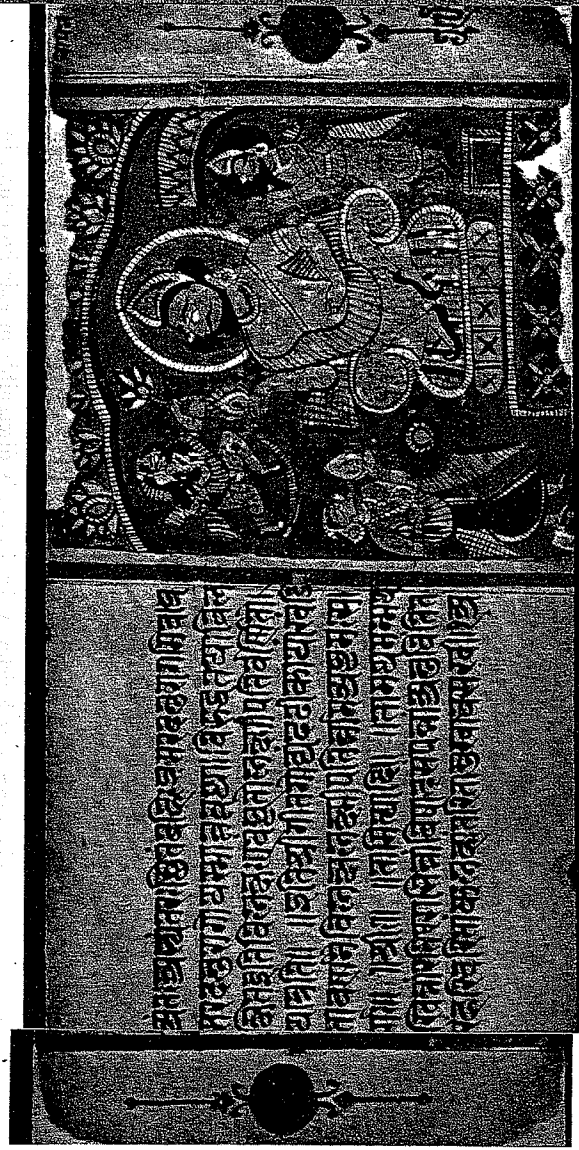


Love Song of the Dark Lord

Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda*



Krishna's incarnation as the cosmic Dwarf is painted in Gujarati style of the fifteenth century. The leaf includes a fragment of Mānānka's commentary on the *Gītagovinda*. Reproduced from the *Journal of the University of Bombay*, 6 (1937), plate IX.

1977

New York

Columbia University Press

EDITED AND

TRANSLATED BY BARBARA STOLER MILLER

that is the consummation (*sambhogāśrīgāra*) of the erotic, esthetic, religious experience Jayadeva creates for himself and his audience. This vision is contained within the structure of the poem, like the vision that climaxes a worshipper's controlled approach to the deity in the womb of a Hindu temple. On another level, the poetic perspective follows the movement of Rādhā's friend (*sakṣī*), who goes between the parted lovers to describe the condition of each to the other. This perspective begins on Rādhā's side, but it subtly shifts to mediate between Rādhā and Krishna and bring them into union. The friend, the poet, and the audience share the experience of secretly participating in the play of divine love.⁷

The *Gītāgovinda* begins with a classical verse indicating the subject of the poem.⁸

"Clouds thicken the sky.

Tamāla trees darken the forest.

The night frightens him.

Rādhā, you take him home!"

They leave at Nanda's order,

Passing trees in thickets on the way,

Until secret passions of Rādhā and Mādhava

Triumph on the Jumna riverbank.

The place, the time, the characters, and their relationship in the poem are superficially clear in this verse. But details of the episode are rich in symbolism and have encouraged complicated interpretations of Jayadeva's meaning.⁹ Most interpretations turn on the identification of the speaker of the first half of the verse and on the reference to Krishna's "fear" and Rādhā's role as his guide through the dark forest. The opening speech is variously attributed to Krishna,¹⁰ Rādhā,¹¹ Nanda,¹² or even the friend of Rādhā.¹³ Jayadeva is characteristically ambiguous here—the many voices that are possible in the verse all direct the sexual energies of Krishna toward Rādhā, but each voice slightly shifts the quality of the darkness and of Krishna's fear. When we hear Krishna's foster-father, the cowherd-chief Nanda, address Rādhā, Krishna's youthful fear of the dark is suggested. When we hear Rādhā speaking to herself, the words suggest a woman sensing the sexual fear of her adolescent lover. When we hear Krishna himself speaking he is courting Rādhā in the veiled language of love, where feigned fear is a device of seduction. The composite voice further suggests that fear may relate to the cosmic age of darkness, the Kali Yuga, for which the union of Rādhā and Krishna is the cure.¹⁴

The darkness of the night in the forest is described in voluptuous sounds and imagery that echo through the entire poem.¹⁵ It is in this secret, sexually stimulating environment that Krishna and Rādhā enact the initial triumph of their divine love and then suffer the long night of separation that ends in their reunion. They follow the path through the forest as a pair, which Jayadeva calls Rādhā-Mādhava.¹⁶ The triumph of their passions occurs in this dual state, which is the defining structure of their relationship in the *Gītāgovinda*. The "home" to which Rādhā brings Krishna is a forest thicket (*kuṇḍīya*), the secret place of their divine love, in which they meet again at the end of their journey.

The erotic mysticism of the *Gītāgovinda*, which inspired the Vaishnava saint Caitanya, was interpreted allegorically by Caitanya's followers in terms of the Sahajiyā doctrine of devotional esthetics (*bhaktīrasa*);¹⁷ they used love as a metaphor whose primary reference was a metaphysical conception. Although many elements in the *Gītāgovinda* are codified in the Sahajiyā doctrine of love, this reading seems artificial. Jayadeva's verses nowhere praise unbodied joy; they are explicitly sensual, and celebrate the sensual joy of divine love. Through imagery, tone color, and rhythm, Jayadeva interweaves levels of physical and metaphysical associations, and the cosmic energy of Krishna's love with Rādhā is condensed into a religious ecstasy.

