

## 1 Jayadeva: The Wandering Poet

Jayadeva, wandering king of bards  
Who sing at Padmāvatī's lotus feet,  
Was obsessed in his heart  
By rhythms of the goddess of speech, <sup>vac?</sup>  
And he made this lyrical poem  
From tales of the passionate play  
When Krishna loved Śrī.

Jayadeva, the poet's signature in the *Gītagovinda*, is the name by which he is known as a poet-saint in Indian tradition.<sup>1</sup> It is a name he shares with Krishna, the divine hero of his poem; he invokes Krishna in the second song with the refrain *jaya jayadeva hare*, "Triumph, God of Triumph, Hari!" In the context where the poet's name becomes an epithet of Krishna, the name in turn gains a dimension of sacred meaning. The listener is reminded of Jayadeva's special relation to Krishna as his name is repeated in the signature verse that ends each song.

The lyrical, religious eroticism of the *Gītagovinda* earned sainthood for Jayadeva and a wide audience for his poem. All versions of the legend that sanctifies Jayadeva's life say that he was born in a brahman family and that he became an accomplished student of Sanskrit and a skilled poet.<sup>2</sup> However, he abandoned scholarship at a young age and adopted an ascetic life, devoting himself to God. As a wandering mendicant, he would not rest under one tree for more than a night for fear that attachment to the place would violate his vow. His ascetic life ended when a brahman of Puri insisted that Jagannātha, "Lord of the World," himself had ordained the marriage of Jayadeva with the brahman's daughter Padmāvatī, who was dedicated as a dancing girl in the temple. Padmāvatī served her husband and he shared her devotion to Jagannātha. As Jayadeva composed, she danced—thus the *Gītagovinda*. In the process of writing the poem, Jayadeva conceived the climax of Krishna's supplication to Rādhā as a command for Rādhā to place her foot on Krishna's head in a symbolic gesture of victory (X.8). But the poet hesitated to complete the couplet, in deference to Krishna. He went to bathe and in his absence



Krishna appeared in his guise to write the couplet; then Krishna ate the food Padmāvatī had prepared for Jayadeva and left. When Jayadeva returned, he realized that he had received divine grace in exalting Krishna's loving relation to Rādhā.

Various local versions of this legend have grown into conflicting traditions about Jayadeva's place of birth and region of poetic activity. Modern scholars of Bengal, Orissa, and Mithila have put forth claims locating the village of his birth in their respective regions. Two strong traditions say that the "Kindubilva" cited in the *Gītagovinda* (III.10) is either a village near Puri in Orissa or a village in the modern Birbhum district of Bengal. A third tradition identifies the village of Kenduli near Jenjharpur in Mithila as Jayadeva's birthplace. The argument is well known and has been summarized in favor of Jayadeva's Bengali origins in a recent monograph by Suniti Kumar Chatterji.<sup>3</sup> Although the Bengali position remains tenuous, both legends and historical documents suggest that Jayadeva lived and composed in eastern India during the latter half of the twelfth century.

The dating of Jayadeva's literary activity is established by the composite evidence of various literary and historical documents. Most prominent is the presence of verses attributed to Jayadeva in Śrīdhara-dāsa's *Saduktikarnāmrta*, an anthology compiled in Bengal in A.D. 1205 (Śāka era 1127), at the end of the reign of Lakṣmaṇasena, who ruled about A.D. 1179-1205.<sup>4</sup> Among the thirty verses attributed to Jayadeva in S. C. Banerji's edition of the anthology, two are in the critical text of the *Gītagovinda*.<sup>5</sup> In the *Gītagovinda* (I.3), Jayadeva compares himself with poets named Umāpatidhara, Śaraṇa, Govardhana, and Dhoyī,<sup>6</sup> all of whom are quoted in the *Saduktikarnāmrta*. Dhoyī composed a court epic entitled *Pavanadūta*, "Wind-messenger," to glorify a campaign by Lakṣmaṇasena into the south.<sup>7</sup> The other poets are less directly associated with Lakṣmaṇasena, but their works relate them to the period and region of his reign.<sup>8</sup>

It seems clear from the contents of the *Saduktikarnāmrta* and from the inscriptions of Lakṣmaṇasena that the king was a patron of Sanskrit learning and of Vaishnavism. The Senas were Karnatic kings who employed Sanskrit for their official documents, the standard practice in North India at this time.<sup>9</sup> The inscriptions of Lakṣmaṇasena open with an invocation to Vishnu (*aum aum namo nārāyaṇāya*) instead of to Śiva, as had been the practice of his predecessors. The king is described by the epithet "Highest Vaishnava" (*paramavaiṣṇava*).<sup>10</sup> A court that promoted Sanskrit learning and the highly syncretic Vaishnava worship of this time

would have provided an appreciative audience for the *Gītagovinda*. It is impossible to know whether Jayadeva composed the work at Lakṣmaṇasena's court; perhaps he composed it elsewhere and performed it there.

