



# Vaishnava Philosophy and the Poetic Aesthetics: An Analysis of Jayadeva's Gitagovindam

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## Abstract

Literature finds the best expression when literary aesthetics and philosophy run side by side. The former offers the external charm, while the latter inculcates the more profound implication to provide it with a superior stature and permanence. Jayadeva's Gitagovindam, being a colossal work in the field of Vaishnava literature, does contain the brilliant juxtaposition of both. This article attempts to show how Jayadeva's Gitagovindam, an enormous work in Vaishnava literature, contains the brilliant juxtaposition of both. On the one hand, like a typical lyrical poem, its melodic nature does have a soothing effect. On the other, the use of philosophy instills in it a greater depth and seriousness to uplift itself as a book of devotion and religious inspiration. Moreover, the importance of this Holy Scripture lies in the fact that it not only played a significant role in paving the way to form a new sect in the Vaishnava religion, known as 'Gaudiya Vaishnavism', but also showed the later Vaishnava lyricists the art of portraying in words the amorous love of Lord Krishna and Radha with compassion and tears.

**Keywords-** Vaishnavism, Poetry, Love-Lyric, Philosophy, Aesthetics, Theology

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## Introduction

The astounding poetic excellence of Jayadeva has enticed scholars and academicians worldwide. The sweet and serene nature of his love lyrics (which he described as "Madhur Komala Kanta Padavalim", that is, the sweet, soft, and melodious verses) is proficient enough to engross the mind of anyone. By leveraging upon the subject of the amorous love of Lord Krishna and Radha, his Gitagovindam manifested itself as the first love lyric composed to introduce a new subject of poetic exploration in literature. Besides, the lyrical quality provides him with enough scope to 'express the intimate power of divine by allowing him to elaborate on the passion of Radha and Krishna to create an aesthetic atmosphere 'for devotees of Krishna'. (Miller, 1977, p.14) In other words, under the cloak of simplicity, the wealth of meaning is embedded in structurally intricate forms and concepts drawn from various levels of Indian literary tradition. In the words of Colin John Holecombe-

... With frank and tender lyricism, the Gitagovindam explored the many aspects of passion, from first awakening through fierce regrets and jealousies of to the rapture and contentment of bodily possession. On one level it narrates the loves of Radha and Krishna as simple cowherds, but the poem also celebrates nature's regeneration through sexual congress, the interplay of human and divine and the profound mystery of erotic experience. (Holecombe, 2008, p. 1)

The title of Jayadeva's Gitagovindam is a conglomeration of two words - 'Gita' and 'Govinda'. The Sanskrit word 'Gita' means song, and 'Govinda' is one of those one hundred and eight names of Lord Krishna. Taken together, the word Gitagovindam means songs composed to praise the grandeur of Lord Krishna. But a little penetration into the text will reveal the fact that the songs of Gitagovindam are not only a celebration of the glory of Lord Krishna alone, rather, they are eulogizing the transcendental relationship between Madhava and Radha. Their soothing, melodic nature can transport an individual to the world of divinity. The subject of Gitagovindam is not only the adoration of Lord Krishna and Radha, instead it is an allegory that uncovers the way through which an individual can obtain salvation by surrendering one's soul to the Supreme Lord. In other words, the songs of Gitagovindam are the

quest of Jiv-Atma (living soul) to have the pleasure of having the supreme company of Paramatma (Divine soul).