4 Krishna: Cosmic Cowherd Lover

Krishna's mythology is ancient and complicated, emerging in the earliest levels of the epic *Mahābhārata* and developing through the various phases of Purāṇic literature. The history and significance of the Krishna legend has been analyzed in numerous scholarly studies; the summary that follows borrows freely from them.¹

The process of Krishna's deification is discernible in epic literature. In the accounts of him in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Hārivaṃśa*, his character is a transparent composite of a cowherd hero and a tribal chief who is also a form, or an incarnation (*avatāra*), of the god Vishnu. The mundane and cosmic levels of his activity are interwoven in the narratives to encompass elements from various sources in a complex mythic structure.² The basic account includes Krishna's miraculous birth, his concealment

among the cowherds to protect him from his demonic uncle Kamsa, his childhood pranks and miraculous deeds in the cowherds' village, his youthful sexual play in the forest with the cowherdesses of Vraja, his destruction of demons, his defeat and killing of Kamsa, his role in the Bhārata war as the cunning and unscrupulous counsellor-cousin of the five Pāṇḍava brothers, and his violent death. In the *Bhagavadgītā*, he teaches a syncretic religion of devotion to his Pāṇḍava companion Arjuna and reveals himself to be the all-God, who is called Vishnu.³ The fusion of Krishna with Vishnu involved a transfer of many of Vishnu's epithets, as well as his functions, to Krishna.⁴ The divine-cowherd episodes of Krishna's legend became the focus of the medieval devotional cults that emphasized erotic mysticism, and in the process his divinity became distinct from the other incarnations of Vishnu. Krishna emerged as the supreme god of the other Yuga, the cosmic age of darkness.⁵

From ancient times, Indian culture has attributed extraordinary power to names and the act of name-giving, especially the naming of gods. The traditional practice in Hindu ritual of chanting a series of a god's thousand names (*śahasranāmastūti*) is evidence of this. Epithets are characterizing names, frequently taking the form of descriptive compound words (*bahuvrīhishamāsa*) in Sanskrit. Although some epithets are petrified into obscure ornamental formulas, most of them function to delineate the subject's character by evoking his deeds, relations, physical forms, and qualities.⁶ The particular names and epithets a sophisticated poet like Jayadeva chose from among the myriad names of Krishna must have been meant to set the figure in a pattern of specific associations.

Most of Krishna's epithets in the *Gītāgovindā* are traceable to older sources. The epithet *Bhagavat*, Lord, which is prominent in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Hārivarṇāśa*, and various Purāṇas and which is referred to in the title of the *Bhagavadgītā*, is notably absent in the *Gītāgovindā*. Its absence, along with the absence of terms like *dharmā*, *karma*, and *bhakti*, encourages the speculation that Jayadeva was consciously distinguishing the Krishna he worshipped from the object of the orthodox Bhāgavata cult.⁷ This is consonant with the poet's concentration on Krishna's special relation to Rādhā, the isolated figure who contrasts with the cowherdess group and who is ignored in early Bhāgavata texts.⁸ The epithets *Jagadīśa*, Lord of the World, and *Jayadeva*, God of Triumph, are textually associated with Krishna for the first time in the *Gītāgovindā*. Their use in the opening songs is crucial to appreciating the conceptual framework and

movement of the poem. The epithets *Dāsavidharūpa* and *Dāsākrīṭi*, referring to Krishna in his ten incarnations, are similarly significant.

The various epithets are defined below, in order of their appearance in the text of the poem, with references to other sources. Chapters and verses in the text of the *Gītāgovindā* are referred to by Roman and Arabic numerals; an asterisk placed after a verse number indicates a refrain.

MĀDHAVA (I.1; III.2; IV.1, 2*, 7; V.7; VII.12, 39; VIII.2*; IX.2*; XI.14*) literally means "related to *madhu*." *Madhu* may mean "springtime," or "honey," or "the progenitor of Krishna's own Yadu clan." The relation of the progenitor Madhu to the demon Madhu whom Krishna destroys is unclear. Daniel H. H. Ingalls suggests that the whole myth of the demon rests on a misunderstanding of the name Mādhava, "springtime."⁹ It may be that the "misunderstanding" was intended by storytellers to amplify the meaning of the epithet as it applies to Krishna. In the *Gītāgovindā*, *madhu* is used to mean "honey" (I.36; VI.2; VII.6; X.2*; XI.18), "springtime" (I.46), and "the demon Madhu" (I.20). The epithets *Madhusūdana*, "killer of Madhu" (I.25, 40; II.17; VII.9), *Madhurīpu*, "enemy of Madhu" (II.9, 18; V.1, 14; VI.5; VII.13, 29; XII.9), and *Madhumathana*, "tormentor of Madhu" (XI.2*) indicate that Krishna conquered *madhu*, but it remains uncertain how *madhu* is to be understood. If these epithets and *Mādhava* are understood as a complex of related meanings, they seem to suggest that Krishna conquered and absorbed into himself the power of what he conquered, whether it was "springtime" or "honey" or Krishna's own progenitor, all of which are potentially dangerous and so "demonical." Springtime, personified in Indian literature as the companion of the god of love, is erotically powerful and painful for parted lovers. Honey, the prized raw food of the forest, is cited as an aphrodisiac of power and danger in early brahmanical literature.¹⁰ Lévi-Strauss offers an analysis of honey in South American myths as a paradisaical seducer and disrupter of marital ties,¹¹ and one can see a parallel relation between Krishna's seductive, antinomian sexual behavior and his metaphoric association with honey. The conventional Indian sexual image of the bee acting like a lover in producing and drinking honey further widens the meaning of Krishna's association with honey. Bees are referred to in the poem by the common Sanskrit epithets *madhukāra*, "honey-maker" (I.27; VII.25), *madhupa*, "honey-drinker" (I.36; V.4; XI.4, 18), and *madhuvrata*, "busy with honey" (II.1). The

dominant meanings of *madhu* thus provide a strongly erotic context for the verbal play of *Mādhava* and related epithets in the *Gītāgovindā*.¹²