The South Indian Vaishnava devotional cults that were influential in Bengal in the twelfth century were equally active in Orissa. Traditional accounts record that Rāmānuja, the great Vedānta philosopher and apostle of the Śrīvaishnava cult, visited Puri in the early part of the twelfth century and established a school there. It is claimed that he met and influenced the King of Puri and worked to introduce the ritual of Śrīvaishnavism into the Jagannātha temple, against the strong opposition of resident Śaiva priests.<sup>11</sup> The king whom he met was probably Anantavarman Choḍagaṅgadeva, the Gaṅga king who ruled in Orissa about A.D. 1078-1147. Later Gaṅga records suggest that Choḍagaṅgadeva initiated major construction of the Jagannātha temple, which was completed during the reign of his grandson Anaṅgabhīmadeva in the late twelfth century. From the evidence of his inscriptions, Choḍagaṅgadeva, like Lakṣmaṇasena of Bengal, came under Vaishnava influence. Two sets of copperplate inscriptions illustrate the shift in his sectarian allegiance. In A.D. 1081 (Śāka era 1003), Choḍagaṅgadeva expressed traditional Gaṅga devotion to Śiva by granting land to support worship of *Rājarājeśvara*, a name of Śiva. In A.D. 1118 (Śāka era 1040), in a grant of land to a brahman named Mādhava, his inscription begins with an invocation to Lakṣmī, and the king is described as "Highest Vaishnava" (*paramavaiṣṇava*). Temple records show that since the time of Choḍagaṅgadeva, Jagannātha has been continuously worshipped as the supreme form of Vishnu, whose power is expressed through the energy of his consort, Lakṣmī or Śrī.<sup>12</sup>

Although the legend of Jayadeva's life has no historical value, it does tell us that in the course of his wanderings Jayadeva visited Puri, where he came under the influence of the Jagannātha cult and formed a special relationship with Padmāvatī. The identification of Padmāvatī as Jayadeva's wife is not supported by either of the early commentators on the *Gītagovinda*. Both Mānāṅka and Kumbhakarṇa identify *Padmāvatī* (I.2; X.9; XI.21), or *Padmā* (I.25), as names of Krishna's divine consort Śrī (I.2; I.23), or *Lakṣmī* (XI.22), who is also called *Kamalā* (I.17) in the poem. The "marriage" of Jayadeva and Padmāvatī in the legend may be a veiled allusion to his initiation in the Śrīvaishnava cult that was established in Puri under Rāmānuja's influence. The role of Krishna's cowherdess consort Rādhā in the *Gītagovinda* takes its cosmic significance from the context of recurrent references to Śrī. Jayadeva's use of the



epithet *Jagadīśa*, "Lord of the World," for Krishna in the first song is too similar to *Jagannātha* to be accidental—the *Gītagovinda* may well have taken shape in the richly syncretic environment in Puri in the twelfth century.<sup>13</sup>

By the fifteenth century, the *Gītagovinda* was sufficiently popular in Puri to be incorporated into the ritual of the Jagannātha temple. An inscription located on the left side of the Jayavijaya doorway, written in Oriya language and script and dated A.D. 1499, prescribes the performance of the *Gītagovinda* in the temple.<sup>14</sup> An English translation of the inscription reads:

On Wednesday the tenth lunar year of Kakaḍā, bright half in the ninth mark of the warrior, the elephant-lord, the mighty Pratāparudradeva Mahārāja, king over Gauḍa and the ninety millions of Kārṇāta and Kalabaraga, orders as follows: "Dancing will be performed thus at the time of food-offerings (*bhoga*) to the Elder Lord (Balarāma) and the Lord of the *Gītagovinda* (Jagannātha). This dancing will continue from the end of the deities' evening meal to their bedtime meal. The dancing group of the Elder Lord, the female dancers of Lord Kapileśvara, and the ancient dancing group of Telangana will all learn no song other than the *Gītagovinda* from the Elder Lord. *Aum*. They will sing no other song. No other dance should be performed before the great God. In addition to the dancing, there will be four singers who will sing only the *Gītagovinda*. Those who are not versed in singing the *Gītagovinda* will follow in chorus—they should learn no other song. Any temple official who knowingly allows any other song or dance to be performed is hostile to Jagannātha."

In the early sixteenth century, the great Vaishnava mystic Caitanya made a pilgrimage to Puri and settled there. It is recorded in the spiritual biography of Caitanya by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, entitled *Caitanyacaritāmṛta*, that Caitanya derived great joy from hearing the *Gītagovinda*, as well as the songs of the Bengali poet Caṇḍīdāsa and the Maithili poet Vidyāpati.<sup>15</sup> There is no reference to the origin of Caitanya's devotion to the songs of the *Gītagovinda*, but it is likely that he heard them in the temple of Jagannātha. His love for Jayadeva's songs led to the canonization of the *Gītagovinda* within the Vaishnava Sahajiyā cult and its interpretation according to the doctrines of Bengali Vaishnavism.<sup>16</sup> Sahajiyā tradition claims Jayadeva as a practitioner of its unorthodox ritual and the "original preceptor" (*ādiguru*) of the cult.<sup>17</sup> Jayadeva's ritual practice is not revealed by his poem, but the place of his songs in the Caitanya cult complements the Oriya tradition that nightly performance of the songs in wor-

ship of Jagannātha at Puri has been continuous for more than seven hundred years.<sup>18</sup>

By the end of the thirteenth century, the *Gītagovinda* was known in western India. A stone inscription of Mahārāja Sāraṅgadeva Vāghelā of Anahillapattan, dated A.D. 1291 (Vikrama era 1348), opens with Jayadeva's invocation to Krishna in his ten incarnate forms (I.16).<sup>19</sup> The inscription records the levying of a revised tax on the inhabitants of Pālhanapura (modern Palanpur) to defray the expenses of temple offerings to Krishna. The *Gītagovinda* was probably brought to Gujarat by Vaishnava pilgrims who heard it at Puri or some other eastern center of the Krishna cult.

Further evidence of the poem's wide dissemination in the centuries following its composition includes the existence of one palm-leaf manuscript in Newari hooked characters dated ca. A.D. 1447 (Nepali era 567) and another in Newari script dated ca. A.D. 1496 (Nepali era 616).<sup>20</sup> The text of this version accords well with the text on which Mānāṅka based his simple commentary. The fifteenth-century date given to an early paper manuscript of the *Gītagovinda*, accompanied by Mānāṅka's commentary and illustrated with paintings of the ten incarnations of Krishna in the Gujarati style of the mid-fifteenth century, is corroborated by the date, ca. A.D. 1512 (*saṁvat* 1569), on another manuscript of Mānāṅka's commentary.<sup>21</sup> The literary critical commentary of Kumbhakarṇa, called *Rasikāpriyā*, is dated the mid-fifteenth century according to the dates of the ruler of Mewar named Kumbhakarṇa (A.D. 1433–68), with whom the commentator is identified.<sup>22</sup> By the sixteenth century Jayadeva's poem was recognized throughout northern India for the intensity of its poetic and its religious expression.

