

THE IMAGERIES *PREMA* AND *VIRAHA* IN THE LOVE SONG OF JAYADEVA

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Abstract:

Jaidevis a celebrated Sanskrit poet and a saint, known for the composition the Gītagovind. The poem is especially dedicated to Lord Kṛṣṇa . It emphasizes on the Kṛṣṇa's love for Rādhā. Here poet made an attempt to reach to the audience who wish to enjoy Kṛṣṇa's divine love through esthetic experience. Jayadeva has given an erotic flavor in his writing which is also a subject of criticism as love with divine does not know whether God is male or female. This has been highlighted by citing the example of *Caitanya*'s love for Kṛṣṇa. More interestingly it captures the images of love and separation in the erotic literature of early medieval India.

Keywords: *Prabandhas, Ashtopadis, Upamā, Alamkāra, Vīra-rasa, Śṛṅgāra rasa, Mahākāvya, Viraha, Pūrva-rāga, Māna, Pravāsa, karuṇa, Manah-saṅga, Nidrāccheda, Unmade, Mūrccā, Marāṇa, Kāmasūtra.*

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Introduction

Jayadeva is considered as a hero of medieval love poetry . His love poem Gītagovind is a unique work in Indian literature and a source of religious inspiration in both medieval and contemporary Vaishnavism. The poem is dedicated in devotion to Lord , Kṛṣṇa. He invokes Kṛṣṇa in the second song with *jayajayadeva hare*, “Triumph, God of Triumph, Hari!” The poet’s name becomes an epithet of Kṛṣṇa and on account of this , it gained a sacred meaning.¹ It shows his special relation with Kṛṣṇa as his name is repeated in the signature verse that ends each song . It mainly emphasizes on Kṛṣṇa’s love with Rādhā . It is organized into twelve chapters. Each chapter is further subdivided into twenty-four divisions called *prabandhas*. The *prabandhas* contain couplets grouped into eight called *ashtopadis*.²

Verses in the Gītagovind express the poet’s intent to reach an audience who wish to enjoy Kṛṣṇa’s divine love through esthetic experience.

Bhojadeva’s heir, Rāmadvī’s son, Jayadeva,
Expresses the power of poetry
In the Gītagovinda.
Let his poem be in the voice
Of devotees like sage Parāśara.³(XII.22)

The role of Kṛṣṇa’s herdsman consort, Rādhā in the Gītagovinda takes its cosmic significance. Jayadeva attempts to integrate religious, erotic, and esthetic meaning which suggests that his inspiration for writing this love poetry came from earlier works of Kālidāsa. When we talk about the Gītagovinda it seems that the brief kāvya verses may contain dense description and complex ideas. Classical ornamentation (*alamkāra*) is used to expand meaning. He has beautifully used a metaphor (*upamā*) and sensuous vocabulary, which are general characteristics of the songs. The very first line shows the aim of the poet and the poem where Jayadeva says:

If remembering Hari enriches your heart,
If his arts of seduction arouse you,
Listen to Jayadeva’s speech
In these sweet soft lyrical songs.⁴(Verse I.4)

The concept of mood, *rasa* is the most important part of Indian poetry. *Rasa* literally means the taste or flavor of something. The *rasa* of verse, song, dramatic scene or musical performance depicts its emotion. The most interesting part of Jayadeva's writing is the dynamics of love i.e. separation and union. Scholars like H.H Daniel Ingalls believe that Kṛṣṇa has three different faces. Kṛṣṇa the hero, Kṛṣṇa the lover, Kṛṣṇa the lord having heroic sentiments (*vīra-rasa*), the erotic sentiments (*śṛṅgāra rasa*), and the peaceful sentiments (*śānta-rasa*). These three reflect power, love, and transcendence.⁵ His love had a flavor of erotic sentiment emerged in the 1st century A.D in the folk tradition. Hāla also talks about Kṛṣṇa's love and his romantic behavior (Verse 114).⁶ And by the 12th century, his love developed as a theme in the *Harivaṃśa*. Jayadeva expanded the theme into a long poem, a *mahākāvya*. After the introduction, God is presented in a completely erotic mood. His chest is flooded with sweat from his lovemaking and Jayadeva says 'it may fulfill your pleasure!' (I. 25).⁷ Kṛṣṇa is depicted in full excitement; his charming face attracts women who seduce him to play.