VĀSUDEVA (I.2) refers to Krishna's royal birth in the Yadu clan as the son of Vasudeva and Devakī. It is a common epithet of Krishna throughout epic literature.¹³

HARI (I.4, 5*, 17*, 27*, 34, 38*, 39, 43, 46; II.1, 2*; IV.9, 17; V.14, 15; VI.2*, 6, 7; VII.3, 7, 10, 14, 29, 38; IX.1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 24*, 31; XII.1, 19) literally means "the tawny one," but Vaishnava commentators interpret it to mean "the destroyer of pain," derived from the Sanskrit root *√ hr*. Hari is a common name of Vishnu in his cosmic form and his various incarnations in the epics and Purāṇas. It is probably borrowed from the Vedic name of Indra, whose characteristics Vishnu and Krishna absorb.¹⁴ The ambiguity of reference in the name *Hari* reflects the identification of Krishna, as *Jagadīśa*, with the cosmic form and function of Vishnu.¹⁵ The similarity between *Hari* and Śiva's name *Hara*, "the destroyer" (III.11), is exploited by Jayadeva for ironical effect.

KĒŚAVA (I.5*, 45; IV.11*; VIII.2*; XI.1) means "long-haired." It is traditionally related to Krishna's killing of the horse-demon Keśin.¹⁶ Like *Hari*, it refers ambiguously to Vishnu and Krishna in epic and Purāṇic literature.

JAGADĪŚA (I.5*) means "Lord of the World." In the refrain of the song of invocation, it indicates Krishna's cosmic supremacy. In the Jagannātha cult of Orissa, which probably provided the context for the composition of the *Gītāgovindā*, Krishna is identified with the composite Buddhist-Saivite-Vaishnavite form of Jagannātha.¹⁷

DAŚAVDHDHARŪPA (I.15) means "having a tenfold form." It indicates that Krishna is at once all of the ten forms of cosmic power he assumes in his awesome aspect (*aīśvarya*) in order to save the world. The same is meant by *Daśākṛtī* (I.16). The ten forms of *Jagadīśa* are a variant of the ten incarnations of Vishnu; in Purāṇic literature Krishna instead of Balarāma is usually the eighth incarnation. The incarnations were originally independent legends that came to center on Vishnu as the preserver of order when it is imperiled. Various aspects of the legends are emphasized in different texts. The content of the *Gītāgovindā* song is not traceable to any single source.¹⁸

The awesome aspect of Krishna, which the ten forms vividly portray, recedes as Krishna's lover-hero role (*nāyaka*) is elaborated in the poem to

dramatize his honey aspect (*mādhurya*) in relation to Rādhā. But the cosmic power remains a background for the intimacy of the lovers throughout the poem; the intimacy offers a dimension of cosmic power on which human perception can focus. The complex and powerful manifestations of cosmic reality are concentrated in emotions that are carefully patterned for esthetic experience.¹⁹ In the terminology of Indian esthetics, the song of invocation to Krishna's tenfold form expresses the mood of wonder (*adbhutarasa*), whose presence is essential to Jayadeva's religious transformation of the mood of erotic love (*śṛṅgārarasa*).²⁰

Jayadeva presents the ten forms of *Jagadīśa* as follows:

1. MĪNĀSARĪRA (I.5), the Fish-form, more commonly called *Matsyāvātāra*. The ancient myth of the deluge and man's rescue by a giant fish, which is told in the *Sātapatha Brāhmaṇa* (I.8.1-6), is the basis of later versions. The *Gītāgovindā* refers to the theft of the Vedas from Brahṁā by a sea demon as the former is entering the sleep of cosmic dissolution. Hari takes on the form of a fish and, by means of the deluge, destroys the demon and recovers the Vedas.²¹
2. KACCHAPARŪPA (I.6), the Tortoise-form. The *Gītāgovindā* refers to the creative power of the giant tortoise in relation to earth, an association that is made in the *Sātapatha Brāhmaṇa* (VII.5.1-5). This form is better known, as *Kūrmāvātāra*, for supporting Mt. Mandara when the gods and demons churn the sea to obtain the elixir of immortality.²²
3. ŚŪKARARŪPA (I.7), the Boar-form, another name for *Varāhāvātāra*. The giant boar rescues the earth by raising it out of the ocean depths on one of his tusks.²³
4. NARAHARŪPA (I.8), the Man-lion form, another name for *Narasimhāvātāra*. It is the form in which Hari destroys the infidel King Hiranyakaśipu, who threatened his own son Prahāda with death because of the son's devotion to Hari. Hiranyakaśipu had been given a boon of invulnerability by day or night, by god, man, or beast, inside or outside his palace, and to overcome it the god appears at twilight as a man-lion inside a pillar and reaches out to dismember the king.²⁴
5. VĀMANARŪPA (I.9), the Dwarf-form. The three cosmic strides of Vishnu form the basis of the dwarf myth.²⁵ The demon Bali, usurper of Indra's power, grants three paces of land to Hari when he comes to him in the guise of a dwarf. Then Hari assumes his cosmic shape

and traverses earth, atmosphere, and heaven. The *Gītāgovindā* refers to Hari's wet feet, which the demon, in his hospitality, has washed to welcome his guest.²⁶

6. BHṚGUPATRĪRŪPA (I.10), the form of the Bhṛgu chief better known as *Parāśurāma*, "axe-wielding Rāma," who reestablishes order in the world by putting an end to the tyranny of the warrior class.²⁷

7. RĀMAŚARĪRA (I.11), the form of the "charming" Rāmacandra, Prince of Ayodhyā, who is alternately called *Raghupatir-ūpa*. He is the hero of Vālmiki's epic *Rāmāyaṇa* and of the *Rāmopākhyāna* of the *Mahābhārata* (III.258-76). His purpose as an incarnation of Hari is the killing of the ten-headed demon king Rāvaṇa, whose evil power threatens the world. The abduction of his wife Sītā by Rāvaṇa and his defeat of Rāvaṇa and Rāvaṇa's general Duśāṇa, "the corrupting one," are referred to in the second song of the *Gītāgovindā* (I.16, 22).²⁸