## 2 The Lyrical Structure of Jayadeva's Poem

The *Gītagovinda*, deceptively simple in its surface beauty, has a wealth of meaning embedded in structurally intricate forms and concepts drawn from various levels of Indian literary tradition. In the process of preparing this textual analysis and translation, I have come to appreciate how masterfully Jayadeva interwove formal and thematic elements to create a work of high art and religious intensity that remains appealing to popular audiences throughout the Indian subcontinent. In order to translate the



lyric drama into an English form that conveys its sense and characteristic texture, I have found it essential to unravel these elements, trace their sources, and understand how Jayadeva used them in his own innovative ways.

I have tried to find a diction within current English that would be receptive to the letters, words, meanings, and textures of Jayadeva's Sanskrit—a medium in which the translation could become a representation of the original. The choice has not been between translation of words (*śabdānuvāda*) and translation of feeling (*bhāvānuvāda*). Words derive meaning from the contexts in which they occur. Words in their various levels of denotative, connotative, and suggested meanings, as well as in their grammatical forms and structural relations, are the stuff out of which feeling is made in poetry. To paraphrase I. A. Richards, word and feeling are interlinked so closely that to dissect one from the other is a perilous operation.<sup>1</sup> Word and feeling have functioned inseparably in the translation process. Critical analysis of Jayadeva's language, style, and concepts has helped to integrate these throughout.<sup>2</sup>

In Sanskrit literature creative expression was circumscribed by strict conventions, which served to expand the significance of words and images beyond their given meaning. Sanskrit poets sought to awaken response by manipulating complex language, figures of speech, and imagery in skillful improvisation. Classical poets like Kālidāsa and Bhartṛhari appealed exclusively to an educated audience of men who were familiar with poetic techniques and were capable of understanding the linguistic subtleties of Sanskrit grammar.<sup>3</sup> Jayadeva seems to have been consciously appealing to a more diverse audience, characterized by broader literary taste and religious devotion. Verses in the *Gītagovinda* (e.g., I.2, 4; XII.22) express the poet's intent to reach an audience sympathetic to the creative purpose of enjoying Krishna's divine love through esthetic experience.

Jayadeva seems to have searched the literary expressions of his poetic heritage and contemporary experience to distill a genre appropriate to his vision of Krishna's springtime rite of love. The form of the *Gītagovinda* defies categorization in any classical genre of Sanskrit literature. The lyricism and dramatic movement of the poem may be based on some non-classical form, but the complex structures Jayadeva uses to integrate religious, erotic, and esthetic meaning suggest that his inspiration for the *Gītagovinda* also came from works like Kālidāsa's classical epic, the *Kumārasambhava*, "The Birth of the Prince," and the same author's unique lyric poem, the *Meghadūta*, "The Cloud-Messenger."<sup>4</sup> Jayadeva's

application to Sanskrit of elaborate sound patterns of rhyme, alliteration, and measured rhythm offers concrete evidence of how he used techniques of "popular" songs to exploit the lyric potential of the classical language.<sup>5</sup>

The *Gītagovinda* is best characterized as a dramatic lyrical poem. It is expressed as a cycle of songs<sup>6</sup> interspersed with recitative portions in the metrical forms of classical *kāvya* verses. These *kāvya* verses function as independent grammatical and esthetic entities. Most of them are narrative verses identifying the singer of a song or elaborating its context. Others, like verse I.47, are relatively independent of the story and serve primarily to reinforce the esthetic atmosphere of the poem. Such verses may be recalled and enjoyed like miniature paintings from an album.

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.

The brief *kāvya* verses in the *Gītagovinda* may contain dense descriptions and complex ideas. Classical ornamentation (*alankāra*) is used to expand meaning. Alliterations and sensuous vocabulary, which are general characteristics of the songs, occur in some verses. Subtle forms of metaphor (*upamā*) employed in the verses are recognized by the commentators.<sup>7</sup>

Since contrasting metrical patterns are basic to the structure of the *Gītagovinda*, the distinction between syllabic meter (*aṣṭavarṇa*) and two types of moric meter (*tālavṛtta*) must be recognized.<sup>8</sup> The basic patterns of both syllabic and moric meters depend on the quantity of individual syllables in a unit of verse. Syllabic meters are generally characterized by fixed sequences of short, or "light," and long, or "heavy," syllables repeated in each quarter of a verse. The musical moric meters are defined by the number of beats (*mātra*) in a line, with each light syllable counting as one beat and each heavy syllable as two beats. Most moric meters are further patterned into measures (*gaṇa*), the most common type being a measure of four beats (*caturgaṇa*).

