

The Style of Gita Govinda Recital and Odissi Music

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ABSTRACT : *In Gita Govinda, Sri Jayadeva has embellished the philosophy, metaphysics, ontology and mysticism in erotic words, melodious versifications, ardent love pictures and pornography delineating the clandestine love of Radha and Krishna. It points to union of natural beings with super nature. Jayadeva Radha is not only radiant, fascinating or angelic, she represents celestial beauty and her union with Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, unfolds supreme love and eternal delight. One does not require surveying the history, delving deep into texts and characteristic features of Odissi system to understand its classy style if he at least reads and listens to Gitagovinda of Sri Jayadeva. 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 Jayadeva 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 Jayadeva.*

KEYWORDS: JAYADEVA, GITA GOVINDA, ODISSI, MUSIC, CLASSICAL

Introduction

Music is an integral part of human life, which is created when the vibratory waves are brought into melodious audible notes in material form. Human beings are consciously or unconsciously tuned into the vibration of the cosmos. In each walk of life, music is judged as the best among 64 types of arts. The architects express through their architecture for a utilitarian purpose, the painters express to represent the visible, the poets express through the medium of words for communication, where musicians express their consciousness through notes, tunes, beats and rhythms not only for the purpose to please but also to enlighten through entertainment. The ultimate objective of music is to produce aesthetic emotions creating a sense of spiritual love, supreme beauty, eternal peace and inner pleasure. Gita Govinda in one sense means song of Govinda, in other sense Gita is Govinda. To sing Gita Govinda means to worship Govinda or Lord Jagannatha. The supreme love between Lord Krishna and Radha has been enshrined in earthly mould. Gita Govinda is the quintessence of love between Radha and Krishna or human being with super being. Jayadeva has engirdled the transcendence with the transient in simple Sanskrit grandiloquence of Gita Govinda. The symphonic syntax set in rhymes, rhythms and ragas fascinates each reader and listener with ecumenical predilection. The sensuous and melodious effects of this superb, unparalleled piece of lyrical literature and classical music transgress all human heart, mind and soul. In this classic work, the poets milieu has established relevance to present and future generations in different cultural contexts. Therefore poet Mahipati declares Sri Jayadeva as an incarnation of Vyasa.

Jayadeva has prescribed particular Ragas and Talas for each song. But he has not depicted the characteristic features of these Ragas & Talas. The ragas 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 suitable for romantic sentiment. The timings of recital of Odissi Ragas synchronise with different seasonal festivals of Odissa. For example, it is enjoined that Vasant raga be recited at any time between Sri Panchmi and Vishnu Sayana and Malabashree from Indra Puja to Durga Puja. In 13th century, Sarangadev has identified some Kriyanga ragas and adhuna prashiddha ragas, which include the ragas of Gita Govinda.

Due to non-availability of his treatise Raga- Tala Lakhyana it is inscrutable to know the gamut of the notes of the ragas and beats of the talas and their characteristic features. However, we find their characteristic features from the poetic translation of Gita Govinda by Dharani dhara Dash of 16th century. There-in he has mentioned the features of Jayadeva ragas. It is observed that these features are found same with the lakhyanas narrated by Sri Harichandana in Sangeeta Muktabali written in the last decade of the 16th century. There-from we get clear and correct features of the ragas. By 14th century, the ragas of Gita Govinda had become so popular throughout India that, Lochana Pandit of Mithila in 14th century distinguished some ragas used according to Jayadeva's tradition such as Jayadevaideshakhya and Jayadevairamakeri. etc. Now we are demanding Odissi music to be classical basing on ragas and talas of Gita Govinda and Sri Jayadeva as the progenitor.

Sri Jayadeva has composed illustrious Gita Govinda as per the specification of Udrmagadhi Prabritti that is mentioned in Natya Shastra of Bharat muni set in Ardhamagadhi padasrita giti, Bhinna Swarasrita giti and Navatalasrita giti which point to present day Odissi music. One has to acknowledge that the Gita Govinda was written in order to be sung before Lord Jagannath exclusively.

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 fascinate each listener. The simple Sanskrit language and frolic love affairs of Radha and Krishna set in classical music attract not only to the persons having knowledge in Sanskrit but also to the common people through its immense musical appeal.

The Odia's worship Gita Govinda manuscripts with their home deities. Most of the Odia's sing Gita Govinda as morning and evening prayer. They also worship Sri Jayadeva as an incarnation of Lord Jagannath. The recital of Gita Govinda is one of the unavoidable Sevas of Lord Jagannath. Each Odia believes Lord Jagannath as their National God. They recite Gita Govinda regularly to propitiate blessings of Lord Jagannath. There is a belief that when someone recites Gita Govinda in sitting position, Lord Jagannath listens in standing position and when the singer is in standing position the Lord listens it in sitting position. Even it is said that once the Lord had come outside the temple to listen Gita Govinda from a gardener's daughter in brinjal field.

The style of Gita Govinda recital in Lord Jagannath temple has not lost its purity. As Gita Govinda is being recited in many parts of the country as well as abroad there is every possibility that original music may undergo a change. We, as his followers should try to maintain its purity.