8. HALADHARĀRŪPA (I.12), the form of the plowman Balarāma, elder brother of Krishna. *Haladharaśodara*, "brother of Haladhara," refers directly to Krishna (VII.28). Balarāma and Krishna are alternate incarnations of Vishnu in some texts; in other texts they are both partial incarnations, each representing a hair of Vishnu, one white and one black.²⁹ Balarāma is known for his addiction to wine, paralleling Krishna's addiction to women. The *Gītāgovindā* refers to the episode where he drunkenly orders the Jumna river to move close so he can sport there. When the river fails to obey, he throws his weapon, the plowshare, into her and makes the river bend to him.³⁰

9. BUDDHĀŚARĪRA (I.13), the form of "the enlightened one," Gautama Buddha. Buddha is not an incarnation in the *Mahābhārata* or the *Harivamśa*, but he appears as such in the texts of early Purāṇic literature.³¹ The orthodox Hindu view stresses that Buddha's emphasis on moral values, as opposed to Vedic ritual, is valuable only in confusing men and fostering the social chaos that marks the decline of the Kali Yuga. Jayadeva's linking of Buddha's condemnation of Vedic ritual with his compassion for animal victims is a more positive view, consonant with the syncretism characterizing the worship of Krishna as *Jagadīśa* in the *Gītāgovindā*.³²

10. KĀLKĪŚARĪRA (I.14), the form of the avenger, Kalki, who appears with a blazing sword on a white horse at the end of the Kali Yuga to punish barbarians and sinners.³³

KṚṢṆA is anglicized as *Krishna* in this volume to render recurring reference to the hero of the *Gītāgovindā* less artificial for English readers (I.16, 26; II.10; VIII.3, 7; X.5; XII.21); it literally means "black," or "dark." It is a prominent name of the epic hero who is identified with Vishnu in the *Mahābhārata* and who is counted as one of the standard incarnations of Vishnu. Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra is mentioned in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (III.17.6) as a pupil of the mythical teacher Ghoṭa Aṅgiras; scholars have made much of the reference, but it is too isolated to be significant. In the *Gītāgovindā*, Krishna is *Jagadīśa*, the cosmic power of the Dark Age. His relationship with Rādhā is set in the context of his youthful adventures among the cowherds and his adolescent erotic play with the cowherdesses in Brindāban forest.³⁴

JĀYĀDEVA (I.17*) is interpreted as a dependent compound (*tatpuruṣasamāsa*) meaning "God of Triumph." This is derived by reading the refrain of the second song as *ajāya jayadeva hare*, "Triumph, God of Triumph, Hari!" to parallel the refrain of the first song, which is *ajāya jagadīśa hare*, "Triumph, Lord of the World, Hari!"³⁵ The commentator Śānkaramiśra, referring to the opening verse of the poem, points out that Krishna's triumph as the hero (*nāyaka*) of the *Gītāgovindā* is in sexual play (*keṭi*). Rādhā is called "Love's living goddess of triumph," *anāṅgajayajāgamadevatā* (III.15). The epithet of Krishna is identical with the name of the author of the *Gītāgovindā*. In this function, *Jayadeva* occurs in the signature stanza (*bhāṇita*) of each song, as well as in some verses (I.2, 4, 15, 24, 34, 45; II.9, 18; III.10; IV.9, 18; V.6, 15; VI.9; VII.10, 20, 29, 38; VIII.9; IX.9; X.9; XI.9, 21, 31; XII.9, 19, 21, 22).³⁶

HAṂSA, (I.18), the Indian wild goose, which migrates to the Himalayas every spring to mate on Lake Mānasa, according to legend. It is symbolic of the Universal Spirit (*parabrahman*). *Mānasa* also means "mental" and the poet's reference is to Krishna as the Universal Spirit in the minds of sages.

MURĀRI (I.37; V.12; VII.21, 22*; XI.21), or *Muravairin* (X.9), means "enemy of Mura." Mura is a demon who is associated with another demon named Naraka in the *Mahābhārata* (I.59, etc.), as in the *Gītāgovindā* (I.20).³⁷

PĪTAVASANA (I.38; II.7), or *Pitāmbara* (XII.20), means "wearing a yellow cloth." It is an ancient epithet of Krishna, referring to the light garment that contrasts with his dark skin.³⁸

VANAMĀLIN (I.38; V.2*, 8*; VII.31*) means "wearing a garland of forest flowers" and symbolizes Krishna's sensual presence in the forest.³⁹

GOVINDA (II.19; V.17; VI.1; XI.23; XII.21) is probably a Prakrit form of *gopendāra* (*gov'inda*), which means "chief of the cowherds." It can also be derived from *go v'ida* to mean "protector of cows."⁴⁰ In either case, the epithet refers to Krishna's adolescence in the forest among the pastoral people of Vraja, the period of his awesome feats of strength, seductive flute playing, and sexual rites. The title *Gītāgovinda* has these associations; the young dark lord of the forest is the subject of the poet's singing.

KĒŚIMATHANA (II.11*) means "tormentor of the demon Kēśin." In the *Harivamśa* (62.69), Kēśin is called "the meanest of horses," *turagādharma*.⁴¹

KĀMSĀRI (III.1) means "enemy of Kamsa." It refers to the rivalry between Krishna and his uncle, the demonic King Kamsa.⁴²

UPENDRA (IV.20) means "Indra's younger brother."⁴³ In the *Gītāgovinda* verse it is used to form a pun on the name of the meter *upendravajrā*.

JANĀRDANA (VII.12) means "exciting to men." It is a common epithet of Krishna in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Harivamśa*, and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

NĀRĀYAṆA (XII.2*) literally means "related to *nara*, man." In the *Śatāpatha Brāhmaṇa* (XIII.3.4.1) it is an epithet of Puruṣa, the primordial man. Throughout the *Mahābhārata* it is the name of Vishnu or Krishna in the role of cosmic creator.⁴⁴

YADUNĀNDANA (XII.12, 12*) means "joy of the Yadu clan." Like the epithet *Vāsudeva*, it refers to Krishna's royal birth.