Yellow silk and wildflower garlands lie on the dark sandal-oiled skin.

Jewel earring dangling in play ornament his smiling cheeks.

Hari revels here as the crowd of charming girls

Revels in seducing him to play.⁸

Separation in Love

Denis de Rougemont's study of the sacred and profane dimensions of love in European tradition observes that the separation of lovers, both temporarily through various obstructions and permanently through death has been the central motif in the history of literature of love in the western world.⁹ And the image of love-in-separation (*viraha*) is the most common theme of the Kṛṣṇaite devotional tradition. One example comes from *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* where the women of Vraja lament over their separation from Kṛṣṇa, he consoles them by saying that although he was hidden from their eyes, and he remained devoted to them and hid from them only to increase their love for him.¹⁰ According to the *Naradīya-Bhakti-Sūtras*, the attachment to Kṛṣṇa felt by the separated devotee is the highest stage of bhakti.¹¹ The highest form of devotion (*prama-bhakti*) in words of Yāmunācārya comes not in the union but after union in the fear of separation. The more intense the fear, the greater is the love, the attachment; the greater the love, the greater is the

fear.¹²And so from ancient to popularmodern Bollywood culture *virahā* is the favorite theme. The same idea of love-in-separation I have discussed in the first part of my paper.

Poets have talked about four different conditions of love-in-separation, viz., *pūrva-rāga*, *māna*, *pravāsa*, *karuṇa*.¹³ *Pūrva-rāga* is the first awakening of love. It is the condition in which affection arising before the lovers is actually united. They are mutually infatuated by having seen each other. It can also be called love at first sight. The second condition of love-in-separation is a mixture of joy and sorrow , fear and hope , love and repulsion . *Rādhā*'s *māna* is aroused when *Kṛṣṇa* performed love play with the other cowherd women . She goes away from him on account of jealousy because she was no longer his favorite beloved.¹⁴When he tries to pacify her, first through her friend, then in person, she rebukes him and displays her *māna*. *Māna* was the separation from love and it is not negative, it is rather the highest manifestation of *sneha* (affection). *Pravāsa* basically means dwelling abroad. It is the separation of lovers against their will. In the mythology of *Kṛṣṇa* , *pravāsa* is seen in the context of the pain which the cowherd-women feel when the former leaves Gokula and goes to Mathura. *Karuṇa* is the pitiful separation when one has died and other mourns. With the death of the beloved, the mood changes from erotic to pathetic.

Vātsyāyana also describes ten stages of love: In the first stage, the lovers see each other and experience love by sight (*caṅsuḥ-prīti*) and then mental attachment (*manah-saṅga*); then there is loss of sleep (*nidrāccheda*); loss of weight; and if one still unable to attain union with beloved, develops an aversion to all sense objects except the perception of the beloved; then there is a loss of modesty or shame, intoxicated madness (*unmāda*) and fainting (*mūrcchā*) and finally, if union does not take place, there is death (*maraṇa*).¹⁵From some of the verses of *Gītagovinda*, it becomes clear that remembrance of the beloved is a symptom of love-in-separation which is generally present in Sanskrit erotic *kāvya*. Ingalls says that the mood of love-in-separation and union increased the charm of the verse.¹⁶

Her eyes shed tears everywhere.

Like dew from lotuses with broken stems,

Kṛṣṇa, *Rādhikā* suffers in your desertion.¹⁷(Verse IV. 14)

The second part of the *Kāmasūtra* (the *Samprayogika*) gives sixty-four arts of love-making, which includes eight basic procedures such as embracing, kissing, scratching, biting, oral copulation, etc. The author declares that these arts enable one to fulfill the three aims of life i.e. *kāma*, *artha*, and *dharma*. Despite having such significance, the art of love is described as a battle by Jayadeva in one of the verses of *Gītagovinda* (XII. 10).¹⁸ The main aim of all such activities in love is to produce pleasure but in the process of achieving pleasure, the couple receives pain both mentally and physically. The famous poet, Bhāravi says that love, although known for tenderness, is truly cruel during sexual union.¹⁹ However one should not take pain in the physical sense only - the separation of Rādhā from Kṛṣṇa, AakkaMahadevifrom ChennaMalikarjuna shows their pain despite the of the fact that they did not have any bodily union with the god.

