

GITA GOVINDA OF SRI JAYADEV: A STUDY OF SOCIO -CULTURAL IDENTITY OF EARLY MEDIEVAL ODISHA

Dr. Pareswar Sahoo
Assistant Professor
Department of History
Utkal University

Abstract

Modern Odisha has been passing through many ups and downs in her historical journey. Since a long lore of time beyond 261 BCE ancient Kalinga , modern Odisha has been considered as a treasure trove of great saints, poets, freedom fighters, journalists, art, architectures, paintings, sculptures, temples , monuments, chaityas, viharas, stupas, staunch politicians and the land of many movements , revolts, uprisings . This is the land where poet Sri Jayadeva, the composer of Gita Govinda in 12th century CE was born in the firmament of Kenduli or Kendu Vilva of Prachi river valley is a rare phenomenon of world importance. His lucid composition of Gita Govinda became world famous during his life time especially because of its introduction in the rituals of Sree Jagannatha tradition. Its romantic as well as religious fervor ignited the devotional thought of priests, peasants and royal personalities alike. The construction of Sree Jagannatha temple at Puri by Chodaganga Deva in 12th century CE. ushered in a new vista in the religious and temple activity in Odisha. As the outcome of the legacy of the Ganga emperors Gita Govinda was sung every day in the temple as a result, of which it became popular in every household of Odisha in particular and Bharata in general. The work of Jaya dev ‘ Gita Govinda is the real treasure of the socio-cultural life of the early medieval Odisha. The prime objective of this research paper is to highlight the socio- cultural condition of the medieval Odisha . The second objective is to trace out the writing style of Jayadev through his literary work Gita Govinda. Further the research paper aims at to describe how does the devotion help to attain mokshya is the thrust area of the work.

The Gita Govinda describes the love sports of Radha and Krishna in a beautiful manner. The charming and simple language of the text attracted one and all from every quarter. The depiction of Avatar conception in the composition of Jayadeva deserves special mention. Similarly, the description of Radha Madhav Cult which was in vogue in Prachi region is very interesting in the poetic articulation of Jayadeva. For the first time we find reference to Radha as a cult icon in his poetic creation. Vaishnavism received new impetus because of the impact of Jayadeva's Gita Govinda from 12th Century A.D. Many new ideas and ideation entered into the fold of Jagannath consciousness after the emergence of Jayadeva. His work also

popularized Jagannath worship in every nook and corner of Orissa. It is glorious that the great poet Jayadeva was born in the sacred soil of Prachi Valley region.

The popular Sree Jagannatha Culture is a mysterious conception. Many distinguished scholars from different parts of the country and abroad have attempted to solve the mystery of origin and evolution of Sree Jagannatha consciousness and have stumbled confusedly at the platform of religious eclecticism of world eminence. Sree Jagannatha allows all and admits all, yet he is aloof from all. It is also said that he is all of it and none of it. He is like a mirror where all can see their reflection but cannot touch. He adorned his *Ratnasimhasan* efflorescent admitting flexibility, adaptability, integrity and magnanimity of all dynamics of Hinduism. For this, the Jainas, Bauddhas, Vaisnavas, Saivas, Saktas, the tribal aboriginals, prelates and potentates surrender at his feet seeking eternal salvation. The earliest reference to *Jagannath-Daru* worship is found in the Vedic literature. In the *Mahabharata* there is mention about a *Vedi* near the eastern Kalingan Sea which was visited by the Pandavas. Scholars have identified this spot with the present-day Jagannath temple complex of Puri. Indrabhuti the king of Sambala in his famous work *Gyanasiddhi* refers to Sree Jagannath as Buddha in the 8th century CE. The invocatory *sloka* of the famous *Vajrayatantric* work says –

*Pranipatya Jagannatham Sarvajinavararchitam,
Sarvabuddhamayam Siddham Vyapino Gagonopamam.*

Sankaracharya in course of his religious propagation of India in 8th-9th century CE. visited Puri and worshipped sree Jagannatha. The *Anargharaghava Natakam* of Murari Misra (9th century CE.) refers to *Purusottama*. There is mention about a '*devayatana*' that existed at Puri in *Prabodha Chandra-dayo Natakam* of Krusna Misra (11th century CE). The Saradadevi temple inscriptions of Mahihar in Satna district of Madhya Pradesh describe *Purusottama* as the Lord of Utkala in 10th century CE. In the Baramdeo temple epigraph of 1088 CE and Nagpur inscription of 12th century CE., there is reference to *Purusottama Kshetra* that existed in Odisha. In ancient Hindi literature like *Bisaldev Raso* (12th century CE.), *Prithvirayo Roso* of the same century sree Jagannath is described as the deity of Odisha.

