

THE HINDU

Gita Govind at a glance

Date : 22.9.2023 | Edition : Chennai | Page : 3 | Clip size (cm) : W: 21 H:

20



Gita Govind at a glance

Kathak dancer Pali Chandra has choreographed all 12 chapters of the classic

Shailaja Tripathi

Pashyati dishi dishi rahasi bhavantam' – She is looking for him. She can see him everywhere, in every direction. She is actually thinking that he's here, he's there. Like Radha I've too have been through this when my husband was away for long," says Switzerland-based Kathak dancer Pali Chandra, elaborating on how an old text like Gita Govind remains relatable even today.

This 12th century love poem written by Jayadeva in Sanskrit,

has always been a subject of interest for dancers, musicians, and painters. So five years ago, Pali and her team set up a task for themselves. Last month, Pali launched the recording of her choreography depicting all 12 chapters, their 24 divisions called Prabandas, and 24 Ashtapadis (songs with 8 couplets). The recordings will be available to subscribers for different periods ranging from one to five years on Natyasutraonline.

For global audience

Pali says this project was triggered by the need to create a

work for herself and not for the audience abroad, whom she has always catered to. "I have done works based on Tchaikovsky's popular 'Swan Lake' and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. I presented a piece for the Millennium Dome inauguration in London. When I was in New York, I was doing something about their buildings and their architecture. When I was in Africa, I was working on Swahili, but there came a point where I just wanted to be me. So I was looking for that piece of literature that would mirror me." In Gita Govind, she discovered a story of any woman and man in love, not just Radha and Krishna.

A team of people was built to research and understand the text better. "Invis and Hari, the directors of the project, started getting in touch with various people who spoke Sanskrit and understood the language. We started to read about the culture, the tradition,

and the era in which it was written. I felt that though it was written 800 years ago, it needed to be projected in today's language. For example, the similes that Jayadeva has given are still relevant, but the tonal quality has changed," says Pali.

The project team

Around 200 people worked with Pali on various aspects of the production – research, costume, choreography and music. The work started during pandemic. "All of us who were feeling low at that point in time found solace in this piece of work. We were at different studios in various parts of the world."

It's a solo presentation featuring Pali Chandra. It's a blend of Kathak, Flamingo, jazz, and contemporary ballet. "Since I wanted to share the experience I have gained over the years, and across continents, I decided to combine various genres for this work. We have also used various instruments such as cello, piano, flute and Spanish guitar to create the score."

Belonging to the Lucknow gharana, Pali trained under Vikram Singhe, Pt Rammohan Maharaj, and Kapila Raj.

"My aim is to take classical dance to a global audience. I have also shared what made me take up this challenging project. The entire presentation, including demonstration, and explanation is 55-hour long," says Pali Chandra.