Gitagovindam is a manifestation of the versatile genius of the poet Jayadeva. Apart from bearing the essence of Jayadeva's unique poetic excellence, it also reflects upon Jayadeva's profound knowledge and command over Indian classical music. Several Vaishnava scholars have paid homage not only to his sublime vision and matured literary craftsmanship but also have adorned him for his command over the realm of Classical music. The twelve parts of Gitagovindam contain twenty-four songs, and every song clearly instructs how it should be sung, particularly Raga and Tala. A little knowledge of Hindustani classical music will enable us to perceive that there is a revelation of the author's profound understanding of the musical theory based on Sangeeta-sastra and dramatic science based on rasa-sastra. Every song is composed in a different classical melodic mode (raga) and rhythm (tala). That is why while reading Gitagovindam, it may seem 'as if Sri Jayadeva has directly experienced Sri Radha-Madhava's meeting and separation while meditating in trance'. (Mukhopadhaya, 2012, p. 110) He has prescribed the Tala and Raga of the song according to its subject matter and mood. For instance, before the beginning of the third song of Gitagovindam, it is clearly instructed that this song should be sung with Raga Vasanta and 'Jyoti' Tala. According to the Indian classical music tradition, the Raga Vasanta should be performed during spring, for it celebrates the festival of spring and the joyous spirit of men and women. Now, if we introspect into the subject matter of the song, we shall see the section is about the merriment of the joyous spirit of Lord Krishna, who is enjoying the sweetness of the spring along with other Gopis (cowherds). Therefore, the song's subject matter strongly resembles the raga under which it is instructed to be performed. Thus, one can conclude that if the English word lyric means a kind of composition meant to be sung along with the accompaniment, then Gitagovindam is undoubtedly an epitome of Indian lyric literature that tends to express the aesthetic as well as the philosophic essence of Indian culture and history. As one scholar has aptly commented,

The sensitiveness of Indian aestheticism as expressed in the lyrical literature of Gitagovindam by Jayadeva pervades the emotion, mood,

sentiment and feeling of many poets and artists of India. Many poets translated this original Sanskrit *kavya* into regional languages; many scholars wrote commentaries on this work while many artists resort to paint and illustrate the moods, mores and sentiments of life as narrated in the *kavya*. Beyond the impact of *Gitagovindam* in socio-cultural life in India, the aesthetic beauty of *Gitagovindam* is known now across the world (Dutta, 2009, p.130).

The excellence of *Gitagovindam* lies in the poetic endowment of Jayadeva, who, despite coveting himself in writing about the erotic love of Radha and Krishna, neither allowed the religious dictum to overshadow the lyrical aestheticism and literariness of the text nor did he approve it to limit the central idea by making it one dimensional. Therefore, it would really be a misreading of *Gitagovindam* if one considers it as a book that was meant only to disperse and popularise the idea of Vaishnava faith and religion in contemporary culture and society of the eastern part of India. It is true that this Holy Scripture was one of the major sources that promoted a new horizon in Vaishnava belief and practice in medieval Bengal, but the religious outpourings were not the only means that the poet Jayadeva wanted to achieve. It is so because if one makes an intensive reading of the text, one will realize that whatever Jayadeva has written is actually a figment of his meditation in a trance, the purpose of which was to please the royal court of King Lakshmana Sen, who himself was a great devotee of Lord Krishna and Radha. Even some Vaishnava thinkers like Sukumar Sen and Suniti Chatterjee posited the idea that the first sloka of *Gitagovindam* was probably written by the King himself as the first sloka ends with the phrase “*Radhamadhavayorjayanti*”, which, as Sukumar Sen argues, was often used by the King Lakshmana Sen himself in some of his slokas. As Suniti Chatterjee also writes-

The refrain-like agreement in the first part of the fourth line in all the three verses (“*Radhamadhavayorjayanti...*”) is to be noted. These three verses probably record quite a pleasant episode in the verse-compilation by emulation in the court circle, in which the ruler, his son and the most esteemed poet of the day took part, with the other members of the circle participating with approbation, one of whom,

the anthologist Sridharadasa, recording all the three poems of the royal poets for posterity (Dasgupta, 2014, p.28).