Thus, there is ample evidence of sree Jagannatha at Puri since remote antiquity. The glory and greatness of sree Jagannatha and *Puridham* find mention in the *Puranas* like *Matsya*, *Brahama*, *Narada*, *Padma Kapilasanhita*, *Niladrimahaodaya* and the *Utkal Kanda* of the *Skanda Purana*. In all such *Puranas*, he has been described as the famous deity of Odra or Utkala. In the tantric works like *Kalika Purana*, *Rudrayamala tantra*, *Brahmayamala tantra* and *Tantrayamala*, etc. of 10th century CE. Sree Jagannatha is mentioned conspicuously.

The foreign scholars like Stevens, Wilson and Fergusson etc. have traced his origin in Buddhism. Rajendralal Mitra has opined that during pre-Christian century only Buddhism was in vogue in Orissa. Chinese traveler like Yuan Chwang has narrated that Mahayana Buddhism was the religion of Utkala in 7th century CE. This school of scholars believes that original Sree Jagannatha temple complex was a Buddhist establishment. Very recently a Chunar sand stone pillar has been traced out below the fossilized Garuda pillar

of *Natamandira* while repairing it by ASI. This further strengthened the Buddhist origin of Sree Jagannatha. From the funeral pyre of Buddha at Kushinagar a tooth relic was known to have been brought by Therakhema to Puri of Orissa. For this for centuries Puri was called Dantapuri. It is believed that it is still there as *Brahmadhatu*, in the wooden statues of Sree Jagannatha which is mysteriously shifted to the new idols at the time of *Navakalevara*. Alexandar Cunningham has stated that "*the three shapeless figures of Jagannath and his brother and sister are simple copies of the symbolical figures of the Buddhist triad i.e. Buddha, Dharma and Sangha of which the 2nd is always represented as a female. The Buddhist origin of the Jagannath figure is proved beyond all doubt by their adoption as the representative of the Brahmanical avatar of Buddha in the annual almanacs of Mathura and Banaras*" H. K. Mahatab has also referred to a similar stone of Asokan poles with the symbol of Buddha, *Sangha* and *Dharma* discovered and sent to Calcutta University sometime back for preservation in Asutosh Museum. According to him, "*The Savaras of Odisha were converted to Buddhism during the time of Asoka and worshipped the Triratna symbol in a Buddhist stupa at Puri. Later on, in the 7th/8th century CE., when Buddha was considered as an avatar of Vishnu, Jagannath was also considered to be an avatāra of Vishnu. Gradually Buddhism lost itself in Vaisnavism.*"

Another school of scholar like Nilakantha Das believed in Jaina association of Sree Jagannatha tradition . So far, its origin is concerned. He has tried to identify *Nilamadhava* with *Kalinga Jina* referred to in the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela which was known to have been taken by Nanda ruler as war trophy in 4th century B.CE. The said Jaina Symbol came to be known as *Nila* i.e. void or black. The image of Sree Jagannatha, that is why represents black colour or void. Subhadra is being identified with the *Dharmachakra* of Jainas and *Kavalya* so closely connected with Sree Jagannatha, has in fact Jaina origin. Kedarnath Mahapatra and Binayak Misra also subscribe to this school of thought. For this they have attempted to identify the legendary Indradyumna with emperor Kharavela who brought back the *Kalinga Jina* in 1st century B.C. which was taken away by Mahapadma Nanda in 4th century B.C. to Pataliputra.

Sree Jagannatha is also adorned as *Darudevata* of Vedic and Bhagavatism. According to P.Mukhereei in about 5th century CE. during the Gupta rule, Sankarsana and Vasudeva came to be worshipped as Balarama and Jagannath. The *Brihat Samhita* of Varahamihira of 6th century CE. associated *Ekanamsa* with Subhadra. In *Harivansa*, she is described as the daughter of Nandaraja and also as the common sister of Jagannath and Balabhadra. Under the influence of the Bhagavatism, she came to be worshipped as Subhadra as their common *Sakti* being the sister, a phenomenon unknown to Indian tradition. Thus, the cult of *Shakti* entered into the fold of Jagannath worship in a zigzag manner baffling the beholders and philosophers alike.

Another strange aspect of the Cult is the *Sabar* connection in the origin and worship of Sree Jagannath tradition. Atiibadi Jagannath Dasa in the *Musaliparva* of *Mahabharata* has written in the 15th century CE. and said that after the Mahabharata war Pandavas left for heaven through Himalaya. The *Yadava Vamsa* of Krishna got destroyed by Krishna himself through the deluge of intoxication and homicide of the clan.