Within the seventy-two *kāvya* verses included in the critical edition of



the *Gītagovinda*, twelve different syllabic meters occur.<sup>9</sup> There are also three verses in the moric meter *Āryā* (VI.1; VII.2; IX.1). *Āryā* is the most extensively used moric meter in Sanskrit poetry. It is the characteristic meter of poetry in Prākṛit dialects of the classical period, exemplified by the contents of Hāla's anthology, the *Sattasāi*,<sup>10</sup> and by Prākṛit verses in Sanskrit dramas. Although the classical *Āryā* meter is organized in terms of beat and measure, like the songs of the *Gītagovinda*, its formal articulation makes it distinct from the types of measured meters that order the songs.<sup>11</sup>

In comparison with the compact form and contained grammar of the classical *kāvya* verses, the structure of the songs is broader and more complex. A composite pattern of three interdependent formal units is repeated in each of the twenty-four songs.<sup>12</sup> The fixed unit in each song is the *dhruvapada*, a "refrain" that is repeated after each couplet; it is the stable unit of sound and meaning in the song. Its content provides a context for the descriptive details of the couplets and intensifies their meaning. Where the *dhruvapada* contains the grammatical subject to which descriptive compounds and phrases refer, it resolves the "dangling" syntax of the couplets. The refrains are characterized by syntactic simplicity and a core vocabulary of recurring words that suggest correspondences between Rādhā and Krishna at different stages of their separation. Just as a refrain unifies a song, the network of refrains unifies the poem.

The varying unit in each song is the *pada*, a stanza that is one of a series of rhymed couplets occurring in a particular moric metrical pattern. From this comes the designation of the songs as *padāvalī*, "stanza-series," a term that Jayadeva introduces in the *Gītagovinda* (I.4). Since the stanzas usually number eight, the songs are also referred to as *aṣṭapadī*, "eight-stanza song."

The final formal unit is the *bhaṇita*, the last *pada* in each song. Each *bhaṇita* repeats the poet's signature, Jayadeva, and usually some form of the root *√bhaṇ*, which means "saying" or "singing." This stanza reaffirms the affinities of the poet's creative activity and the audience's esthetic experience to the developing erotic relationship between Rādhā and Krishna. It functions in each song to give the perspective of esthetic and religious perception to the emotional intensity of the preceding stanzas and the refrain.

The system of moric meters in the *Gītagovinda* songs gives the poem its rhythmical structure. A particular meter relates couplets within a song, and the metrical system relates the songs to one another. Jayadeva's skill-

ful variation of a few selected metrical patterns sustains the aural appeal of his long poem.

As I have already suggested, the moric meters of the songs contrast with the traditional moric meters like *Āryā* in several ways. The severely restricted occurrence of heavy syllables is most striking. Heavy syllables are relatively rare in the songs; they are limited mainly to initial position within the *gaṇa* units and to the ends of lines. This gives the songs their lilting quality and definite rhythmical beat. The rhythmical element is further emphasized by repetitious sound patterns of alliteration, assonance, consonance, and end rhyme. These devices are all used in earlier Sanskrit literature, but nowhere else with the persistence that characterizes the *Gītagovinda*.

The meters of the songs and the mode of their articulation clearly resemble the meters of medieval poetry in the vernacular languages known as Apabhraṃśa. Although few of Jayadeva's meters are specifically identifiable with those known from either Jain Apabhraṃśa poetry of western India or Buddhist Caryāpada poetry of eastern India, the predominant metrical pattern of the songs corresponds with the basic rhythmic design of such non-Sanskrit medieval poetry. The correspondence had led scholars like Pischel, Renou, and Chatterji to suggest that the songs, or even the entire poem, were originally composed in Apabhraṃśa and then translated into Sanskrit.<sup>13</sup> A close reading of the songs and a comparison of the songs with the *kāvya* verses in the poem suggest instead that Jayadeva adapted the musical moric meters of vernacular poetry in order to create a medium of song within conventional poetic Sanskrit. If one analyzes Jayadeva's style in terms of meter, ornamentation, and structure, the classical elements drawn from Sanskrit and Prākṛit sources are as significant to the songs as the Apabhraṃśa meters. Jayadeva's adaptation of Apabhraṃśa meters to Sanskrit is not an isolated phenomenon. It is the most sustained and successful of several such experiments that are known from the tenth century and after, when the bonds of classical Sanskrit literature were loosened by attempts to broaden its appeal.<sup>14</sup>

The most prominent meter in the *Gītagovinda* songs repeats a pattern of couplets structured into lines of seven four-beat measures, exemplified by the opening couplet of the third song (I.27):<sup>15</sup>

lālitala|vaṇṇala|tāpari|śīlana|kōmala|malayasa|mīre|  
madhukara|nikaraka|rambita|kōkila|kūjita|kuñjaku|tīre ||  
— — — — | — — — — | — — — — | — — — — | — — — — | — — — — | — — — — ||  
— — — — | — — — — | — — — — | — — — — | — — — — | — — — — | — — — — ||



This meter and its variants, which maintain the four-beat measure, govern nineteen of the twenty-four songs in the *Gītagovinda*.<sup>16</sup> The dominant metrical unit of the songs reflects the four-beat subdivision of the most common rhythmical pattern (*tāla*) of both Hindusthani and Karnatic classical music. The meter of a song can provide the rhythmical component of the song's music. It seems significant that no *tāla* designations are given in two of the oldest manuscripts of the *Gītagovinda*, though each song in these manuscripts is defined by the name of a melodic pattern (*rāga*). Where *tāla* names do accompany *rāga* names in other manuscripts, there is enormous variability with regard to the *tāla* names.<sup>17</sup>

Most of the refrains are in moric metrical patterns that maintain the same measured beat as that of the associated couplets.<sup>18</sup> They generally contrast with the couplets in length only. Refrains usually consist of one line or two rhyming lines of unequal length. The rhythmic cadences of the refrains tend to be heavier than those of the couplets, thus giving their words greater emphasis.<sup>19</sup>

Rhyme, in its several varieties, highlights the rhythmic patterns of the songs. Alliteration (*anuprāsa*) in Sanskrit poetry involves the echo of repeated sounds in a line; it is not limited to the initial sounds of words. Alliteration is the rhyming device most commonly used to produce emphasis and euphony in classical *kāvya*.<sup>20</sup> In the *Gītagovinda* alliterative combinations of consonants and vowels reinforce the meters and the sensuous imagery of the songs. They often contribute to the rhythmical complexity of a line by forcing syllables into a syncopation of the metrical accent.<sup>21</sup>

