

Jayadev and Gitagovinda

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The Gitagovinda and its poet Jayadev is a unique phenomenon in the history of world literature. No other poet has achieved such immortality and imperishable distinction as Jayadev, by writing a single piece of Kavya.

Jayadev, the celebrated Sanskrit poet was born in the village of Kenduli Sasan in the district of Khurda in Odisha. As per record of History, he was born in twelfth Century A.D., during the reign of Kamarnava Deva, the king of Imperial Ganga Dynasty. Jayadev was devotee of Madhava (Krshna or Vishnu) and in praise of his Lord, he composed his immortal poem Gitagovinda towards the last part of twelfth century A.D.

The controversy about the age and birthplace of Jayadev has been extensively dealt with by many prominent scholars all over India. The controversy on birthplace of Jayadev was started unnecessarily by some scholars of Bengal since 1906 when M.M. Chakravorty published his article entitled "Sanskrit literature in Bengal during the Sena Rule" in the journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol.II, No.5. He claimed that Jayadev was born in Bengal. However, history will be obliged to the Bengali researchers like Dr. Satyakam Sengupta, Dr. Sukumar Sen, Dr. Ashutosh Bhattacharya, Dr. Suniti Kumar

Chattopadhyay and Atul Saur who strongly condemned the claim of M.M. Chakravorty. Scholars of Odisha had also strongly raised their voice and with consistent effort, they have already established the nativity of poet Jayadev which need not any discussion further more.

Jayadev and his creation Gitagovinda are well-known in the tradition of Odisha than either in Bengal or other States. Right from Jagannath temple rituals to the Art, Architecture, textile, dance, music and literature Gitagovinda has largely influenced the social and cultural life of Odisha.

Though prior to Gitagovinda, several erotic songs were written in Sanskrit language, but never before the Gitagovinda of Jayadev, a complete Kavya had been written on amorous dalliance of Radha and Krishna in Tamala grove on the river bank of Yamuna. And therein lies the uniqueness of the Gitagovinda and its poet Jayadev. Its sensuous words, graceful diction and musical lore, imaginative description of landscape and artistic expression together combined to make it a timeless piece of poetic creation. Its aesthetic and poetic beauty has acclaimed world-wide approbation since years. The fame of Gitagovinda has never been confined within the limits of Odisha or India; it has travelled althrough the world

literature crossing the barrier of race. According to an eminent authority of Sanskrit literature, "It has claimed more than a dozen imitations. It has been quoted extensively in different poems of different languages and it has been regarded not only as a great religious work of medieval Vaishnavism but for ever." The magical composition has been translated into English, French, German, Maithili, etc. and more particularly Sri Chaitanya transported it into a magnitude of ecstasy whenever he heard this song from Ray Ramananda for the first time in Puri during former's sojourn in Puri. Had the Gitagovinda been written in Bengali literature, it would have been widely popular and an erudite Sanskrit scholar like Sri Chaitanya would not have waited to hear it from Ray Ramananda in Puri.

Though the western scholars have levelled it as a great oriental poetry, the Indian scholars have evaluated the Gitagovinda from scriptural point of view. The reference of Gitagovinda in its birthplace Odisha is found in the Madalapanji or the Jagannath temple chronicles, in the accounts relating to Kavi Narasingha Deva who had succeeded to the throne of Odisha after the illustrious Langula Narasingh Dev. W.W. Hunter, in the "History of Orissa" identifies Kavi Narasingh with Keshari Narasingh (1282-1307 A.D.). Madalapanji records that Kavi Narasingh had inaugurated the

Gitagovinda in the liturgy of the temple. However, introduction of Gitagovinda and its period is a matter of separate and extensive research. Different Historians opine differently. Why and when singing of Gitagovinda in the liturgy of Jagannath temple discontinued till Gajapati Prataprudra Deva (1497-1534 A.D.) the last king of Surya Dynasty re-introduced the singing and dancing of Gitagovinda, in the nocturnal *seva* and had specially ordained that no other song or dance except Gitagovinda should be performed before the Lord.

Composed in 12 cantos or *sargas*, 24 *Prabandhas* and 72 *slokas* this magnum opus of poet Jayadev not only describes the erotic dalliance of Radha and Krishna but also for the purpose of Madhava or Jagannath have a captivative effect on poets and scholars of the world. From 12th century A.D. amidst cosmopolitan analysis and research, Gitagovinda and its poet Jayadev becoming more and more brilliant, influenced not only the life and literature, art and architecture, religion and ritual of Odisha but also the whole spiritual world of the universe as a whole.

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