In addition to the epithets that Jayadeva chose to characterize Krishna, references to characters, places, and events from various Vaishnava myths are used to expand the context of the poem. The role of Krishna's foster-father, the cowherd-chief Nanda, in the opening verse is barely indicated by the adverbial compound *nandamidesātāh*, "at Nanda's order." But the presence of the name emphasizes that Krishna is young as his sexual play begins.⁴⁵ References to Krishna's defeat of the serpent-king Kāliya (I.19)⁴⁶ and the bird-demoness Pūtanikā (VIII.8)⁴⁷ evoke heroic events of his legend. Kāliya was punished for befouling the Jumna waters and Pūtanikā was killed when the baby Krishna sucked her life from her by taking the poisoned breast she offered him. Garuda (I.20) is the anthropomorphized eagle who usually serves as Vishnu's vehicle.⁴⁸

The sexual freedom enjoyed by the adolescent cowherd is symbolized by Krishna's simple bamboo flute, which is called *vamśā* (I.43; II.2, 19) or *venu* (V.9).⁴⁹ Like the flower arrows shot by the god of love, Krishna's

magical flute is an adolescent instrument for arousing and sustaining sexual desire. Both the arrow and the flute, with their obvious phallic significance, function in this way in the myths of many societies.⁵⁰ The culminating effect of Krishna's flute-playing is the ritual circular dance, called *rāsa* (I.43; II.2*), which he performs under the full moon of autumn with the cowherdresses. The common version of the story recounts Krishna's seduction of the cowherdresses by the melodious call of his flute in the woods of Brindaban (*Vṛndāvana*) on the banks of the river Jumna (*Yamunā*).⁵¹ Krishna remains elusive, but promises to dance with the girls in autumn, when the heat and rains are finished. On a night of the full moon, Krishna goes toward the forest playing his flute. The cowherdresses follow and form a circle around him, like stars around the moon. By his magic power, he multiplies himself to dance with all the cowherdresses at once.⁵² This rite of autumn acts as a foil for his spring-time play with his cowherd consort Rādhā.

In Indian myth, spring is the ally of Kāma, the god of love. The sexual aggression of Love is portrayed in the myth of his body's destruction by Śiva when he interrupted Śiva's meditation with flower arrows to arouse the divine ascetic's desire for Pārvatī, the daughter of Himālaya. In his relation to Rādhā, Krishna is both the object of Love's attack and the embodiment of Love's creative sensuality.⁵³

By representing his divine hero with a complex of characteristics known from older religious sources, Jayadeva thus sets Krishna's relation with Rādhā in a sacred framework. Krishna's relation to all living beings is expressed through his ten incarnate forms. His personal spiritual relation to human beings is expressed through the form of the flute-playing adolescent cowherd. His intense spiritual intimacy with an individual human being is expressed through the divine sensuality of his love with Rādhā.

As the divine lover and object of the poet's worship, Krishna is the embodiment of erotic mood (*śṛṅgāramūrtiman*, I.46) and the essence of esthetic experience (*eḥarasa*, XI.24*). His relation with Rādhā epitomizes the classical pattern of erotic love in Sanskrit drama and poetry. Krishna is referred to by standard forms of address given for the dramatic hero (*nāyaka*) in Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, such as "beloved" or "lover" (*kānta*, VII.11, XII.10, 11; *dayita*, I.41, VII.17, 30; *priya*, IV.21, V.16, VII.30, VIII.1, X.12, XI.32, 33, XII.5, 13; *vallabha*, VII.30),⁵⁴ "cheat" (*kṛtava*, VI.10),⁵⁵ and "rogue" (*śatṛha*, VII.30).⁵⁶ These familiar forms of address complement the sensuous surface that emerges from descriptions of Krishna's ornamented physical presence and his manifestations of emo-

tion. By such means the poet encourages his audience to approach the divine lover through esthetic experience. The ingenious integration of religious, erotic, and esthetic meaning that Jayadeva achieves in the structure of the *Gītagovindā* is basic in the character of Krishna too.

5 Rādhā: Consort of Krishna's Springtime Passion

Rādhā is one of the most obscure figures in early Indian literature. Until Jayadeva made her the heroine of his poem, she appeared only in stray verses scattered through various Purāṇas, anthologies of Prākṛit and Sanskrit poetry, works of literary esthetics, grammar, poetry, drama, and a few inscriptions. In the *Gītagovindā*, Rādhā is neither a wife nor a worshipping rustic playmate. She is an intense, solitary, proud female who complements and reflects the mood of Krishna's passion. She is Krishna's partner in a secret and exclusive love, contrasted in the poem with the circular *rāsa* dance Krishna performs with the entire group of cowherdesses. Krishna disappears after this dance, deserting the cowherdesses; but he stays with Rādhā to admire and ornament her. Her relationship with Krishna culminates in their union and mutual "victory" (*jayā*) over each other. In Jayadeva's view, the profound intimacy of Krishna's concentration on Rādhā, in contrast with the diffusion of erotic energy in his play with the cowherdesses, is the perfection of Krishna's nature.¹

Jayadeva's reference to his heroine focuses on one name, *Rādhā* (I.1, 26; II.1; III.1; IV.20; V.1; VI.2*; XI.1, 13, 14*, 24, 32; XII.1, XII.11) and its diminutive, *Rādhikā* (I.37; III.2; IV.1, 11*; X.9, XI.2*; XII.2*). Names of Krishna's divine consort, such as *Śrī* (I.2; I.23), *Padmāvatī* (I.2; X.9; XI.21), *Kāmalā* (I.17), *Padmā* (I.25), and *Laṅgmi* (XI.22), occur to place Rādhā in the appropriate cosmic context. Rādhā's role as the female counterpart of her lover is consonant with the meaning of her name, which is related to the word *rādhas*. In Vedic and Purāṇic literature, *rādhas* and other forms of the root $\sqrt{rād}$ have meaning of "perfection" and "success," even "wealth."² The Vedic god most closely associated with *rādhas* is Indra, who bears the epithet "Lord of Success" (*rādhaspati*).³ In the *Mahābhārata* and various Purāṇas, the rivalry between Indra and Vishnu/Krishna results in the transference of elements of Indra's great power to Vishnu/Krishna. Among these elements are female powers associated with Indra, such as Śrī in the episode of the churning

When spring came, tender-limbed Rādhā wandered
Like a flowering creeper in the forest wilderness,
Seeking Krishna in his many haunts.
The god of love increased her ordeal,
Tormenting her with fevered thoughts,
And her friend sang to heighten the mood.