End-rhyme (*antānuprāsa*) is a universal feature of the couplets. It serves to mark the close of each metrical cycle. This consistent use of end-rhyme is rare in classical Sanskrit poetry, though internal rhyme is common, as it is in the *kāvya* verses of the *Gītagovinda*.<sup>22</sup>

The eminent critic Ānandavardhana warns that a poet's preoccupation with repetitions of sound, like word-play, alliteration, and assonance, is an obstacle to the production of erotic mood.<sup>23</sup> But most Sanskrit critics consider these devices essential to the sweetness of poetry (*madhura, mādhurya*).<sup>24</sup> These critics seem to agree with the practicing poets that sense and sound must complement each other to create intensity in the expression of erotic mood.

The entire *Gītagovinda* abounds in various forms of word-play as well as rhyme. The repetition and shifting meaning of key words like *rasa* (taste), *madhu* (honey), and *vilāsa* (seduction), relate levels of content

within the poem and often expand the context of a verse or song. Jayadeva puns on the names of certain meters he uses in the *kāvya* verses.<sup>25</sup> He plays on the names of heavenly nymphs to describe Rādhā (X.14). He plays on the epithets of Krishna, especially *Mādhava*, *Madhusūdana*, and *Hari*. The poet's own name, Jayadeva, which is also used as an epithet of Krishna, is repeated as the poet's signature at the end of each song.<sup>26</sup>

The grammar of the songs is simplified. Certain forms are repeated frequently. Prominent are the locative, which is often used in its absolute function, the instrumental, and various participles. In the tenth song, unvarying grammatical parallelism governs each of the couplets.

In the *Gītagovinda* repetitive patterns of sounds, syllables, words, and phrases serve to reinforce and supplement the metrical structures of the songs. All Sanskrit poetry contains generous amounts of sound elaboration (*śabdālamkāra*);<sup>27</sup> in the songs of the *Gītagovinda* the redundancies are incessant, complex, and multileveled. They create a sensuous surface of verbal ornamentation that suggests comparison with the sculptured surfaces of the medieval Hindu temples of Bhubaneswar and Khajuraho. In the rhythmic disposition of a basic ground plan and the superimposition of repetitive shapes along a vertical axis, each temple moves to a point of intense concentration, where it simultaneously plunges into the womb-house of the deity and transcends itself.<sup>28</sup> The intricate vertical and horizontal design that emerges in the *Gītagovinda* from the repetitions of metrical units, refrains, rhymes, alliterations, technical words, puns, and syntactic devices unifies the entire poem and concentrates its movement.

All known manuscripts of the *Gītagovinda* indicate the names of various *rāgas*, or melodic patterns, for individual songs. The Indian *rāga* is a melodic formula that includes particular embellishments and tone colors. The technique of improvisation, which is essential to the formal presentation of a *rāga*, uses dense combinations of grace notes and microtonal ornaments. The *rāga*, in the form of either a song or an instrumental piece, is identifiable in performance by its characteristic turns of phrase and dominant tones. In theory, every *rāga* is associated with a particular mood, time, and seasonal setting.<sup>29</sup>

The songs of the *Gītagovinda* are sung in regions of eastern and southern India in a variety of different *rāgas*.<sup>30</sup> Although the oldest manuscripts show striking agreement in designating a group of eleven different *rāgas* for the twenty-four songs, there has been no traditional trans-

Language  
structure  
creates  
sensuality



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.<sup>1</sup> As Jayadeva elaborates the passion of Rādhā and Krishna, he creates an esthetic atmosphere of erotic mood (*śṛṅgārarasa*) that is bliss for devotees of Krishna. The poet's aim is implied in an opening verse of the *Gītagovinda* (I.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 (*sthāyibhāva*). Sanskrit poets and critics came to realize the unique power and the esthetic potential of sexual passion (*ratibhāva*) in its aspects of pain and pleasure.<sup>2</sup> The erotic mood that emerges from passion was expressed in the antithetical modes of "separation" (*vipralambhaśṛṅgāra*) and "consummation" (*sambhogaśṛṅgāra*). To experience this mood in the interplay of its two modes was considered the height of esthetic joy.<sup>3</sup> Jayadeva created the religiously potent atmosphere of the *Gītagovinda* 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> In the *Gītagovinda*, this restraint functions to make potentially pornographic subject matter the material of esthetic and religious experience.

In Jayadeva's environment of springtime (*sarasavasanta*, I.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 (*vyabhicāribhāva*, *sāttvikabhāva*) 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.<sup>6</sup> 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 (*ekarasa*, 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)



that is the consummation (*sambhogaśṛṅgāra*) 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 (*sakhī*), 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.<sup>7</sup>

The *Gītagovinda* begins with a classical verse indicating the subject of the poem.<sup>8</sup>

"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.<sup>9</sup> 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,<sup>10</sup> Rādhā,<sup>11</sup> Nanda,<sup>12</sup> or even the friend of Rādhā.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

The darkness of the night in the forest is described in voluptuous sounds and imagery that echo through the entire poem.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> The triumph of their passions occurs in this dual state, which is the defining structure of their relationship in the *Gītagovinda*. The "home" to which Rādhā brings Krishna is a forest thicket (*kuñja*), the secret place of their divine love, in which they meet again at the end of their journey.