Literature finds its best expression when literary aesthetics and philosophy run side by side. The former offers the external charm, while the latter inculcates in it the deeper implication to provide it with a superior stature and permanence. Jayadeva's *Gitagovindam*, being a colossal work in the field of Vaishnava literature, does contain the brilliant juxtaposition of both. On the one hand, like a typical lyrical poem, its melodic nature does have a soothing effect, and on the other, the use of philosophy instils in it a greater depth and seriousness to uplift itself as a book of devotion and religious inspiration. That is why under the cloak of 'madhurakomalakantapadavalim', that is, the sweet, serene nature of his verses, the book reveals such philosophic perceptions, which played a significant role in enriching the thought and practice of the cult of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. In other words, the delineation of the amorous love of Radha and Krishna is actually an exposition of Jayadeva's faith that just "as a devotee cannot live without God", to quote Shri Rama Krishna Paramahansa, so also "God cannot live without His devotee. The devotee becomes the sweetness and the God its enjoyer. The devotee becomes the lotus and God, the bee. It is also the Godhead that has become all these in order to enjoy its own Bliss. That is the significance of the episode of Radha and Krishna" (Tripathy, 2009, p.4). This idea of the sacred relationship between the devotee and the God alludes to the relationship between the 'Shakti' and the 'Shaktimaan', the power and the possessor of that power, respectively, around which the entire subject matter of *Gitagovindam* revolves to show the entire Vaishnava community that Radha and Krishna are integral parts and one cannot be separated from other. While exploring the philosophic aspect of *Gitagovindam*, C.R. Srinivasa Iyengar has said that there are "four aspects in which the *Gitagovindam* or *Ashtapadi* may be viewed - (1) Literary (2) Devotional (3) Musical (4) Mystical..." (2018, p.138). He further continues by saying that Radha is not a "woman but a thing representing the materialism and the whole is a gradual story of the pilgrimage of the soul up to the path of the glory" (Iyengar, 2018, p. 138).

The subject matter of Gitagovindam is all about the expression of the Vaishnava faith of Jayadeva. The plot revolves around the theme of Krishna and Radha's love, estrangement and reunion. Being one of the finest love lyrics ever written in Sanskrit literature, Jayadeva's Gitagovindam delineates the amorous pastimes of Lord Krishna and Radha in such a way that the book itself becomes an expression of his absolute faith in the two grand images, the synthesis of which can provide the ultimate aesthetic pleasure by liberating one's soul from the mundane complexities of the world. In Gitagovindam, what Jayadeva has done is that he has transformed an extremely simple subject of love and languishment into an endless tale of devotion, dedication and desire to be in the company of the Infinite. That is why the verses of Gitagovindam become a manifestation as well as the proof of the poet's complete submission at the feet of the Almighty and his existence in the realm of the Sublime. This idea of surrendering one's self influenced the later Vaishnava poets like Vidyapati, Chandidas, Gobindadas and Gyanodas, who, like Jayadeva, wrote their verses by leveraging upon the subject of the transcendental love of Lord Krishna and Radha, by elevating them from the stature of mere hero and heroine of the love lyrics. Hence, in Chandidas, while we find the courtship of Radha and Krishna, Gobindadasa describes the perilous journey of Radha in search of Krishna, and Vidyapati's lyrics are different as they paint the image of Radha during her estrangement from Krishna.

Jayadeva's Gitagovindam consists of twelve chapters, which contain twenty-four songs altogether that include 386 verses. The twenty-four songs are often called Ashtapadis, for they are songs with eight couplets. These twenty-four Ashtapadis portray the different moods of Lord Krishna and Radha during their pastimes in the open, sweet air of the spring season. If we analyse their subject matter, we shall be able to see that some are like hymns, describing the glory of Krishna's achievements in his various incarnations; some penetrate into Krishna's or Radha's minds at times of separation, anger or reconciliation; some are the utterances of the messengers sent to each other, who beg for mercy and urge them to swallow their pride for the sake of their happy union. In short, these twelve parts that contain the twenty-four songs are sheer exhibitions of Jayadeva's profound devotion and sacred expression of that Vaishnava faith, which influenced the later Vaishnavites like Sri Chaitanya to

revolutionize the age-old notion of Vaishnavism by introducing Radha as an integral part of Lord Krishna.

Chapter one of Gitagovindam is entitled सामोद-दामोदरः or Joyful Krishna. The lyric begins by portraying a picture of a night where the calmness of the sky is getting disturbed by the presence of the thickening clouds and the 'Tamala trees with fragrant leaves, white blossoms and dark coloured bark, are associated with night and nocturnal trysts.' Radha, while walking amidst the forest, is getting overjoyed to think about her meeting with Madhava (another name of Lord Krishna). 10 Here, Radha is also advised by the poet to take Madhava home with her as he is getting frightened and will not be able to make his way home alone at night-

Clouds thicken the sky.

Tamala trees darken the forest.

The night frightens him.

Radha, you take him home!"

