



GITA GOVINDA AND ITS MUSICAL INTERPRETATIONS IN ODISSI TRADITION

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ABSTRACT

This topic deals with an overview of Gita Govinda of saint poet Jayadeva and its musical interpretations particularly in Odissi music. This particular field of investigation and research is always inspired by Gita Govinda, a renowned Sanskrit classic of poet Jayadeva. Shree Jayadeva was the 12th century most illustrious Sanskrit Saint-poet, for his glorious lyrical composition, the epic poem "Gita Govinda" in Sanskrit that portrays the supreme divine love of Krishna-an avatar of Vishnu and his consort, Radha. Gita Govinda's musical love theme has been portrayed beautifully through ages as an artist's compulsive passion depicting further the appreciation and pride for Jayadeva's masterpiece. Through his Gita Govinda, Sri Jayadeva has not only created a specific musical tradition where the music is organized into systematic form and definite melodic pattern based on raga-tala repertoires. It is universally acclaimed that Jayadeva's Gita Govinda is a musical classic of finely crafted lyrical composition.

KEYWORDS : Jayadeva, Gita Govinda, Odissi, Music, Verses

Jayadeva's intrinsic envision of the eternal longing and love-bond between the Supreme and an earthly human unfolding the absolute devotion of submission was orchestrated into such prolific, lyrical, well-articulated melodious verses as seen engraved in Gita Govinda. These verses were ornamented into the rhythms and rhymes of specific Ragas. Jayadeva was an expert in Gandharv Kala, which is the combination of Swara (notes), Tala (rhythm), Pada (words) and marga (higher style of recital). The Astapadi Prabandha compositions in words, Raga-Tala repertoire with melodious style of singing undoubtedly fascinate each listener. The simple Sanskrit language narrating frolic love affairs of Radha and Krishna that is set into classical music attract not only the persons having knowledge in Sanskrit but also to the common people through its immense musical appeal. As perceived, Jayadeva was a secular mystic poet of love and romanticism as well as the saint and real devotee of Krishna. This dual character of the poet is reflected in the various verses of Geeta Govinda. The 26 verses of Jayadeva which is quoted in the Sadukti-Karnamrita are indicative of the wide range of his poetic interest and achievement which were confined to both love, eroticism as well as consistent undercurrent of Vaisnav faith and devotion in his articulation. Literary flavor is predominant in his work in the diction of Sringara i.e. love and love play. The masterpiece was destined to be dedicated at the lotus feet of Supreme Lord Jagannatha, the ancestral Deity of Odias worshiped at Puri of Utkala, now the state of Odisha. Jayadev's extreme devotion for the Supreme and his consciousness of the Supreme's love for "Sri Devi" is portrayed in Gita Govinda.

The poet's visualization of the Supreme love in the Lord's divine form of Krishna towards Devi Radha was expressed in his musical composition, consumed although with apparent human-like passion, has an underlying inscription of over whelming spiritual love with complete surrender to the Devine. His composition has since then been perpetually resourced as the divine music of the Hindu temples all over India and also to the literary societies, academic and non-academic institution of all Hindu traditions, especially to the Vaishnavism faith. So powerful was its lyrics and music that Gita Govinda even had tremendous impact in revolutionizing and re-vitalizing the socio-cultural aspects of communal existence. The music had become a source of bonding in communal way of life that existed then. It was instrumental in retrieving and sustaining the establishment of lost religious activities not just in Odisha but throughout India, explicitly by virtue of the astounding spiritual love depicted with complete musical decoration in his Gita Govinda songs. Moreover, the perception of such human emotions when incorporated into such finely orchestrated

composition foretells the ultimate exotic experience of the Infinite itself.

This was how the tremendous impact of poet Jayadev's Gita Govinda had on the school of bards, authors, musicians, philosophers and in general on all being. Sri Jayadeva had composed the illustrious Gita Govinda following the specifications of Udrmagadhi Prabutti, as mentioned in the Natya Shastra of Bharat muni, with setting to Ardhmagadhi padasrita giti, Bhinna Swarasrita gitiani Navatalasrita gitithat point to the present day Odissi music. It is assumed and acknowledged that the Gita Govinda was written in order to be sung before Lord Jagannatha exclusively. Jayadeva was an expert in Gandharv Kala, that represents the combination of Swara (notes), Tala (rhythm), Pada (words) and marga (higher style of recital). Here, the Astapadi Prabandha compositions in Raga, Tala based simple Sanskrit text with melodious style of singing has fascinated its ardent listener. It is the simplified language of Sanskrit used to unfold the frolic love affairs of Radha and Krishna narrated through unique organization of classical music structure that has attracted not only the persons having knowledge of Sanskrit and classical music but also the common people through its immense musical appeal. Additionally, this sacred piece of lyrical structure astoundingly consists of all the distinguished salient features of Indian classical music, significantly depicting the antiquity of Odia music in its classical form.