The erotic mysticism of the *Gītagovinda*, which inspired the Vaishnava saint Caitanya, was interpreted allegorically by Caitanya's followers in terms of the Sahajiyā doctrine of devotional esthetics (*bhaktirasa*);<sup>17</sup> they used love as a metaphor whose primary reference was a metaphysical conception. Although many elements in the *Gītagovinda* 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.<sup>1</sup>

The process of Krishna's deification is discernible in epic literature. In the accounts of him in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Harivaṁśa*, 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.<sup>2</sup> The basic account includes Krishna's miraculous birth, his concealment



among 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.<sup>3</sup> The fusion of Krishna with Vishnu involved a transfer of many of Vishnu's epithets, as well as his functions, to Krishna.<sup>4</sup> 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 Kali Yuga, the cosmic age of darkness.<sup>5</sup>

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 (*śahasranāmastuti*) is evidence of this. Epithets are characterizing names, frequently taking the form of descriptive compound words (*bahuvrīhisamāsa*) 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.<sup>6</sup> 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 *Gītāgovinda* are traceable to older sources. The epithet *Bhagavat*, Lord, which is prominent in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Harivaṃśa*, and various Purāṇas and which is referred to in the title of the *Bhagavadgītā*, is notably absent in the *Gītāgovinda*. Its absence, along with the absence of terms like *dharma*, *karma*, and *bhakti*, encourages the speculation that Jayadeva was consciously distinguishing the Krishna he worshipped from the object of the orthodox Bhāgavata cult.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> The epithets *Jagadīśa*, Lord of the World, and *Jayadeva*, God of Triumph, are textually associated with Krishna for the first time in the *Gītāgovinda*. Their use in the opening songs is crucial to appreciating the conceptual framework and

movement of the poem. The epithets *Daśavidhārūpa* and *Daśākṛtikṛt*, 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 *Gītāgovinda* 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."<sup>9</sup> It may be that the "misunderstanding" was intended by storytellers to amplify the meaning of the epithet as it applies to Krishna. In the *Gītāgovinda*, *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), *Madhuripu*, "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.<sup>10</sup> Lévi-Strauss offers an analysis of honey in South American myths as a paradisaical seducer and disrupter of marital ties,<sup>11</sup> 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 *madhukara*, "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 *Gītāgovinda*.<sup>12</sup>

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.<sup>13</sup>

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; XI.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  $\sqrt{hr}$ . 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.<sup>14</sup> The ambiguity of reference in the name *Hari* reflects the identification of Krishna, as *Jagadīśa*, with the cosmic form and function of Vishnu.<sup>15</sup> The similarity between *Hari* and Śiva's name *Hara*, "the destroyer" (III.11), is exploited by Jayadeva for ironical effect.

KEŚAVA (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.<sup>16</sup> 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 *Gītāgovinda*, Krishna is identified with the composite Buddhist-Śaivite-Vaishnavite form of Jagannātha.<sup>17</sup>

DAŚAVIDHARŪPA (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 (*aiśvarya*) in order to save the world. The same is meant by *Daśākṛtikṛt* (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 *Gītāgovinda* song is not traceable to any single source.<sup>18</sup>

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.<sup>19</sup> 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*).<sup>20</sup>

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

1. MĪNAŚARĪRA (I.5), the Fish-form, more commonly called *Matsyāvatāra*. The ancient myth of the deluge and man's rescue by a giant fish, which is told in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (I.8.1-6), is the basis of later versions. The *Gītāgovinda* refers to the theft of the Vedas from Brahmā 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.<sup>21</sup>
2. KACCHAPARŪPA (I.6), the Tortoise-form. The *Gītāgovinda* refers to the creative power of the giant tortoise in relation to earth, an association that is made in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (VII.5.1.5). This form is better known, as *Kūrmāvatāra*, for supporting Mt. Mandara when the gods and demons churn the sea to obtain the elixir of immortality.<sup>22</sup>
3. ŚŪKARARŪPA (I.7), the Boar-form, another name for *Varāhāvatāra*. The giant boar rescues the earth by raising it out of the ocean depths on one of his tusks.<sup>23</sup>
4. NARAHARIRŪPA (I.8), the Man-lion form, another name for *Narasimhāvatāra*. It is the form in which Hari destroys the infidel King Hiranyakaśipu, who threatened his own son Prahlāda 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.<sup>24</sup>
5. VĀMANARŪPA (I.9), the Dwarf-form. The three cosmic strides of Vishnu form the basis of the dwarf myth.<sup>25</sup> 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 *Gītagovinda* refers to Hari's wet feet, which the demon, in his hospitality, has washed to welcome his guest.<sup>26</sup>

6. BHRGUPATIRŪPA (I.10), the form of the Bhṛgu chief better known as *Paraśurāma*, "axe-wielding Rāma," who reestablishes order in the world by putting an end to the tyranny of the warrior class.<sup>27</sup>
7. RĀMAŚARĪRA (I.11), the form of the "charming" Rāmacandra, Prince of Ayodhyā, who is alternately called *Raghupatirūpa*. He is the hero of Vālmīki'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 Duṣāṇa, "the corrupting one," are referred to in the second song of the *Gītagovinda* (I.16, 22).<sup>28</sup>
8. HALADHARARŪPA (I.12), the form of the plowman Balarāma, elder brother of Krishna. *Haladharasodara*, "brother of Haladhara," refers directly to Krishna (VII.28). Balarāma and Krishna are alternative 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.<sup>29</sup> Balarāma is known for his addiction to wine, paralleling Krishna's addiction to women. The *Gītagovinda* 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.<sup>30</sup>
9. BUDDHAŚARĪRA (I.13), the form of "the enlightened one," Gautama Buddha. Buddha is not an incarnation in the *Mahābhārata* or the *Harivaṃśa*, but he appears as such in the texts of early Purāṇic literature.<sup>31</sup> 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 *Gītagovinda*.<sup>32</sup>
10. KALKIŚARĪRA (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.<sup>33</sup>