They leave at Nanda's order,

Passing trees in thickets on the way,

Until secret passions of Radha and Madhava

Triumph on the Jumna riverbank (Miller, 1977, p.69).

Harekrishna Mukhopadhaya, in making an analysis of the first sloka (verse) of Gitagovindam opines that though the subject matter of his love lyric is Lord Krishna's delight during the calm atmosphere of spring, the mysterious opening verse describes how darkening clouds are troubling the calmness of the sky and how Blackish Tamāla trees are casting the forest into the darkness to make Madhava frightened of his surroundings and Radha is instructed to take care of him (2012, p.110). He further continues by saying that the first sloka of Gitagovindam bears a strong resemblance with the first sloka of 'Brahmavaivarta Purana' where one can also trace not only the similar kind of description of a forest overshadowed by a darkening cloud but also the use of the expression "भीरुः"(timid) (2012, 110).

The deprecation, as well as the soothing effect of the first verse of Gitagovindam, encompasses every sphere of Vaishnava literature. The influence of the picture that Jayadeva portrays of a night sky getting covered with dark clouds is well pervasive in the writings of the later Vaishnava poets. The depiction of the thickening clouds that occurred in the very first sloka was so powerful that even poet like Rabindranath, who wrote his Vaishnava lyrics almost seven hundred years later, could not surpass the overshadowing nature of the first verse of Gitagovindam. The result is –

Gathering dark clouds are dominating the monsoon sky, dark is the night.

Here it is noteworthy to mention that if a little glance is made towards the realms of Vaishnava literature, one will be able to perceive the fact that the season of monsoon has been given special stature by almost all the lyricists. Now the question may arise here is why the season of monsoon does get so much importance in Vaishnava literature. The question is not very easy to answer in terms of logic and reasoning, but it can aptly be said that, like the spring in the West, the monsoon in India is also considered to be a season of creation. When the entire Nature gets devastated by the scorching heat of the summer, it is at this moment that the monsoon comes with its boon to generate new life in it. To put it in the words of the English Romantic poet Shelley, if the the west wind of the autumn is considered the destroyer, then surely the season of monsoon is the preserver, for it preserves the calmness of Nature with its power of regeneration produced from the perfect synthesis between the natural force and supernatural power. Like monsoon, the Vaishnava literature also stems from the power that can originate only when man and Nature, the natural and the supernatural and Jivatma and Paramatma (Supreme Soul) get united in a perfect manner. This kinship between the Vaishnava literature and the monsoon allows the latter to have a prominent place in the subject matter of the former.

Apart from that, the monsoon is treated by ancient Indian literature as the season of estrangement and separation. The perfect example of such treatment is the epic Meghadūta (मेघदूत) by Kalidasa, where we see that the passing clouds work as messengers to provide solace to the heart of the hero and heroines during their separation from



each other. Vaishnava literature is also attributed as the literature of estrangement and separation, and probably that is the reason why the poets of the Vaishnava lyrics have eulogized the monsoon not only to pour more compassion and tears but also to make their composition charming and appealing. Moreover, it is a popular belief that just as the separation in love makes the congregation even sweeter, similarly, literature becomes more charming and appealing if it deals with the subject of estrangement and separation. Hence, as the seasonal monsoon is a symbol of separation and as the Vaishnava literature emphasizes producing devotion with the help of estrangement and separation, the importance of the seasonal monsoon is a bit more than any other season.

Thirdly it can also be said that there is a popular belief that the journey in the rainy season is never safe, for there is a possibility of thunder, lightning and storms to make the journey perilous. But so many Vaishnava poets have delineated Radha's journey during the time of monsoon to meet with her Supreme lover. Probably the Vaishnava poets, by showing the hazardous journey of Radha, have actually tried to propagate the idea that the path of obtaining the divine bliss of the Supreme is always perilous. Those who can progress slowly but steadily even in such adverse circumstances; can achieve, like Radha, the holy company of Paramatma (Supreme Soul).

