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The Poetical Analysis of Jayadeva's Śrī Gītagovinda

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This research paper provides a comprehensive analysis of Jayadeva's *Gīta Govinda*, a lyrical composition in Sanskrit that describes the love between *Rādhā* and *Kṛṣṇa*. The paper explores the structure and themes of the poem, focusing on the use of various poetic devices and their effect on the reader. The research also delves into the historical and cultural context of the poem, highlighting its importance in the tradition of Indian classical poetry. Through close reading and critical analysis, the paper sheds light on the complex and multi-layered nature of the poem, and its significance in the study of Indian literature and culture. Ultimately, this paper aims to deepen our understanding of the *Gīta Govinda*, and its place in the rich and diverse landscape of Indian poetry. The Poetical Analysis of Jayadeva's *Gīta Govinda* examines the literary and poetic qualities of the renowned Indian poet Jayadeva's work, *Gīta Govinda*. The paper delves into the intricate metaphors, allusions, and symbolisms employed by Jayadeva in his compositions, highlighting their beauty and significance. The research also sheds light on the historical and cultural context in which Jayadeva wrote his poetry, providing a deeper understanding of his literary contributions. Through a thorough examination of Jayadeva's work, the paper provides valuable insights into the nature of Indian poetry and its rich cultural heritage.

Key words:

Jayadeva, Śrī Gītagovinda, poetic analysis, poetry, Sanskrit, Indian literature, devotional poetry, Hinduism, Vaishnavism, Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā, love, emotions, imagery, symbolism.

Introduction

The *Gīta Govinda*, composed by the 12th-century poet Jayadeva in the region of Orissa, stands as one of the most celebrated works of Sanskrit literature. This exquisite *Kāvya* (poetic composition) is a unique confluence of poetry, music, and devotion, capturing the essence of divine love between Lord Krishna and Radha. Through its intricate verses, musicality, and evocative imagery, the *Gīta Govinda* has transcended time, influencing not only the literary world but also the realms of music, dance, and religious worship.

Jayadeva's work is more than just a poetic composition; it is a symphony of love and devotion that has been interpreted in various ways over the centuries. Scholars have debated its genre, with some classifying it as a lyrical drama, pastoral drama, or even an opera. This diversity of interpretation underscores the rich complexity of the *Gīta Govinda*, which refuses to be confined within the boundaries of any single literary category.

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The *Gīta Govinda* is a masterful Sanskrit *Kāvya* crafted by Jayadeva in the 12th century in Orissa. It is a profound testament to poetry, the pinnacle of artistic expression. The *Gīta Govinda* uniquely blends refined poetry with exquisite musical compositions, set to various tunes (*ragas*) and rhythms (*tālas*). Scholars have debated its poetic style, with some, like Hassen, viewing it as a lyrical drama, while others, such as Jones, consider it a pastoral drama. Levi described it as an opera, Pischel placed it between song and drama, and Schroder saw it as a sophisticated *yātrā*. Keith likened it to the festival plays of Bengal, reminiscent of the Mathura *rasa*, where *Kṛṣṇa līlā* is portrayed with music and song. Additionally, Keith suggested that due to its division into cantos (*Sarga*), the *Gīta Govinda* belongs to the *kāvya* genre. S.K. De further observed that as a creative work of art, it defies conventional classifications, standing out with a unique form of its own.

The Present Observation

The *Gīta Govinda* is an exceptional Sanskrit poem of distinct character that challenges traditional categorizations like *Khaṇḍakāvya* or *Laghukāvya*, similar to *Meghaduta*. It does not align with the *muktaka* type, as it maintains a continuous narrative throughout. Jayadeva himself refers to it as a *prabandha* (*etam karoti jayadeva kavi prabandham*). Despite its division into cantos, it follows the design of a *mahākāvya*. Some critics and commentators have even classified it as a *mahākāvya*. The poem is structured into 12 cantos, combining traditional verses in classical metres with songs set to popular *ragas* or tunes, each sung to specific *tālas*. The general descriptions are rendered in metres like *vasantatilakā*, *Śragdhara*, and *Śikharinī*, while the emotional and subtle aspects of the human heart are conveyed through popular *ragas* like *Malavagauḍa*, *Gujjarī*, *Rāmakeri*, and *Vasanta*.