KṚṢṆA is anglicized as *Krishna* in this volume to render recurring reference to the hero of the *Gītagovinda* 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 Ghora Aṅgiras; scholars have made much of the reference, but it is too isolated to be significant. In the *Gītagovinda*, 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 cowherdresses in Brindaban forest.<sup>34</sup>

JAYADEVA (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 *jaya jayadeva hare*, "Triumph, God of Triumph, Hari!" to parallel the refrain of the first song, which is *jaya jagadīśa hare*, "Triumph, Lord of the World, Hari!"<sup>35</sup> The commentator Śaṅkaramiśra, referring to the opening verse of the poem, points out that Krishna's triumph as the hero (*nāyaka*) of the *Gītagovinda* is in sexual play (*keli*). Rādhā is called "Love's living goddess of triumph," *anaṅgajaya jaṅgama-devatā* (III.15). The epithet of Krishna is identical with the name of the author of the *Gītagovinda*. In this function, *Jayadeva* occurs in the signature stanza (*bhaṇita*) 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).<sup>36</sup>

HAṆSA, (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 *Gītagovinda* (I.20).<sup>37</sup>

PĪTAVASANA (I.38; II.7), or *Pītāmbara* (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.<sup>38</sup>

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



GOVINDA (II.19; V.17; VI.1; XI.23; XII.21) is probably a Prākṛitic form of *gopendra* (*gov' inda*), which means "chief of the cowherds." It can also be derived from *go* √*vid* to mean "protector of cows."<sup>40</sup> 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 *Gītagovinda* has these associations; the young dark lord of the forest is the subject of the poet's singing.

KEŚIMATHANA (II.11\*) means "tormentor of the demon Keśin." In the *Harivamśa* (62.69), Keśin is called "the meanest of horses," *turagādhama*.<sup>41</sup>

KAMŚĀRI (III.1) means "enemy of Kaṁsa." It refers to the rivalry between Krishna and his uncle, the demonic King Kaṁsa.<sup>42</sup>

UPENDRA (IV.20) means "Indra's younger brother."<sup>43</sup> In the *Gītagovinda* 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 *Śatapatha 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.<sup>44</sup>

YADUNANDANA (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 *nandanideśataḥ*, "at Nanda's order." But the presence of the name emphasizes that Krishna is young as his sexual play begins.<sup>45</sup> References to Krishna's defeat of the serpent-king Kāliya (I.19)<sup>46</sup> and the bird-demoness Pūtānikā (VIII.8)<sup>47</sup> evoke heroic events of his legend. Kāliya was punished for befouling the Jumna waters and Pūtānikā was killed when the baby Krishna sucked her life from her by taking the poisoned breast she offered him. Garuḍa (I.20) is the anthropomorphized eagle who usually serves as Vishnu's vehicle.<sup>48</sup>

The sexual freedom enjoyed by the adolescent cowherd is symbolized by Krishna's simple bamboo flute, which is called *vaṁśa* (I.43; II.2, 19) or *veṇu* (V.9).<sup>49</sup> 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.<sup>50</sup> 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*).<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup> This rite of autumn acts as a foil for his spring-time play with his cowherdess 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.<sup>53</sup>

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 (*eṣarasa*, 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*, *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),<sup>54</sup> "cheat" (*kitava*, VI.10),<sup>55</sup> and "rogue" (*śaṭha*, VII.30).<sup>56</sup> These familiar forms of address complement the sensuous surface that emerges from descriptions of Krishna's ornamented physical presence and his manifestations of emo-

Dionysis  
cult

Role of  
violence  
in love.

male/female  
iconography



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 *Gītagovinda* 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 *Gītagovinda*, 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 cowherdresses. Krishna disappears after this dance, deserting the cowherdresses; but he stays with Rādhā to admire and ornament her. Her relationship with Krishna culminates in their union and mutual "victory" (*jaya*) 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 cowherdresses, is the perfection of Krishna's nature.<sup>1</sup>

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), *Kamalā* (I.17), *Padmā* (I.25), and *Lakṣmī* (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  $\sqrt{rādh}$  have meaning of "perfection" and "success," even "wealth."<sup>2</sup> The Vedic god most closely associated with *rādhas* is Indra, who bears the epithet "Lord of Success" (*rādhaspati*).<sup>3</sup> 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

of the ocean.<sup>4</sup> Indra lost *Śrī* through a curse by the sage Durvāsa and Vishnu reclaimed her as his spouse. A similar pattern may well account for Krishna's role as "Lord of Success" (*rādhaspati*) in relation to *Rādhā*, the feminine personification of *rādhas*. This explanation helps to clarify the parallelism between the pair *Śrī/Lakṣmī-Vishnu/Krishna* and the pair *Rādhā-Krishna* that is suggested in many stray verses antedating the *Gītagovinda*. There is no need to construct fanciful etymologies for the word *rādhā*, but this has been the approach of the Sanskrit commentators on the *Gītagovinda* and more recently of the linguist Sukumar Sen.<sup>5</sup> Such accounts offer no clue to why the association between Rādhā and Krishna was made.

In the absence of direct textual evidence it remains impossible to know when and in what circumstances the Rādhā-Krishna pair originated. What we find in the available Prākṛit and Sanskrit sources suggests that the poets and critics are dealing with a familiar subject. The name Rādhā seems to carry overtones of meaning from astral mythology. Although there is no reference to the pair in Vedic literature, the word *rādhā* occurs in the *Atharva Veda* (XIX.7.3) in relation to the two stars called *viśākhā*.<sup>6</sup> Later references to *rādhā* as the name of a feminine constellation or star-cluster (*nakṣatrā*) associate her with Indra. Indra is called a "cowherd" (*gopā*) and is paired with a *viśākhā* in several Vedic contexts. In the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* (3.1.1.11)<sup>7</sup> two *viśākhās* are described as the chief female consorts (*adhipatnī*) of the male constellations (*nakṣatra*) and are paired with Indra and Agni, who are called the two best cowherds. In the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* (4.4.11),<sup>8</sup> in the section where the building of the fire altar (*agnicayana*) is described, the layers of bricks are pairs of feminine constellations and masculine deities. The feminine *viśākhās* are paired with the masculine deities Indra and Agni. These associations are especially significant when it is recalled that Indra is the "Lord of Success" (*rādhaspati*).