After this brilliant description of Radha's journey amidst the forest at night, three verses deal with three different subjects. The first one praises Padmavati, Vishnu's consort and also the wife of Jayadeva. The second verse deals with the dedication of Jayadeva towards Saraswati, the Goddess of eloquence and the third one expresses the claim of Jayadeva regarding the superiority of his work in comparison with the works of contemporary fellow poets. After this invocation and assertion, the first song begins.

The first song contains eleven verses, and they are dedications of the poet toward the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu. All the verses of this song express the sincere gratitude of the poet towards Lord Vishnu for what he has done in his different incarnations to save humanity from the clutches of evil. Though it is very difficult to ascertain the reason behind the inclusion of the Dasavatara Stotra at the very beginning of Gitagovindam, the subject matter of it is the

transcendental love of Lord Krishan and Radha, whereas the Dasavatara Stotra is all about the valour of Lord Krishna, an expression of Veera Rasa (Rasa of Courage), it can be opined that the poet probably wanted to establish the fact that as the hero of his love lyrics is no ordinary person but Lord Krishna Himself, Supreme Godhead the avatari, the source of all these avatars, so whatever is delineated in his love lyrics regarding His confidential amorous pastimes is not about any mundane lusty sentiments rather about those that lie beyond all material considerations. (Dasi, 2013, p. 26)

The second song, like the first, also expresses the achievements and valour of Lord Krishna in his different incarnations. In this song, “Krishna is identified with Vishnu and the third character, Radha’s unnamed girlfriend, appears to act as a go-between for the lovers” (Holecombe, 2008, p.71). The significance of the second song lies in the fact that, whereas the first song describes Lord Krishna as a subject of everyone’s worship, in the second one, He is being glorified by Jayadeva as the exclusive subject of contemplation and meditation (Miller, 1977, p.27).

The third song is about Krishna’s dance with Gopis (cowherds). The song begins with a brilliant sloka where one Sakhi describes the beauty and serenity of Vrindaban during the season of spring-

Soft sandal mountain winds caress quivering vines of clove.

Forest huts hum with droning bees and crying cuckoos.

When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here

To dance with young women, friend –

A cruel time for deserted lovers (Miller, 1977, p.74).

The most interesting part of this verse is that the speaker while recounting the calmness of Nature, states that as her Sakhi (girlfriend), Radha is away from her lover, the season, despite its ecstatic beauty, cannot engross the mind of her dearest friend, for it is the very truth that the pleasing season becomes more pleasant when lovers meet, but it becomes even more distressful when they are separated from each other. In a way, this verse reminds us of a famous utterance of Satan, the grand orator of Milton’s epic Paradise

Lost, in which he challenges the very notion of Heaven and Hell by saying that there is nothing called Hell or Heaven because it is the state of mind that possesses the power to transform a Hell into Heaven or Heaven into Hell,

The mind is its own place and in itself

Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n (1935, lines 254-255).

The fourth song continues with the description of joyful Krishna among 'Gopis' (cowherds). In this segment, Lord Krishna has been acknowledged as the darling of the cowherds. These cowherds are considered to be playing a significant role in making the dalliance of Radha and Krishna more charming and more ecstatic. Thus, the first part of Gitagovindam ends with hinting at Radha's desire to meet with Lord Krishna.

The second chapter of Gitagovindam is entitled by Jayadeva as "Aklesha Keshava" or the Careless Krishna (p. 77). The part contains two songs, namely songs fifth and sixth. The title itself clearly indicates that this part expresses the pain of Radha after getting no attention from Madhab, who remains careless and ignorant in his attitude towards her. Thus, the part begins with Radha's utmost endeavour to get the attention and care of Hari,

A circle of peacock plumes caressed by moonlight crowns his hair.

A rainbow colours the fine cloth on his cloud-dark body.

My heart recalls Hari here in his love dance,

Playing seductively, laughing, mocking me (Miller, 1977, p.78).

The fifth song finds Radha attracted to Krishna, and the sixth song describes Radha discovering Hari in a forest hut and submitting herself to him. The part ends on a happy note as Radha, at last, gets noticed by her Lord-

Meeting me under a towering tree, he calms my fear of dark time.

Delighting me deeply by quickly glancing looks at my heart.

My heart recalls Hari here in his love dance,

Playing seductively, laughing, mocking me (Miller, 1977, p.79).