The audience of Gita Govinda are bound to comprehend this to appreciate the uniqueness and wholesomeness of Odissi music. Although Jayadeva has composed the lyrics of Gita Govinda based on particular Ragas and Talas, he has not described the characteristic features of these Ragas & Talas. The ragas he used in Gita Govinda are Malav, Gurjari, Vasanta, Ramakeri, Malavagouda, Gundakeri, Karnata, Desakhya, Desa Varadi, Vairaba, Bivasa and the talas are Rupaka, Nihsara, Jati, Ekatali, Astatali, etc. These ragas and talas are mostly suitable for romantic sentiment. The songs of Gita Govinda are uniquely coded with traditional music sastra of Odisha.

The substance of the Prabandha is called the Dhatu which are four types, such as, Udgraha, the first part; followed by Melapaka and Dhruva; and the last part is the Abhoga. Except the first and second Prabandha of Gita Govinda, the rest of the Prabandhas are composed with all the four Dhatus. Traditionally, although Prabandha itself is Suddha gita, the songs of Gita Govinda are not classified under Suddha but under the eight stanza-based, Astapadi, the Dhruva Panchalithat belong to Chitrakala of Khudragita

classification. Since they are composed, confined to specific raga and tala, they belong to the Nibaddha class and not Anibaddha class of music.

There are six padas between Dhruba and Abhoga of each Prabandha of Gita Govinda, which we call as the Antara. This also is part of the Sangita Shastra. The songs of Gita Govinda, even though melodious, there is no direct mention or utilization of the Swaras in the Dhatus of the Prabandha. Moreover, there is neither any mention of Tenakha, Badyakhyra, or Ukutadi nor about the Talas of the Prabandha. But the Prabandhas are full of the descriptive intricacy of characteristic Gunas and Padaarrangement. Since, these songs of Gita Govinda are composed with the help of Biruda and Pada, the two Angas, it appropriately belongs to the Tarabalee class or Jati of Prabandha. However, the complete structural musicality of the songs of Gita Govinda comes from its use and mention of Ragas and Talas. Gita Govinda composition is ornamented with the uniquely lyrical (matu), powerful language based on Ragas endowed beautifully, enchanting Swarabana or Dhvnee, making it the most suitable medium for entertaining Lord Jagannath. Beside the Ragas and Talas that Jayadeva used for the ornamentation of his composition, there are other distinctive features, such as his diction, phrasing of the Prabandha with abundant use of alliteration, the repetition of the same sound, rhymes and inter-rhymes (Antyanuprasa and Madhyanuprasa). Rhyming in compositions had started around seventh or eighth century, largely under the influence of folk poems or the local vernacular and probably integrated with all its splendour into Jayadeva's Gitagovinda. It seems Jayadeva had adapted the musical moraic meters of vernacular poetry in order to create a medium of song within conventional Sanskrit poetry. No doubt the Gita-govinda is the most significant poem in the history of Sanskrit literature so far the metrical innovations and rhymes are concerned. In many of the poems it is the sound rather than the sense that overpowers the whole poetic structure, thus creating an atmosphere of intoxication through its cadence and rhythm. Since the time of Jayadeva's composition of songs in Sanskrit, a similar trend apparently was followed by the poets of later time who had consistently incorporated Sanskrit as the language for song composition in Odisha.

As composed, the real beauty of the Gita Govinda lies in its music. The lyrics are organized in such a way that a talented composer can fit a large number of tunes and unleash his creativity, letting the music speak voluminously more than even the words for itself. The tradition of Gita Gobinda singing has been initiated since the time of Jayadeva with his composition of Gita Govinda. Sri Jayadeva's illustrious Gita Govinda composition has followed the specifications of Udramagadhi prabritti, Ardha magadhi Padasrita giti, Bhinna swarasrita giti and navatalasrita giti set to talas (rhythms), such as Rupaka, Nisaraha, Jati, Astatala, & Ekatali, which are included in navatalas commonly used in Odissi till to-day. Gita Govinda's symphonic syntax set in rhymes, rhythms and ragas fascinates each music lover, composer or lyricist, providing innumerable scope beyond horizon with unique mystic fondness. Poet Jayadeva with all his brilliance although has prescribed particular Ragas and Talas for each song, he has not depicted the characteristic features of these Ragas & Talas. Since the specificity of the Raga- Tala Lakhyana used in Jayadeva's composition was unavailable then, it was indecipherable to know the Gamut of the notes of the ragas, the beats of the talas and their characteristic features.

The characteristic features of the Ragas of Gita Govinda was gradually clarified. Jayadeva had approached the medium of music to express his devotion through Gita Govinda to Lord Jagannath. Thus, by adopting all the characteristic features of music, he had made Gita Govinda the most lyrical

composition that the world had to treasure. Sri Jayadeva has uniquely composed Gita Govinda in conjunction with his musical skills and magical vocal genres. Most of the Odia compositions based on Radha-Krishna or Krishna-related epics were highly influenced by Gita Govinda's extraordinary elusive subject and supply of lyrical classical architecture to certain extent but the ones that were highly popularized and upgraded the Odia musical status. The music of Odisha has carried a glorious tradition with the onset of the composition of Gita Govinda by Odia poet Jayadeva.

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