—* The Third Song, sung with Rāga "Uasanta" *

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.

Lonely wives of travelers whine in love's mad fantasies.
Bees swarm over flowers clustered to fill mimosa branches.
When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here
To dance with young women, friend—
A cruel time for deserted lovers.

Tamāla trees' fresh leaves absorb strong scents of deer musk.
Flame-tree petals, shining nails of Love, tear at young hearts.
When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here
To dance with young women, friend—
A cruel time for deserted lovers.

Gleaming saffron flower pistils are golden scepters of Love.
Trumpet flowers like wanton bees are arrows in Love's quiver.
When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here
To dance with young women, friend—
A cruel time for deserted lovers.

30

Tender buds bloom into laughter as creatures abandon modesty.
Cactus spikes pierce the sky to wound deserted lovers.
When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here
To dance with young women, friend—
A cruel time for deserted lovers.

31

Scents of twining creepers mingle with perfumes of fresh garlands.
Intimate bonds with young things bewilder even hermit hearts.
When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here
To dance with young women, friend—
A cruel time for deserted lovers.

32

Budding mango trees tremble from the embrace of rising vines.
Brindaban forest is washed by meandering Jumna river waters.
When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here
To dance with young women, friend—
A cruel time for deserted lovers.

33

Jayadeva's song evokes the potent memory of Hari's feet,
Coloring the forest in springtime mood heightened by Love's presence.
When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here
To dance with young women, friend—
A cruel time for deserted lovers.

34

Wind perfumes the forests with fine pollen
Shaken loose from newly blossomed jasmine
As it blows Love's cactus-fragrant breath
To torture every heart it touches here.

35

Crying sounds of cuckoos, mating on mango shoots
Shaken as bees seek honey scents of opening buds,
Raise fever in the ears of lonely travelers—
Somehow they survive these days
By tasting the mood of lovers' union
In climaxing moments of meditation.

36

Pointing to Mura's defeater nearby
Delighting in his seductive game
Of reveling in many women's embraces,
Her friend sang to make Rādhā look back.

37

—* The Fourth Song, sung with Rāga "Rāmāhari" *

Yellow silk and wildflower garlands lie on dark sandalwood skin.
Jewel earrings dangling in play ornament his smiling cheeks.
Hari revels here as the crowd of charming girls
Revels in seducing him to play.

38

One cowherdess with heavy breasts embraces Hari lovingly
And celebrates him in a melody of love.
Hari revels here as the crowd of charming girls
Revels in seducing him to play.

39

Another simple girl, lured by his wanton quivering look,
Meditates intently on the lotus face of Madhu's killer.
Hari revels here as the crowd of charming girls
Revels in seducing him to play.

40

A girl with curving hips, bending to whisper in his ear,
Cherishes her kiss on her lover's tingling cheek.
Hari revels here as the crowd of charming girls
Revels in seducing him to play.

41

Eager for the art of his love on the Jumna riverbank, a girl
Pulls his silk cloth toward a thicket of reeds with her hand.
Hari revels here as the crowd of charming girls
Revels in seducing him to play.

42

Hari praises a girl drunk from dancing in the rite of love,
With beating palms and ringing bangles echoing his flute's low tone.
Hari revels here as the crowd of charming girls
Revels in seducing him to play.

43

He hugs one, he kisses another, he caresses another dark beauty.
He stares at one's suggestive smiles, he mimics a willful girl.
Hari revels here as the crowd of charming girls
Revels in seducing him to play.

44

The wondrous mystery of Krishna's sexual play in Brindaban forest
Is Jayadeva's song. Let its celebration spread Krishna's favors!
Hari revels here as the crowd of charming girls
Revels in seducing him to play.

45

When he quickens all things
To create bliss in the world,
His soft black sinuous lotus limbs
Begin the festival of love
And beautiful cowherd girls wildly
Wind him in their bodies.
Friend, in spring young Hari plays
Like erotic mood incarnate.

4

Winds from sandalwood mountains
Blow now toward Himalayan peaks,
Longing to plunge in the snows
After weeks of writhing
In the hot bellies of ground snakes.
Melodious voices of cuckoos
Raise their joyful sound
When they spy the buds
On tips of smooth mango branches.

"Joyful Krishna" is the first part in *Gītāgovinda*

THE SECOND PART

Careless Krishna

While Hari roamed in the forest
Making love to all the women,
Rādhā's hold on him loosened,
And envy drove her away.
But anywhere she tried to retreat
In her thicket of wild vines,
Sounds of bees buzzing circles overhead
Depressed her—
She told her friend the secret.

I

The Fifth Song, sung with Rāga "Gurjari"

Sweet notes from his alluring flute echo nectar from his lips.
His restless eyes glance, his head sways, earrings play at his cheeks.

My heart recalls Hari here in his love dance,
Playing seductively, laughing, mocking me.

2

A circle of peacock plumes caressed by moonlight crowns his hair.
A rainbow colors the fine cloth on his cloud-dark body.

My heart recalls Hari here in his love dance,
Playing seductively, laughing, mocking me.

3

Kissing mouths of round-hipped cowherd girls whets his lust.
Brilliant smiles flash from the ruby-red buds of his sweet lips.

My heart recalls Hari here in his love dance,
Playing seductively, laughing, mocking me.

4

Vines of his great throbbing arms circle a thousand cowherdesses.
Jewel rays from his hands and feet and chest break the dark night.
My heart recalls Hari here in his love dance,
Playing seductively, laughing, mocking me.

