and dancers. Through interactive kiosks, users can browse through the artistic performances and paintings; and The inner ring presents discussions with scholars on the higher levels of meaning of the poem.

This presentation involved indepth analysis of six out of the twenty four songs of the Gita Govinda. Each song has been interpreted in the roughly, 19 artistic genres of painting, music and dance. Users can explore the interpretations of Gita Govinda by artists genre representing a complete world in itself, each with its own autonomy of form, symbols and techniques.

Public Response

The Multimedia Experience was enjoyed by thousands of visitors. The overwhelming responses has inspired the IGNCA to consider holding this multimedia presentation in other parts of the world. Given below are some thought-provoking and beautiful responses:

"This fusion of thought and action has built a bridge of communication between traditional art and modern technology. That you should have chosen the Gita Govinda as the first such 'bridge' reflects in ample measure and intellectual heights that you have achieved."

Hari Shankar Singhania, President, J.K. Organisation, New Delhi

"It was a great experience to see how the rhythms of this marvellous poem echo through our country and have been transmuted from area to area in dance, music and painting. I hope this exhibition can go round in India and enrich the lives of the people by showing the essential unity of our traditions."

Ashok Desai, Attorney-General of India

"I must congratulate the IGNCA team which has put together the Gita Govinda in Multimedia in a very impressive form under your dynamic leadership. I went through the various levels of presentations with great interest and found it very user friendly and interest evolving."

Dr. Shyamal Ghosh, Secretary, Department of Electronics, Government of India

"The beauty of our culture and the power of new high technology combined with explosive creativity of your own conception made an indelible mark on my mind."

R.A. Mashelkar, Director-General,

Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, New Delhi

"I believe that a new dimension has been added to those of us who are trying to formulate a comprehension about Indian Culture. What is extremely important, it seems to me, is that these threads provide a much deeper insight into the identity of the subcontinent than trying to force down the idea of the Nation State. At one level its technical competence was superb, at another level it explored India in a manner never attempted before and yet at another level it began to explore the possibility of formulating, in modern times, a new form of Cultural identity to hold this ancient garden of wisdom together."

Romi Khosla, Architect

"A rare aesthetic experience successfully took us to the heights of creativity appreciation."

Dr. N. Radhakrishnan

Director, Gandhi Smriti & Darshan Samiti, New Delhi

"The technology explanation of a poem of such great truth and beauty opens up enormous possibilities for this innovative presentation."

Dr. Chitra Naik, Member, Planning Commission, New Delhi

"Fantastic! It's terrific that technology is teaching me heritage."

Ms. Vidya Viswanathan

"A mystical experience."

V.K. Saluja