Sri Jayadeva has composed this illustrious Gitagovinda as per the specifications of Udrmagadhi prabritti, *Ardha Magadhi 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*, *Gurjjari*, *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 Jayadeva, Sri Sarangadev has identified some of the aforesaid ragas as *kriyagh* or *adhunaprasidha raga's*. By the 14th century the ragas of Gitagovinda had become so popular throughout India that *Lochan kavi* of Mithila distinguished these ragas as Jayadevai ragas because these were being recited, delineated and developed by Sri Jayadeva with distinctive musical entity.

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 Jayadeva 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 Jayadeva 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 Govinda.

In Gitagovinda Sri Jayadeva 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.

A palm-leaf manuscript of Gitagovinda written in Odia script in 18th century is preserved in National Museum, New Delhi. In which, the icons of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra are drawn in letters.

In Ragamala painting, we find *Ragaputra Kalinga* (Kangra, pahari, circa AD 1790) which is analogical with a stanza in the 12th canto of Gitagovinda.

*"Paryankikrutananaganayak aphanasrani maninagane
Sankranta pratibimba sanklanayabibrat bibhubikriyam.
Padambhoruhadharibaridhi sutam kshyanam didrukshyuh sataih.
Kayabyuhamiba charannu pachitakuto harih pata bah."*

The above stanza written in sanskrit by Sri Jayadeva has been translated by Arnold as under –

*"Hari keep you ! He whose might, On the king of Serpents seated,
Flashes forth in dazzling light From the great snake's gems repeated.
Hari keep you ! He whose graces, Manifold in majesty, -
Multiplied in heavenly places - Multiply on earth to see
Better with a hundred eyes Her bright charms who by him lies."*

Sri Jayadev's Hari means Sri Krushna 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 Jayadeva. 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. 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 Jayadeva was born at Kendubillow of Odisha. We adore him as the progenitor of Odissi system of classical music. Mr. HA Popley said in his work, 'The Music of India' (1st edition 1921) that "The first north Indian musician whom we can definitely locate both in time and place is Jayadeva, who lived at the end of twelfth century. He was born at Kendula, near Bolpur, where the poet Laureate of Bengal and modern India lives today. Kendula still celebrates an annual fair at which the best musical pieces are regularly performed. Jayadeva wrote and sang Gitagovinda, a series of songs descriptive of the amours of Krishna, and so belongs to the number of India's lyrical songsters connected with *bhakti* revival. Though each song has the name of the raga and tala to which it was sung these are not intelligible to-day to Indian musicians."

By the time (1921) Mr. Popley wrote the said text, probably no modern Odia scholars have protested the dubious information about birth place of Sri Jayadeva although he belongs to Odisha. However now many researchers, scholars, poets, pandits and musicians of Odisha as well as West Bengal have clarified with supporting evidences that the real birth place of Jayadeva is Kendubilow of Khurda district (erstwhile Puri), Odisha.

Prior to Jayadeva (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 Jayadeva was a *smarta* (ardent brahmin) means an erudite scholar in smriti Shastra and a devotee of five deities. Supporting the views and statements of others, he has again said that Jayadeva was a follower of *Sahajajana* (easier path) and was well versed in *charya gitika*. From the Odiya daily, the Sambad dt. 20.8.03 we come across a news item that Prof. Satyakam Sangupta (a scholar of West Bengal) has said "Jayadeva has placed Buddhadev as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu in his Dasavatara prabandha of Gita Govinda. Therefore, it is perspicuous that Jayadeva 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 Govinda is completely lost. The rhetoric words, symphonic syntax set to rhymes, rhythms and ragas of Gita Govinda fascinate the hearts and minds of each listener with rapture. Jayadeva 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.

It is a fact that Gitagovinda is recited in all parts of India including the north and south. It may be said that music of ancient India is not intelligible to many extents, but not Jayadev's music, which is regularly being recited in the temple of Lord Jagannath as a daily ritual as well as in all corners of Odissa. If there is doubt everybody is free to make further research and study to accentuate the truth. When Sri Jayadeva is an Odia and his Gitagovinda is set to native ragas, talas and sung according to Ardhamagadhi padasrita giti, Bhinna swarashrita giti, Odissi vocal which follows its traits and tradition is also classical. Truly Odissi vocal is classical and it is a different system from Hindustani and Carnatic. Therefore, Sri Jayadeva is the progenitor of Odissi music.

The Classical Odissi Music owes much to the great Saint poet, Jayadeva, whose highly lyrical Geet Govind, composed in Sanskrit in the 12th Century was ritually sung in many of these temples. By the 15th Century instead of Sanskrit, Odia language was being used for literary works and the poetry developed on the love theme of Radha and Krishna. The musical forms like Chhanda, Chautisha, Champu, Chaupadi, Bhajan, and Janana had developed. The period between 16-19th century under the local patronage saw great composers of lyrical music based on raga (tune) and tala (beat). Treatises on music like Sangitarnava, Chandrika, Gita Prakasha, Sangita Kalpalata, Sangita Sarani and Sangita Narayana were compiled. Jayadeva, the saint-poet, the great composer and illustrious master of classical music, has immense contribution to Odissi music.

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