‘Mughda Madhusudan’ or Enchanted Krishna is the name of the third part. This part consists of only one song, that is, the seventh song. Unlike the previous songs, which describe the excellence of Lord Krishna, concluding with a vivid portrayal of Radha’s love and eagerness for him, this song depicts Lord Krishna’s intense passion for Radha. It elucidates the repentance of Madhava for not receiving the charming company of Radha. The seventh song begins on an apologetic note as Krishna condemns himself for being too reluctant towards her-

She saw me surrounded in a crowd of women,

And went away.

I was too ashamed,

Too afraid to stop her.

Damn me! My wanton ways Made her leave in anger (Miller, 1977, p.82).

He continuously talks about Radha’s beauty and becomes ready to apologise to her by saying-

Forgive me now.!

I won't do this to you again?

Give me a vision, beautiful Radha!

I burn with passion of love.

Damn me! My wanton ways

Made her leave in anger (Miller, 1977, p.83).

The significance of the third part is that it shows the gradual development of the relationship between Lord Krishna and Radha. If the first two parts show the eagerness of Radha for Krishna, this part certainly is about the disposition of Krishna for Radha. In other words, this part upholds how the Supreme Lord Himself is anxious about his beloved and a true devotee.

The fourth part of Gitagovindam is entitled ‘Snighdha Madhusudan’ or tender Krishna. There are two songs in this part. They are the

eighth and the ninth. In this part, Krishna is being informed by the go-between about Radha's distress-

She slanders sandal balm and moonbeams — -weariness confuses her.  
She feels venom from nests of deadly snakes in sandal mountain winds.

Lying dejected by your desertion, fearing Love's arrows,  
She clings to you in fantasy, Madhava (Miller, 1977, p.86).

Both the eighth and ninth songs describe "Radha with tearful self-reproaches and 'Radha's distress and failing confidence" and Radha's need for Krishna-

"Hari! Hari!" she chants passionately,  
As if destined to die through harsh neglect.

Krishna, Radhika suffers in your desertion (Miller, 1977, p.89).

What is so charming about this chapter is that the poet introduces a messenger, a Sakhi, who delineates the love-stricken conditions of Radha to Krishna. The reason behind introducing a messenger may be to make Krishna feel, so also us, how Radha is getting impelled by loneliness so that Madhava becomes ready to satisfy the ever-consuming desire for Radha to meet with him. In other words, the introduction of a new character, known as Sakhi, is perhaps the ploy that Jayadeva applied to make an end to their prolonged wait for each other by arranging their meeting, which is full aesthetic in nature.

Part five is entitled 'Sakandyapundarikahya' or Desiring Lotus Eyed Krishna. Unlike the eighth and ninth songs, here songs eleventh and twelfth portray the eagerness of Lord Krishna to meet with Radha. Krishna pleads with the go-between to bring Radha to him. The tenth song, which is basically the utterance of the messenger, describes how by rejecting his 'luxurious house', the Supreme Lord of the universe is impatiently waiting on the banks of river Yamuna with the desire of getting united with Radha-

He dwells in dense forest wilds,

Rejecting his luxurious house.

He tosses on his bed of earth,

Frantically calling your name.

Wildflower-garlanded Krishna

Suffers in your desertion, friend (Miller, 1977, p.94).

The eleventh song is all about the description of Radha, who hastened to meet with her Lord, as told by the go-between. In the song, we are also informed how the supreme Lord dreams about his beloved's approach towards him to give him extreme comfort.

'Dhrista Baikuntha' or the indolent Krishna, is the name of the sixth part, which contains only one song. If the eleventh song is all about Krishna's eagerness and his dream, then the twelfth song describes the longing of Radha for his supreme lover and her imagination regarding his arrival. Here it is noteworthy to mention that these songs represent the condition of both Radha and Krishna after befalling in each other's love. The purpose behind this may be the poet's desire to show the entire Vaishnava society that the true Bhakti will always help a devotee to receive the blessings of the Supreme Lord.

Part seventh of Gitagovindam is called 'Nagar Narayan' or what can be translated into English as cunning Krishna. This part does have four songs, namely- thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth. In the thirteenth song, Radha recounts her failure at not meeting Krishna. She assumes that he has found someone else-

The sweet spring night torments my loneliness-

Some other girl now enjoys Hari's favor.