5

His sandalpaste browmark outshines the moon in a mass of clouds.
His cruel heart is a hard door bruising circles of swelling breasts.
My heart recalls Hari here in his love dance,
Playing seductively, laughing, mocking me.

6

Jeweled earrings in sea-serpent form adorn his sublime cheeks.
His trailing yellow cloth is a retinue of sages, gods, and spirits.
My heart recalls Hari here in his love dance,
Playing seductively, laughing, mocking me.

7

Meeting me under a flowering 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.

8

Jayadeva's song evokes an image of Madhu's beautiful foe
Fit for worthy men who keep the memory of Hari's feet.
My heart recalls Hari here in his love dance,
Playing seductively, laughing, mocking me.

9

My heart values his vulgar ways,
 Refuses to admit my rage,
 Feels strangely elated,
 And keeps denying his guilt.
 When he steals away without me
 To indulge his craving
 For more young women,
 My perverse heart
 Only wants Krishna back.
 What can I do?

10

—* The Sixth Song, sung with Rāga "Mālavā" ♪—

I reach the lonely forest hut where he secretly lies at night.
 My trembling eyes search for him as he laughs in a mood of passion.
 Friend, bring Keśi's sublime tormentor to revel with me!
 I've gone mad waiting for his fickle love to change.

11

I shy from him when we meet; he coaxes me with flattering words.
 I smile at him tenderly as he loosens the silken cloth on my hips.
 Friend, bring Keśi's sublime tormentor to revel with me!
 I've gone mad waiting for his fickle love to change.

12

I fall on the bed of tender ferns; he lies on my breasts forever.
 I embrace him, kiss him; he clings to me drinking my lips.
 Friend, bring Keśi's sublime tormentor to revel with me!
 I've gone mad waiting for his fickle love to change.

13

My eyes close languidly as I feel the flesh quiver on his cheek.
 My body is moist with sweat; he is shaking from the wine of lust.
 Friend, bring Keśi's sublime tormentor to revel with me!
 I've gone mad waiting for his fickle love to change.

14

I murmur like a cuckoo; he masters love's secret rite.
 My hair is a tangle of wilted flowers; my breasts bear his nailmarks.
 Friend, bring Keśi's sublime tormentor to revel with me!
 I've gone mad waiting for his fickle love to change.

15

Jewel anklets ring at my feet as he reaches the height of passion.
 My belt falls noisily; he draws back my hair to kiss me.
 Friend, bring Keśi's sublime tormentor to revel with me!
 I've gone mad waiting for his fickle love to change.

16

I savor passion's joyful time; his lotus eyes are barely open.
 My body falls like a limp vine; Madhu's foe delights in my love.
 Friend, bring Keśi's sublime tormentor to revel with me!
 I've gone mad waiting for his fickle love to change.

17

Jayadeva sings about Rādhā's fantasy of making love with Madhu's killer.
 Let the story of a lonely cowherdess spread joy in his graceful play.
 Friend, bring Keśi's sublime tormentor to revel with me!
 I've gone mad waiting for his fickle love to change.

18

The enchanting flute in his hand
 Lies fallen under coy glances;
 Sweat of love wets his cheeks;
 His bewildered face is smiling—
 When Krishna sees me watching him
 Playing in the forest
 In a crowd of village beauties,
 I feel the joy of desire.

19

Wind from a lakeside garden
 Coaxing buds on new aśoka branches
 Into clusters of scarlet flowers
 Is only fanning the flames to burn me.
 This mountain
 Of new mango blossoms
 Humming with roving bumblebees
 Is no comfort to me now, friend.

"Careless Krishna" is the second part in *Gītāgovinda*



THE FIFTH PART



Lotus-eyed Krishna Longing for Love

"I'll stay here, you go to Rādhā!
Appease her with my words and bring her to me!"
Commanded by Madhu's foe, her friend
Went to repeat his words to Rādhā.

1

The Tenth Song, sung with Rāga "Deśavarāḍī"

Sandalwood mountain winds blow,
Spreading passion.
Flowers bloom in profusion,
Tearing deserted lovers' hearts.
Wildflower-garlanded Krishna
Suffers in your desertion, friend.

2

Cool moon rays scorch him,
Threatening death.
Love's arrow falls
And he laments his weakness.
Wildflower-garlanded Krishna
Suffers in your desertion, friend.

3

Bees swarm, buzzing sounds of love,
Making him cover his ears.
Your neglect affects his heart,
Inflicting pain night after night.
Wildflower-garlanded Krishna
Suffers in your desertion, friend.

4

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.

5

Poet Jayadeva sings
To describe Krishna's desolation.
When your heart feels his strong desire,
Hari will rise to favor you.
Wildflower-garlanded Krishna
Suffers in your desertion, friend.

6

Mādhava still waits for you
In Love's most sacred thicket,
Where you perfected love together.
He meditates on you without sleeping,
Muttering a series of magical prayers.
He craves the rich elixir that flows
From embracing your full breasts.

7

—* The Eleventh Song, sung with Rāga "Gurjari" *

He ventures in secret to savor your passion, dressed for love's delight.
Rādhā, don't let full hips idle! Follow the lord of your heart!
In woods on the wind-swept Jumna bank,
Krishna waits in wildflower garlands.

8

He plays your name to call you on his sweet reed flute.
He cherishes breeze-blown pollen that touched your fragile body.
In woods on the wind-swept Jumna bank,
Krishna waits in wildflower garlands.

9

When a bird feather falls or a leaf stirs, he imagines your coming.
He makes the bed of love; he eyes your pathway anxiously.
In woods on the wind-swept Jumna bank,
Krishna waits in wildflower garlands.

10

Leave your noisy anklets! They clang like traitors in love play.
Go to the darkened thicket, friend! Hide in a cloak of night!
In woods on the wind-swept Jumna bank,
Krishna waits in wildflower garlands.

11

Your garlands fall on Krishna's chest like white cranes on a dark cloud.
Shining lightning over him, Rādhā, you rule in the climax of love.
In woods on the wind-swept Jumna bank,
Krishna waits in wildflower garlands.

