



The Essence of Gitagovinda and Odissi Music

KEYWORDS

JAYADEV, ODISSI, MUSIC, CLASSICAL, ASTAPADIS

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ABSTRACT *In Odisha, original Indian classical music in the form of "Raga-Pravandha-Gana" was transformed to Raga-Ksyudra-Geeta Pravandha Gana by Sri Jayadeva, the great composer, illustrious musician, a saint poet of Odisha as well as great devotee of Lord Jagannath. He was born in the first half of the 13th century A.D. in the village Kenduli on the sacred river Prachi in the district of Puri and gave new shape, new taste and colour to Indian Classical music through his ever glittering and uncomparable compositions of Sri Geeta Govinda. Ingredients of classical music like Raga-Tala-Geeta-Chhandas etc. of Sri Geeta Govinda were introduced in the services of the temple of the Lord Jagannath and was accepted as the temple music of Odisha.*

The traditional school of classical music presently popular as Odissi was referred to by Bharatmuni, Matanga muni, Saraangadev under an independent nomenclature Udrumugudhi prabritti, which was once popular as Kaling music, Utkal music or Jayadevi music in different periods. One does not require to survey the history, delve deep into texts and characteristic features of Odissi system to understand its classy style if he atleast reads and listens to Gitagovinda of Sri Jayadev. As this sacred piece of lyrical poem contains all the salient and distinguishing features of classical music, the reader or listener must appreciate the uniqueness and wholesomeness of Odissi as the third system of classical music in the domain of Indian music.

Sri Jayadev has composed this illustrious Gitagovindas as per the specifications of Udrumagadhi prabritti, Ardhamagadhi Padasrita giti, Bhinna swarasrita giti and navatalasrita giti. The songs of Gitagovinda are set to talas (rhythms) such as Rupaka Nisarah Jati Astatala, & ekatali, which are included in navatalas, commonly used in Odissi till to-day. The raga repertoire used in Gitagovinda such as Malava, Gurjari, Vasanta, Ramakiri, Malavagouda, Gundakiri, Karnata,

Desakhya, Desavaradi, Bhairavi, Varadi etc. are being recited in Lord Jagannath temple as well as all the corners of Odisha since 12th century. Can we not claim without oddity that these are native ragas of Odisha? After around 100 years of Sri Jayadev, Sri Sarangadev has identified some of the aforesaid ragas as kriyanga or adhunaprasidha ragas. By the 14th century then ragas of Gitagovinda had become so popular throughout India that Lochan kavi of Mithila distinguished these ragas as Jayadevi ragas because these were being recited, delineated and developed by Sri Jayadev with distinctive musical entity.

The characteristic features of ardhmagadhi padashrita giti is clearly understood from the titles of the cantos such as Samoda-Damodara, Aklesha-Keshava, Mugdha Madhusudana, Snigdha-Madhava, Sakankhya-Pundarikakhya, Sotkantha-Vaikuntha, NagaraNarayana,

Bilakhya-Lakhmipati, MugdhaMukunda, Chatura-Chaturbhuj, SanandaDamodara and Suprita-Pitambar. About characteristic features of ardhmagadhi giti, Dattila has said - "Ardhakala nibruttaistu varnadhy Chardhamagadhi."

(Dattilam 2:238B) i.e. Ardhmagadhi is rich in varnas and has repetitions made in half that time. Sarangadev has also written in Sangit Ratnakara that "Purvayoh padayoaryodhai Charamediradodite." Sri Jayadev has composed Gitagovinda according to this principles. The recital of Gitagovinda follows the specifications of Bhinna-giti. According to Mattanga muni, Bhinnagiti is said to be mobile, curved, subtle, spread out, attractive with cadence and made to shine up wards.

"Sukshmaischa prachalairavkrullasita prasaritaih. / Lalitastaramandraischa bhinna gitirudahruta." (Brihaddesi 3:276)

Prior to Jayadev (12th century AD), the tradition of music in Kalinga, Utkal was rich but the gities (style of recital) flourished during Jain period was almost lost. But the essence of Buddhist music which had reached the zenith during 7th to 11th century maintained its identity at-least till Jayadev's time. According to Madanlal Vyasa, Sri Jayadev was a smarta (ardent brahmin) means an erudite scholar in smruiti shastra and a devotee of five deities. Supporting the views and statements of others, he has again said that Jayadev was a follower of Sahajajana (easier path) and was well versed in charya gitika. It is perspicuous that Jayadev had knowledge about Charyagiti i.e. Buddhist music. One has to acknowledge that Gitagovinda was written in order to be sung before Lord Jagannath exclusively and since then (12th century) the recital is being continued as daily ritual in Srimandira to propitiate the Lord. We cannot construe that the conventional rendition style of Gita Gobinda is completely lost. The rhetoric words, symphonic syntax set to rhymes, rhythms and ragas of Gita Gobinda fascinate the hearts and minds of each listener with rapture. Jayadev has engirdled the transcendence hence with the transient in simple Sanskrit grandiloquence. He has elucidated with lucidity the supreme love between Lord Krishna (Parama) and Radha (Jiva) in earthly mood. This unparalleled and superb piece of lyrical literature and classical music transgress all human hearts. Gita means song and Govinda is a synonym for Lord Krishna. Go is the metonym for cow, world, heaven, veda mata, gayatri, vak (speech) and vani (voice). He who knows the theology of vak and vani is called Govinda. Sri Jayadev has composed Gitagovinda in conjunction with his musical skill and magical vocal genres. At the outset he has paid auspicious salutation