Whom can I seek for refuge here?

My friend's advice deceives me (Miller, 1977, p.98).

In the fourteenth song, Radha envisions Krishna "with his latest conquest. Radha has no peace of mind. In the fifteenth song, Radha torments herself with further imaginings. She decides that Krishna will not come. In the sixteenth song, Radha is pictured as responding to Krishna's lovemaking. The land-borne lotus may be the hibiscus. Radha is still despondent" (Holecombe, 2008, p.74).

Section eight, entitled "Bilakhyalaxmipati" or 'Abashed Krishna', starts with the presence of depleted Krishna in Radha's court. This segment depicts Radha as the heroine of 'Khandita' or the 'Nayika' who is reproving her lover. After waiting for him so long, Radha becomes so angry that she rejects Govinda's expression of remorse for making her hold up the whole night alone by saying the opening sloka of the seventeenth song, the only song of this part-

Bloodshot from a sleepless night of passion, listless now,

Your eyes express the mood of awakened love.

Damn you, Madhava! Go/ Kesava, leave me!

Don't plead your lies with me!

Go after her, Krishna!

She will ease your despair (Miller, 1977, p.106).

The ninth part, or the 'Languishing Krishna' (Mughda Mukunda) is all about the repentance of Radha due to her separation from her Supreme Lord. In this segment, we find Radha as a heroine of 'Kalahantarita' or the heroine who is separated by a quarrel by her lover. This part is significant because it is often said that sometimes separation makes the coalescence or the union sweet. In other words, this segment makes the Vaishnava devotees curious about how the supreme union between God and the devotee will occur.

Among the twelve sections of Gitagovindam, part ten is considered to be the most significant one. The segment, which is entitled 'Chatur Chatur Bhuja' or 'Four Quickening Arms', contains song number nineteen. The reason why this part is hailed by the entire Vaishnava society is that this episode exposes the very truth of the relationship between the devotee and God. It propagates the message that if one has pure bhakti like Radha, then the supreme Lord does not even hesitate to embrace one. In Bengal, those vocalists, who perform the various episodes of the pastimes of Radha and Krishna with the help of Vaishnava lyrics, often present the union of Radha and Krishna by using the several slokas of the song nineteenth.

The tenth part begins with the utterance of Lord Krishna where Madhava, while pleading with Radha to leave her anger for her infidelities, says-

If you speak, moonlight gleaming on your teeth  
Dispels the dread darkness of fear.  
Let your moon face hire my night bird eyes  
To taste nectar from your quivering lips!  
Radha, cherished love,  
Abandon your baseless pride  
Love's fire burns my heart –

Bring wine in your lotus mouth! (Miller, 1977, p.111)

Likewise, Krishna uses all his tricks and cunningness to please Radha, but when she finds that no remedy is proving to be effective to enchant Radha and make her speak to him, he decides to embrace her feet by saying-

Place your foot on my head –

A sublime flower destroying poison of Jove!

Let your foot quell the harsh sun

Burning its fiery form in me to torment Love (Miller, 1977, p.113).

This sloka of Jayadeva is so widely adorned in Bengal that there is a popular folk tale regarding the composition of the sloka. In folklore, it is said that when this sloka came into Jayadeva's mind, he was unable to compose that because it was beyond his imagination that the feet of a Devotee could be embraced by the Supreme Lord of the universe. So, he left it blank and went to bathing. In the meantime, Krishna Himself came in disguise of Jayadeva and wrote the famous line "देहिपदपल्लवमुदारम्" (dehi pada-pallava udaram) with his own hand in order to teach the entire Vaishnava community that Supreme Lord Himself is conscious of those devotees, who always chant His sacred name out of sheer Bhakti and become ready to sacrifice himself at his 'parama-pad' (gracious feet). (Dutta, 1895, p.15)