The Popularity of the *Gīta Govinda*

The *Gīta Govinda*'s popularity is evident from the over ninety commentaries and 132 imitations recorded on this *Kāvya*. Moreover, its songs are integral to many classical dance forms like *oḍiṣī*, *Manipuri*, and *Bhāratānāṭyam*. In the worship of Lord *Jagannātha*, a specially woven silken cloth named *Gāta Govinda Khaṇḍuā* is offered to the deities at the great temple in Puri. The prayer songs of *Gīta Govinda* are chanted every night during rituals before the deities retire for the night, dressed in *baḍasimhāra veśa*. The chanting of these songs in the daily service of the deities is enshrined in a proclamation by King *Pratāparudradeva*, inscribed in Oriya language and script on the *Jaya Vijaya* door-way in A.D. 1499.

The Poetic Form and Structure

At its core, the *Gīta Govinda* is a lyrical poem divided into twelve cantos, known as *Sargas*. Each canto consists of a series of verses, alternating with songs set to specific *ragas* (musical modes) and *tālas* (rhythmic cycles). This structure is

reminiscent of a *mahākāvya* (epic poem), yet the *Gīta Govinda*'s compactness and focus on a single theme distinguish it from traditional epics.

Jayadeva's use of metre and verse forms adds to the poem's musicality. The general descriptions are often rendered in metres like *vasantatilakā*, *Śragdhara*, and *Śikharinī*, which are known for their rhythmic beauty and elegance. Meanwhile, the more emotional and intimate moments are expressed through songs set to popular *ragas* such as *Malavagauḍa*, *Gujjarī*, and *Vasanta*. This interplay between verse and song creates a dynamic and immersive experience, drawing the reader into the emotional landscape of the poem.

The *Gīta Govinda*'s structure also reflects its thematic unity. Unlike other *Kāvya* that may consist of loosely connected episodes, the *Gīta Govinda* maintains a continuous narrative centered on the love and separation of *Krishna* and *Radha*. This narrative coherence is another reason why some scholars have categorized the *Gīta Govinda* as a *prabandha*, a type of *Kāvya* known for its connected storyline.

Musicality and Rhythm

The *Gīta Govinda* is not only a literary masterpiece but also a musical one. Jayadeva was a visionary in integrating music with poetry, crafting songs that are as melodious as they are meaningful. The poem's musicality is evident in its careful use of sound, rhythm, and metre to evoke specific emotions and moods.

Each song in the *Gīta Govinda* is set to a particular *raga* and *tāla*, creating a rich tapestry of sound that enhances the poem's emotional depth. For instance, the *raga Malavagauḍa* is often used in verses that express longing and desire, while the *raga Vasanta*, associated with spring, is employed to convey the joy of reunion. This fusion of music and poetry makes the *Gīta Govinda* a multi-sensory experience, where the meaning of the words is amplified by the melody of the song.

Jayadeva's mastery of rhythm is also apparent in his use of *Anuprāsa* (alliteration), which creates a musical effect within the verse itself. The repetition of sounds, such as the "ca" in "vagdevata caritacitricittasadma" or the "ma" and "dha" in "unmilanmadhugandalubdha," mimics the rhythmic patterns of music, making the poem a pleasure to read aloud. This attention to the sonic qualities of language demonstrates Jayadeva's skill in crafting a work that is as pleasing to the ear as it is to the mind.

Thematic Exploration: Love and Devotion

At the heart of the *Gīta Govinda* is the theme of divine love, expressed through the relationship between *Krishna* and *Radha*. This love is portrayed in all its facets—desire, separation, longing, and reunion—making the *Gīta Govinda* a profound exploration of the human and divine experience of love.