to the Goddess of learning, Sri Saraswati, who stays in his heart. In comparison with Umapatidhar, Sarana, Dhoi and Gobardhanacharya he has ranked himself as the best for his composition with sweet words, romantic and erotic sentiments, amorous love story of Radha-Krishna and above all aesthetic essence; the articulation of which imbues ecstasy and alacrity in each heart. Shri Jayadev has again confirmed in the 12th canto that let the dilettantes know the theme of gandharva (art of music), skill of recital, essence of romantic sentiments, the art of writing lyrical poems and clandestine love affairs of Radha-Krishna from Gita Gobinda.

In Gitagovinda Sri Jayadev has not only embellished his lyrical poems with music and melodious versifications but also with philosophy, metaphysics, ontology and mysticism. His music is meant not only for the purpose to please but to enlighten through entertainment creating aesthetic

Emotions, a sense of spiritual love, supreme beauty and perpetual peace. Therefore Gitagovinda has maintained ascendancy since it is written.

Sri Jayadev's Hari means Srikrushna is seated on the hood of the king of serpents with a flute and lotus. Through the dazzling flashes of gems in the hoods, Hari wants to see Lakshmi in his uncounted eyes. Probably for that he took multiplied shapes. "Let him save you." A stone made serpent with seven hoods is found in the village Kendubilow, Khurda district (erstwhile Puri), the birth place of Sri Jayadev. This indicates that Ragaputra Kalinga is a native raga of the then Kalinga music, now known as Odissi.

The quintessence of Odissi music is discerned in the intrinsic vision of the learners and listeners, who repose in Gitagovinda, for its traits like composition, improvisation, raga repertoire, treatment of rhythms and rhymes, usage and genre. Sri Jayadev has not only originated a specific music tradition, systematic form and definite melodic pattern, raga-tala repertoires but also built a socio-cultural community. The purity, sanctity and characteristic features of Odissi music have been enriched refined and pervaded its horizon through Gitagovinda of Sri Jayadev. We have the first evidence of Odissi music in an articulated and systematic form from the versifications of Gitagovinda. This

sent and seer, poet and musician, Sri Jayadev was born at Kendubillow of Odisha. We adore him as the progenitor of Odissi system of classical music.

Odissi music gives great importance to the lyric where words are required to be sung without fragmentation or distortion. All songs are required to be sung in specific 'raagas' and 'Taalas'. Typical Odissi taalās have a different distribution of beat and pause from north or south Indian taalās with the same number of beats. Odissi style of singing lays great stress on 'Prabandha' or 'text of the song'. All Odissi lyricists are reknowned poets - Jayadev, Kavisamrat Upendra Bhanja, Deenkrushna, Kavisurya Baladev Ratha, Gopalkrushna, Banamali etc. Odissi songs traditionally depict the love and frolics of Radha and Krishna. Odissi dance is usually performed to the accompaniment of Odissi music. Originally Odissi was sung to the dance of the 'Maharis' (Devadasis) at the Jagannath Temple, and was later sung to dances by young boys, 'Gotipuas' performing Odissi dance. The Odissi music of today has evolved from the style of 'Gotipua' music.

Odissi style of classical music has some similarity with Hindustani 'Dhrupad' style. 'Gamak' is common to both, though Odissi also adopts the 'Tom Nom' sounds. The percussion instrument played with Odissi music is the 'Mardal', which is similar to 'pakhawaj'. Temple sculptures in Odisha abound in statues of 'Mardal' players.

Odissi has certain similarities with the Karnataka style of music also. At one time the Kalinga Empire extended all the way up to the river Kaveri and incorporated major parts of Karnataka. King Purosottam Deva of Odisha conquered Kanchi and married the princess. There were many singers from South India in the courts of Odisha. The main singer of the compositions of Kavisurya was Rajamani, a Telugu weaver. Therefore, a strong influence of Karnataka style of music is prevalent in Odissi music. Many renowned Odissi lyricists like Upendra Bhanja, Kavisurya, Gopalkrushna, Gaurahari etc. are from South Odisha where Karnataka had a strong influence. It is this interaction between Odisha and South India that led to the widespread singing of Jayadeva's 'Astapadis' in South Odisha in typical karnataka style of music.

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