The *Krisna avatar lila of Dvapara Yuga* was thus to be concluded. Lord Krishna, to leave the mundane world was swinging in the forest. A *Savara*, thinking him to be a deer shot an arrow at Krishna. When the *Savara* came to know of this he cried and prayed God to excuse him. Consoling him the Lord said that this incident was preordained to put an end to, his *avatar* of *Dvaparajuga*. He further directed him to burn his body and to immerse the ashes in the ocean. The *Savara* could not completely burn his body. As per heavenly direction, he threw it in the ocean. It floated and in course of time came to *Mahodadhi* i.e. Puri Sea beach. The then king of Puri Indradyumna dreamt of this and as per the divine direction brought it to the palace to make the wooden statues of Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sree Jagannatha. The incarnations have been described in many books and presented at many places like the Mahabharata, (12.3.26), Bhagavata (1.3.6-25, 1.7.1.38, X.40.17-22). Agnipurāṇa (chs 2,3,4,5,12,16), Daśāvatāra stuti of Śaṅkarācārya, Daśāvatāra stuti of Kṣemendra, Daśāvatāra *mathas* of Kakatapura and Puri, Daśāvatāra of Jagannatha temple. In most of the places Kṛṣṇa is an incarnation. In some descriptions Balarama is replaced by Kṛṣṇa. Different kinds of Daśāvatāra have also been enumerated (Sri Mahapurusa Vidyā: 1984, Ed. Otto Harressowitz, Wiesbaden, Ch. 1. 20-29). Here Kṛṣṇa is an avatāra and Balarāma has been ignored. It is a work of post Jayadeva period. In this particular book Jagannatha is glorified. Jagannatha plays with Rama, the eternal consort and manifests in four Vyūhas, viz Vasudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. Aniruddha manifests the incarnations. Jagannatha is beyond the concept of Avatara and Avatarin. On the wall of the Jagamohana of Puri temple Jagannatha replaces Buddha. This is a recent construction with cement plaster. This has been made to identify Jagannatha with Buddha. This may create confusion among the future researchers. On the main temple there is the image of Buddha. So, the Daśāvatara image of the wall of the Jagamohana should not be taken as authentic.

In most of the incarnations *Vishnu* manifests in different incarnations. But Jayadevas Daśāvatāra stuti has popularized Kṛṣṇas incarnations (दशकृतिकृते कृष्णाय तुभ्यं नमः 1). It is also a part of the theory of Mādhavism.

पद्मावतीचरणचारण चक्रवर्ती (GG. 1.2)

Some critics have made the interpretation of पद्मावती and चरण in the sense of Jayadeva's wife (Padmavati) and one who causes her feet to move in dance. The verse needs a study.

वाग्देवताचरितचित्रितचित्तसद्मा

पद्मावतीचरणचारणचक्रवर्ती ।

श्रीवासुदेवरतिकेलिकथासमेत-

मेतं करोति जयदेवकविः प्रबन्धम् ॥

(GG, 1.2)

Jayadeva, wandering king of bards, who sing at Padmavati's feet, was obsessed in heart by rhythms of the goddess of speech, and he made this lyrical poem from tales of the passionate play when Kṛṣṇa loved Śrī. (The Gītagovinda of Jayadeva: 1984, Tr., Barbara Stoler Miller, Motilal Banarasi Dass, p.69). I have made development on this translation with the following observation. The heart is an abode wherein the glorious deeds of goddess of speech have been painted. The goddess of speech has manifested in all forms in the heart of the poet of the genius. In the first line prayer has been offered to the goddess of speech.

पद्मावती... पद्मावत्याः चरणयोः चारणाः वन्दिनः तेषां चक्रवर्ती । चारण means singing actor. They wander and sing the glory of Gods and kings. चारणास्तु कुशीलवाः (Amara Kosa, II.10.12). Bhānuji Dikṣita interprets - चारयन्ति कीर्तिम् - They publicize the glory. चारणसु can compose and sing. They move from place to place, narrate and popularize a glorified story of Gods. They represent the Sūta-tradition of the *Puranas*. They are represented by the Cakulia (or Cakādia) Panda tradition, Natha tradition, Harikathā tradition and Baul tradition of Orissa and Andhra (Tri Kalinga) and Bengal. Barbara Stoler Miller translates that Jayadeva, a wandering king who sings at Padmavati's feet. The translation may be like this-