The Taste of Union

The *Sāhityadarpaṇa* describes four kinds of union. It believes that the pleasure of union cannot be achieved without tasting separation. It means that the pain of separation yields the joy of union. And in the opinion of Jayadeva, the separation of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is necessary to taste the sweetness of reunion. Keeping the pleasure of union in his mind he starts and ends *Gītagovinda* with the union of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This union and reunion present a heart-rending picture of separation followed by pain and sufferings. In my opinion, this pattern of union-separation-reunion is the conventional theme in Indian literature from Hāla's *Gāthā-Saptaśati* to Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda*. At the time of reunion, infatuation reaches its apex level and it becomes even more visible in some of the verses of Jayadeva. Kṛṣṇa's body is scratched (VIII. 4) and his lip is bitten (VIII. 6)²⁰ by a herds woman. The first union is also very peculiar from the point of lovemaking.

Love also brings jealousy which is evident from Jayadeva's writing. The hero of Jayadeva's literature appears before Rādhā with red eyes, *mascara* on his lips, nail marks on his body, teeth marks on his lower lips. She is angry and jealous on account of this incidence. In almost all erotic and non-erotic religious literature, only men are presented as having a relationship with other women and once again it raises gender issues. Jayadeva presented Kṛṣṇa as a lover in relation to Rādhā and other herds women. In spite of having all such feelings the victory over

lover in the battle of love gives immense pleasure in the heart of the beloved. Here victory does not mean winning a war; it is symbolic in the sense of winning the heart of one's beloved in the play of love-making.

In his *Gītagovinda*, Jayadeva shows the nature of divine love and it is perhaps the first attempt to write a religious romantic poem . The love-play of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā is an allegory depicting the temptation of the human soul . We should keep in mind that the relation of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa which is given in the *Gītgovinda* is Jayadeva's own thinking and he writes it into a form of literature. He connected love with divinity while Hāla's love is very much worldly. All the characters of his book are real and have no mythical presentation. The *Gītagovinda*, we may conclude, is certainly an erotic poem, but it is much more: it is symbolic; it opens up a world of mystical perception. One may only enjoy its music, another may enjoy the erotic sentiments but a real *rasika* will also find the joy of the mystical marriage of the individual soul and deity.²¹

Conclusion

The *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva helps in the development of the Kṛṣṇa bhakti tradition . The character of both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa keep on changing in the various traditions : Rādhā is at once the stereotypical heroine of court poetry, but it seems that Jayadeva has converted her into the ideal beauty of his erotic religious literature . Her close association with Kṛṣṇa makes her the feminine power emanating from God and she also came as a symbol of true devotee . Kṛṣṇa is at once the conventional lover of erotic poetry, the heroic warrior of the Epic and *Purāṇic* literature develops into a completely different picture in Jayadeva's writing. In modern times, also he is considered as a true lover and his *rasa līlā* became a symbol of God's play.

Although Jayadeva has given an erotic flavor in his writing, love with divine does not know whether God is male or female. It becomes clearer when we see *Caitanya's* love for Kṛṣṇa. Apart from reflecting on various other aspects, this paper is an interesting work to figure out the images of love and separation in the erotic literature of early medieval India.

References

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- ⁴Miller, Love Songs of the Dark Lord, 1977, p.14.
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- ⁶For discussion, see Radhagovind Basak, The Prākṛit Gāthā-Saptasatī Compiled by Sātavāhana King Hāla, The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1971.
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- ¹⁴Miller, Love Songs of the Dark Lord, 1977, p. 142.
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- ¹⁶Ingalls, 'Forward' to Milton Singer (ed.), Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes, 1965, p.216.
- ¹⁷Miller, Love Songs of the Dark Lord, 1977, p. 88.
- ¹⁸Miller, Love Songs of the Dark Lord, 1977, p. 123.
- ¹⁹See Bhāravi's Kirātārjunīya, IX. 49.
- ²⁰For all verse of this text, see Barbara Stoler Miller (tran.), Love Song of Dark Lord Jayadeva's Gītagovind, Columbia University Press, New York, 1977.
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