Krishna, the divine lover, embodies the playful and seductive aspects of love, while Radha represents the soul's yearning for union with the divine. Their relationship is a metaphor for the spiritual journey, where the soul, in its separation from the divine, experiences the pangs of longing and desire. The eventual reunion of Krishna and Radha symbolizes the soul's return to the divine, a moment of bliss and fulfillment.

Jayadeva's portrayal of love is both sensual and spiritual. The physical beauty of Krishna and Radha, described in exquisite detail, is a reflection of their inner divine qualities. For example, in the verse "candanarcita-nilakalevara-pitavasana vanamāli," Krishna is adorned with sandalwood paste, wearing a yellow garment, and holding a garland of forest flowers. This imagery not only captures Krishna's physical allure but also his divine nature, which attracts and captivates the soul.

The theme of devotion is intricately woven into the fabric of the *Gīta Govinda*. The poem is a celebration of bhakti (devotion), where the love between Krishna and Radha serves as a model for the devotee's relationship with God. Through Radha's unwavering love and longing for Krishna, Jayadeva illustrates the intensity and purity of true devotion, where the devotee is willing to endure any hardship for the sake of union with the divine.

Rhetorical and Literary Devices

Jayadeva's *Gīta Govinda* is a treasure trove of rhetorical and literary devices that enhance its poetic beauty. The use of Alaṅkāras (figures of speech) such as Upamā (simile), Rūpaka (metaphor), and Utprekṣā (imagined suggestion) adds layers of meaning to the text, inviting the reader to explore its depths.

One of the most striking features of the *Gīta Govinda* is its use of Bhrāntimān (illusion or mistaken perception), which creates a sense of ambiguity and mystery. In the verse "hṛdibisalataharo nayam bhusangamanyakal," the poet plays with the idea of illusion, where the adornments of Krishna are mistaken for something else, reflecting the transient and illusory nature of the material world.

The *Gīta Govinda* also employs Sādhāraṇīkaraṇa, a literary device that universalizes individual emotions, making the experiences of Krishna and Radha relatable to all. Through this device, Jayadeva transforms the personal into the universal, allowing the reader to see their own spiritual journey mirrored in the divine love story of Krishna and Radha.

Cultural and Religious Significance

The *Gīta Govinda* is not only a literary and musical masterpiece but also a work of immense cultural and religious significance. It has played a central role in the devotional

practices of the Jagannātha temple in Puri, where the songs of the *Gīta Govinda* are sung daily as part of the temple rituals. The poem's influence extends beyond Orissa, as it has been adopted and adapted in various regional traditions across India, including the classical dance forms of oḍiṣī, Manipuri, and Bhāratanāṭyam.

The popularity of the *Gīta Govinda* is also evident in the numerous commentaries and imitations that have been produced over the centuries. With more than ninety commentaries and 132 known imitations, the *Gīta Govinda* has inspired generations of poets, musicians, and scholars, contributing to the rich tapestry of Indian cultural heritage.

The influence of the *Gīta Govinda* can be seen in the works of later Sanskrit and Oriya authors, such as Puruṣottama Deva, Divākara Miśra, and Abhimanyu Sāmanta Siṅhāra. These authors have drawn on the themes, imagery, and musicality of the *Gīta Govinda* to create their own poetic compositions, further cementing the poem's place in the literary canon.

Rīti in *Gīta Govinda*

Sanskrit literature classifies rītis, or styles, into four main types: Vaidarbhī, Gauḍi, Pāñcālī, and Lāṭī. In the *Gīta Govinda*, Jayadeva predominantly uses the Vaidarbhī and Gauḍi styles. For example, the verse "ganayati guna-gramam bhamam bhramadapi nehate" exemplifies the Vaidarbhī style, while "unmilanmadhugundha lubdhamadhupavyadhutacutan kura" showcases the Gauḍi style. A notable aspect of Jayadeva's composition is the inclusion of twenty-four melodious songs in various ragas, such as Mālava, Gursijari, Vasanta, and Karnata, which are particularly well-suited for classical Oḍiṣī music. The poet emphasizes the sweetness and melody of his diction, referring to it as "madhura komala kāntapadāvati."