12

Loosen your clothes, untie your belt, open your loins!
Rādhā, your gift of delight is like treasure in a bed of vines.
In woods on the wind-swept Jumna bank,
Krishna waits in wildflower garlands.

13

Hari is proud. This night is about to end now.
Speed my promise to him! Fulfill the desire of Madhu's foe!
In woods on the wind-swept Jumna bank,
Krishna waits in wildflower garlands.

14

While Jayadeva sings his enticing song to worship Hari,
Bow to Hari! He loves your favor—his heart is joyful and gentle.
In woods on the wind-swept Jumna bank,
Krishna waits in wildflower garlands.

15

Sighing incessantly, he pours out his grief.
He endlessly searches the empty directions.
Each time he enters the forest thicket,
Humming to himself, he gasps for breath.
He makes your bed of love again and again,
Staring at it in empty confusion.
Lovely Rādhā, your lover suffers
Passion's mental pain.

16

Your spitefulness ebbed
As the hot-rayed sun set.
Krishna's mad desire
Deepened with the darkness.
The pitiful cry of lonely cuckoos
Keeps echoing my plea,
"Delay is useless, you fool—
It is time for lovers to meet!"

17

Two lovers meeting in darkness
Embrace and kiss
And claw as desire rises
To dizzying heights of love.
When familiar voices reveal
That they ventured into the dark
To betray each other,
The mood is mixed with shame.

18

As you cast your frightened glance
On the dark path,
As you stop at every tree,
Measuring your steps slowly,
As you secretly move
With love surging through your limbs,
Krishna is watching you, Rādhā!
Let him celebrate your coming!

19

“Lotus-eyed Krishna Longing for Love” is the fifth part in *Gītāgovinda*

mission or notation to assure that these names designate the same melodic patterns they do in later times. The fact that many commentators are preoccupied with defining the *rāgas* in terms of Indian music theory suggests that the songs were variously interpreted throughout their history.

3 Jayadeva's Language for Love

Poetry is distinguished from ordinary modes of speech by the controlled and stylized ways it strives to transcend the limits of ordinary language. The lyrical techniques of Jayadeva's songs combine with the conventional language of Sanskrit erotic poetry to express the intimate power of divine love.¹ As Jayadeva elaborates the passion of Rādhā and Krishna, he creates an esthetic atmosphere of erotic mood (*śṛṅgāra-rasa*) that is bliss for devotees of Krishna. The poet's aim is implied in an opening verse of the *Gītāgovindā* (1.4):

If remembering Hari enriches your heart,
If his arts of seduction arouse you,
Listen to Jayadeva's speech
In these sweet soft lyrical songs.

The relation between esthetic and spiritual experience is made explicit in the signature verse of the final song of the poem (XII.19):

Make your heart sympathetic to Jayadeva's splendid speech!
Recalling Hari's feet is elixir against fevers of this dark time.
She told the joyful Yadu hero, playing to delight her heart.

The concept of mood, *rasa*, is at the heart of all Indian artistic expression. *Rasa* is literally the taste or flavor of something. The *rasa* of a verse, song, dramatic scene, or musical performance is the flavor of a pervading emotion (*sthāyībhāva*). Sanskrit poets and critics came to realize the unique power and the esthetic potential of sexual passion (*rañibhāva*) in its aspects of pain and pleasure.² The erotic mood that emerges from passion was expressed in the antithetical modes of "separation" (*vipralambhaśṛṅgāra*) and "consummation" (*sambhogāśṛṅgāra*). To experience this mood in the interplay of its two modes was considered the height of esthetic joy.³ Jayadeva created the religiously potent atmosphere of the *Gītāgovindā* by exploring the poignant mood of separation within the broader play of divine passion in consummation.

Passion is transformed into erotic mood when a poet distills essential qualities from the confusion of spontaneous emotion and then patterns them according to universalizing rules of composition. Passion is made palpable through sensuous descriptions of movements and physical forms. Seasonal changes in nature and bodily signs of inner feeling are colored richly to create a dense atmosphere of passion.⁴ The theorists dictated that the gestures exposing a character's mental states must be subtle, expressive enough to arouse a sensitive audience but never so crudely detailed that they stimulate wanton desire.⁵ In the *Gītāgovindā*, this restraint functions to make potentially pornographic subject matter the material of esthetic and religious experience.

In Jayadeva's environment of springtime (*sarasvasanta*, 1.27*), Rādhā and Krishna are vehicles (*vibhāva*) for the universalization of erotic emotion. These youthful figures with gleaming flesh and lotus-petal eyes manifest signs of emotion (*vyañhicāribhāva*, *sātvikābhāva*) to communicate the passion of their separation. For Jayadeva, their longing and reunion is the concrete example of religious experience in which the disquieting distinction between "I" and "mine" verses "you" and "yours" is calmed.⁶ The esthetic experience of their love is the means for breaking the imaginary barrier dividing human from divine.

The poet's direct presence throughout the poem dramatizes his view that the discipline of esthetic perception is a way to enjoy Krishna's graceful love. Each signature verse is a variation on the idea that the emotional states of Rādhā and Krishna have religious power through the medium of the poet's lyric presentation.

Insight into Jayadeva's conception is found by following the way he presents his characters through the movement of the poem's twelve parts. After evoking Rādhā and Krishna in their secret erotic relationship and stating his own aim, Jayadeva invokes the ten cosmic incarnations of Krishna. He proceeds to present increasingly intimate aspects of Krishna's relation to existence, focusing on the suffering he shares with Rādhā in the frustration of their love. Krishna's ecstatic reunion with Rādhā within the forest thicket in springtime allows the poet's audience to witness the center of existence. The vision (*darśana*) of Krishna revealed through Rādhā at the end of the poem is a vision of the soul of his erotic mood (*ekarāsa*, XI.24-31, song 22). Its effect is comparable with Krishna's manifestation to Arjuna in the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Rādhā's heart, strengthened by the long trial of their separation and by the force of Krishna's suffering, is filled with erotic mood (*sarasamanas*, XII.1)