Jayadeva, foremost among the bards, sings the glory of the feet of Padmavati (Lakṣmi-Rādhā). Padmavati is a goddess. In the first line and third line of the verse there is reference to the goddess speech and Vāsudeva. So, on the strength of associationism the meaning of Padmavati in the second line is contextually relevant in the sense of goddess. Padmavati may mean the goddess of Kenduli. Or as per the context Padmavati means integrated Lakṣmi-Radhā (राधा पद्मावती पद्मा पद्महस्ता च विस्तृता). In Padmavati Lakṣmi- Radha has individual identity. In Sri-Vāsudeva Lakṣmi-Rādhā has become the integral part in the eternal love-dalliance of *Vishnu-Kṛṣṇa*. Here Vasudeva does not necessarily mean one of the four Vyūhas of *Vishnu* (viz, Vasudeva, Sankarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha) rather its association with Padmavati (Lakṣmi-Radhā) strengthens the Madhavism in the form of *Vishnu-Kṛṣṇa*. If Padmavati represents Lakṣmi-Rādhā there is no necessity to translate Sri Vāsudeva as Vasudeva loving Śrī. During Jayadevas period Sri has been accepted as an integral part of a proper name. It adds the auspiciousness to the name. So, Jayadeva uses Śrī Vasudeva, Sri Jayadeva and Śrī *Gitagovinda*. Most probably it was due to the influence of Sri- Sampradaya. Śrī Ksetra, Śrī Mandira, Śrī Jagannatha and proper names are used with Śrī at present time.

In the particular verse the meaning of Jayadevas wife Padmavati may have apparent श्लेष but not pure श्लेष । In श्लेष the meanings are expressed and are contextually relevant. The meaning of wife is not relevant here. श्लेष रूपक cannot be supported as there is no continuity of the description of his wife, which should be a प्रस्तुत and there should be no concealment in imposition. If we take the meaning as suggested it has no charm and it will fall under गुणीभूतव्यङ्ग्य. It cannot be aprastuta as the aprastuta is a standard of comparison and superior in nature. Jayadeva is the husband of Padmavati. It has been mentioned at another place, e.g.

जयति पद्मावतीरमण जयदेव कविः (GG, 10.9)

A story goes that no carpenter could handle the wooden log. Ultimately an old carpenter came and assured the king that he can make the statues under one condition that he would not be disturbed for fourteen days and he would do his job inside the temple by locking the door. The king agreed to the terms and conditions. But hearing no sound of the carpenter from outside, the Queen insisted the king to break open the door before the completion of 14 days and to his surprise the king found the deities half made and the old carpenter vanished. He prayed God who advised him to worship him in that form which we find today. Many such other stories in different versions are found about the *Sabar* connection of the Sree Jagannatha. The *Daitapatis* now claim their origin to this *Sabar* tribe.

From the above discussion it is said that the synthetic and syncretic tradition of Sree Jagannatha is the embodiment of several faiths and beliefs of diverse religious traits that existed in Bharatabarsha in different time spans of her long cultural historical developments. In the historic process of assimilation, it has embraced strange contradictions and varied tradition of amazing diction. There is no discarding of any religious sentiment in Sree Jagannatha tradition. Nilakantha Das has rightly surmised that "*all the gods and goddesses attacking and appealing have found a place in the compound of the temple. Sree Jagannatha has welcomed and embraced all, but been overwhelmed by none and has lost himself in none.*" The poetic composition like *chandan charchita nila kalevara vasati vane vanamali* of Jayadeva is reverberating and echoing in every household even today highlighting the composite sree Jagannatha Tradition of Krishna consciousness. To develop this article I acknowledge the scholars like late C.B. Patel and Professor Gopal Chandra Das. The work of Jayadev's *Gitagovinda* is the epitome of the socio-cultural life of the people of the early medieval Odisha.

References:

1. P.K.Pradhan & et al., *Incredible Prachivalley: Its Monuments and tourism possibilities*, Cuttack, 2007, pp.87-92.
2. Ibid.
3. P.K.Pradhan & et al., op.cit., p.41.
4. G.K.Dash., *The Gita Govinda of Jayadev: A Model*, P.K.Pradhan & et al., *Incredible Prachivalley: Its Monuments and tourism possibilities*, Cuttack, 2007, pp.38-42.
5. Ibid .
6. G.K.Dash., op.cit.p.43.
7. Ibid .
8. Jaya Dev., *Gita Govinda Canto,8*.
9. Ibid.
10. Jayade., op.cit., canto,9.
11. Ibid .
12. Tuan.Yi-Fu,1978, "*Sacred Space-Exploration of an idea*" in Karl W. Butzer, (ed) *Dimensions of Human Geography*, Research Paper, Dept. of Geography, University of Chicago
13. Singh, Rana, P.B.1988, "*The image of Varanasi Sacrality and Perceptual World in Hindu Codification*", NGJI, Vol.34, Oark. Chris C1994, *Sacred worlds-An introduction to Geography and Religion*, Routledge, London.
14. Swami, Ranganathanarnda,1990, *The Charms and Power of the Upanishads*, Calcutta.
15. Swami, Harshananda, 1993, *All about Hindu Temples*, Madras