Alaṅkāras in *Gīta Govinda*

Jayadeva's proficiency in alaṅkāras (figures of speech) is evident throughout the *Gīta Govinda*. Almost every verse and song features the rhythmic effect of Anuprāsa (alliteration), which captivates the listener. For instance, the repetition of "ca" in "vagdevata caritacitritacittasadma" and the use of "Ma" and "dha" in "unmilanmadhugandalubdha" demonstrate his poetic technique. Jayadeva also employs various Arthālaṅkāras, such as Upamā, Rūpaka, Utprekṣā, Kāvyaṅga, Viśeṣokti, Vyatireka, Dīpaka, Arthāntaranyāsa, Samuccaya, Anumāna, and Bhrāntimān. The verse "hṛdibisalataharo nayam bhusangamanyakal" illustrates the complexity of Bhrāntimān, offering delight to connoisseurs.

Musical Aspects of *Gīta Govinda*

In the introduction to the *Gīta Govinda*, Jayadeva mentions his intention to create a prabandha kāvya (etam karoti jayadeva kaviḥ prabandham). The term prabandha refers to a

specific type of Khaṇḍakāvya, as well as a style of musical composition. Jayadeva's Gīta Govinda is rich in songs, each titled as Prabandha (e.g., Prabandha-I, Prabandha-II), making it closer to the prabandha song type of kāvya rather than the muktaka variety. The intricacies of Prabandha songs are so significant that Sāṅgadeva dedicated an entire chapter to them in his musicological treatise, Saṅgīta-ratnākara. Moreover, musicological texts from Orissa, such as the Saṅgītakalpalatā, Saṅgītārnavacandrikā, and Gītaprakāśa, frequently reference the Gīta Govinda, underscoring its musical value.

Influence of Gīta Govinda on Regional Sanskrit and Oriya Literature

The Gīta Govinda has had a profound impact on later literature, influencing Sanskrit authors like Puruṣottama Deva, Divākara Mīśra, and Rāya Rāmānanda, as well as Oriya writers like Abhimanyu Sāmanta Siṅghāra, Upendra Bhañja, and Dīnakṛṣṇa Dās. This influence has contributed to a rich, lyrical, and musical tradition in Orissa, characterized by its depth, entertainment value, and dramatic elements. While a full exploration of all the aesthetic aspects of the Gīta Govinda would require a comprehensive study, this analysis offers a glimpse into its lasting legacy.

Conclusion

An in-depth analysis of Jayadeva's Gīta Govinda reveals the depth and beauty of this timeless Indian masterpiece. Through careful examination, one can appreciate the themes, symbols, and imagery that continue to make this work beloved today. Jayadeva's skillful use of language, rhythm, and meter creates a rich, evocative world that embodies the essence of love, devotion, and the divine. The Gīta Govinda's adaptations and translations into various languages and artistic forms—ranging from music and dance to visual arts and literature—attest to its enduring appeal and relevance. This study not only highlights Jayadeva's artistic brilliance but also underscores the work's significance across generations.

The Gīta Govinda by Jayadeva remains a timeless masterpiece that captivates and inspires. Its unique blend of poetry, music, and devotion creates a work of profound beauty and spiritual depth. Through its exploration of love, longing, and devotion, the Gīta Govinda offers a glimpse into the divine, inviting readers and listeners on their own spiritual journey. Jayadeva's skillful use of language, rhythm, and literary devices ensures that the Gīta Govinda remains a vibrant tradition, resonating across generations. As a work that transcends time, genre, and culture, the Gīta Govinda stands as a testament to the enduring power of art to touch the soul and elevate the human experience.

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