Dr Meher, in his research article "Jayadeva and His Gitagovindam: A Critical Analysis" while studying the tenth part of Jayadeva's love lyrics, writes that prior to this section of Gitagovindam Jayadeva has



depicted the different moods of Radha and Krishna. Sometimes he has depicted the intolerable pain and the incessant weeping of Radha at her separation from Krishna, and “sometimes he also shows Sri Bhagaban in the intense anxiety of separation from her” (2008, p., 24). But when the delineation of the amorous pastime of Radha and Krishna reaches its climax in the tenth chapter, Jayadeva does not prevent himself from writing that in order to alleviate Radha’s anger towards him, the Supreme Lord embraces the lotus feet of Radha and begging- “Place your foot on my head” (p. 213). By doing this, Jayadeva has upheld the essence of all Vedas, that is, “the utmost extremity of love of God and also the pinnacle of the Lord’s affection for His devotee” (Meher, 2008, p. 26).

After the dramatic end of chapter ten of Gitagovindam, where we find the Supreme Lord embracing the feet of his beloved cum devotee Radha, chapter eleven begins with Radha’s consent to come at Krishna’s bower after getting reconciled with his prayer which in turn delights him. While watching Radha feeling bashful to proceed there in the presence of her companions, one of her attendants, with the intention of witnessing the auspicious union of Radha and Krishna, starts inspiring her by inciting passion in her and thereby impelling her to proceed for Krishna. Before entering Krishna’s arbour, Radha is once again reminded about the norms of secret love-making and is also advised to enjoy the company of Krishna to the fullest. The poet, with utmost joy, delineates the union of the divine couple at the end of this canto entitled, ‘Sananda-Damodara’.

In the twelfth or the last canto of Gitagovindam, entitled ‘Suprfta-Pitambara’, Radha is portrayed as a heroine who is now ready to submit herself at the lotus feet of her Lord Krishna. When Radha’s companion goes away by leaving her at the bower, Krishna starts enchanting the ‘Supreme Nayika’ with her tender words, and love-touches. They start enjoying each other’s company, and the canto ends with a happy note to visualise the amorous union of Radha-Krishna.

To conclude, we must admit that the importance of Jayadeva’s love lyric lies in its ability to juxtapose in the same vein both the traditional and innovative ideas lurking behind the faith and belief of Vaishnava theology. On the one hand, like a pursuer of the pre-existing Vaishnava notion, he begins the opening chapter of his

treatise by eulogizing the grandeur of Lord Krishna, a part of Lord Vishnu, in His different incarnations and on the other, like a precursor, he introduced a new horizon in Vaishnava faith and belief by delineating the idea of Radha as an integral part and a source of devotion, the continuous chant of whose sacred name will provide the power to comprehend the idea of Lord Krishna. This innovative thought brought such a revolution in Vaishnava faith that it had a huge impact in composing an incipient Vaishnava sect called Gaudiya Vaishnavism. In other words, with Sri Chaitanya, Jayadeva became popular with the Gaudiya Vaishnava sect and his philosophy of Radha as an integral part of Lord Krishna developed into a core content of worship for the cult. It is as if from Jayadeva that this world of devotion, compassion and faith is taught that without the idea of Radha, it is impossible to receive the blessings from Lord Krishna. This is where lies the significance of him as a true Vaishnava poet, for it is he who, by pioneering a new trend of poetry writing, showed the later Vaishnava lyricists how to portray in words the amorous love of Lord Krishna and Radha with compassion and tears and to transform it from a simple love making to a subject of devoutness.

Vaishnava literature is considered to be literature that expresses the idea of Prema-Bhakti or loving devotion. The importance of Jayadeva lies in the fact that it is he who, for the first time, tried to exhibit the very idea that it is 'Prema-Bhakti' or the loving devotion that erases all mundane complexities and can liberate the Jivatma to go in pursuit for the 'Paramatma'. The poet has, as if, used the idea of 'Prema-Bhakti' in their writing in order to convey properly what he has seen and comprehended through his transcendental eyes or Bhab-Chakshu. He was probably aware of the fact that what he was trying to represent would not be properly described unless he took refuge in the realm of Bhakti, for his subject matter was not the mere tale of love and languishment but the amorous pastimes of the divine couple- Krishna and his consort Radha. It is this brilliant implication of the idea of 'Prema-Bhakti' that has made the Gitagovindam a true exponent and the immortal maestro of Vaishnava theology and literature.

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