In the same *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* passage the pairs of months of the various seasons are named; the months of spring (*vāsantīkāv ṛtū*) are named *madhu* and *mādhava*. In the *Mahābhārata*, Vishnu is related to the constellations by his epithet *Nakṣatrin*, "Lord of Constellations," and to spring by the epithets *Mādhū* and *Mādhava* that he shares with Krishna.<sup>9</sup> *Mādhava* is a major epithet of Krishna in epic and later literature. Krishna is also associated in several contexts with various feminine constellations.<sup>10</sup> Whether or not the equation of *rādhā* with *viśākhā* in commentaries on the *Atharva Veda* passage is based on a "misunder-



standing" of the word *anurādhā*, as Whitney suggests, it is clear that by the fifth century, *rādhā* was held to be another name for the constellation *viśākhā*.<sup>11</sup> With the equating of month names and constellation names, *viśākhā* became one of the months of spring, creating another link between *rādhā* and *mādhava*. The somewhat esoteric character of these associations may have increased the appeal of *Rādhā* as a consort for Krishna in a secret relationship. In these two aspects, she represents, like Lakṣmī, the power of "success" and she incarnates, like Śiva's Pārvatī, a phenomenon of nature. Both aspects illuminate her association with Krishna.<sup>12</sup>

Because of the fluidity of Purāṇic texts, it is impossible to date or locate the relationship of *Rādhā* and Krishna from them. However, the pattern of *Rādhā*'s presence and absence in some major Purāṇas is relevant to the problem. As disciples of the sixteenth-century Vaishnava saint Caitanya, who was considered an incarnation of the divine lovers *Rādhā* and Krishna, the Gosvāmins searched Purāṇic literature to find references that would establish *Rādhā*'s old and high status within orthodox Vaishnavism.<sup>13</sup> References to *Rādhā* by name in early Purāṇas such as the *Matsya*, the *Linga*, and the *Varāha* are significant, but few. *Rādhā*'s elaborate treatment in the *Brahmavaivarta* and *Padma* Purāṇas seems to postdate the Caitanya movement.<sup>14</sup> There is no direct reference to *Rādhā* in the *Harivaṃśa*, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* or the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. But the mention of a favored cowherdess who is "worshipped" or "desired" (*ārādhitā*) by Krishna in the tenth book of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*<sup>15</sup> led the Gosvāmins to derive the name *Rādhā* from *ārādhitā* and to claim *Rādhā*'s place in the text.<sup>16</sup>

The heroine of the *Gītagovinda* is so complex that it seems absurd to seek Jayadeva's model for her in the allusions to the arrogant girl (*drptā*) of the *Bhāgavata* episode. Krishna's special mistress is presented there to criticize the exclusivism that Krishna's relationship with her represents. If the *Bhāgavata* authors are referring to Krishna's consort *Rādhā*, they seem to be rejecting her relationship with Krishna as an inappropriate model for the devotee. The possessive attitude manifested in her secret encounter with Krishna is antithetical to the values presented in the *Bhāgavata* and the attitude is criticized for its perversity (*daurātmya*, X.30.42). It is not unlikely that the authors of the *Bhāgavata* knew a rival cult centering on Krishna and his cowherdess-consort and were critical of it.

Charlotte Vaudeville, in her article entitled "Evolution of Love-

Symbolism in Bhagavatism,"<sup>17</sup> has stated her supposition that the author of the *Bhāgavata* was specifically rejecting the figure of Nappiṇṇai, as she appears in the Tamil Ālvār poetry of Āṇḍāl and Nāmmālvār. Here Nappiṇṇai is the daughter, or daughter-in-law, of Nandagopāl and the wife of Krishna; she is an incarnation of Vishnu's consort Nīladevī.<sup>18</sup> It is possible that Nappiṇṇai is the source of the *Rādhā* conception in Prākṛit and Sanskrit literature, but the two figures more likely represent independent variants; their characteristic relations with Krishna are different. In the ritual dance called *kuravai*, Krishna dances with his wife Nappiṇṇai, while Krishna's relationship with *Rādhā* is a secret, erotic rite.<sup>19</sup>

The character of *Rādhā* and her unique association with Krishna that Jayadeva brought to his *Gītagovinda* from earlier literature is not apparent from any single source, but details emerge from the collection of stray verses that refer to her. A chronological catalogue of these references suggest an old tradition surrounding the secret love of *Rādhā* and Krishna.<sup>20</sup>

From the *Sattasāi* of Hāla (dated first to seventh centuries by various scholars):<sup>21</sup>

Krishna, removing cow-dust from *Rādhikā*  
With the breath of your mouth,  
You sweep away the high esteem  
These other cowherdresses have for you. (86)

From the *Gauḍavaho* of Vākpāti (late seventh or early eighth century):<sup>22</sup>

Let nailmarks *Rādhā* makes remove your pain—  
They are rich with mood.  
They are shining on Krishna's chest  
Like his magical kaustubha gem. (22)

violence in  
love

From the *Veṇiśaṃhāra* of Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa (antedates A.D. 800):<sup>23</sup>

Angered in sensual play, she lost her mood for love  
In the rāsa dance on sandbanks of the Jumna river.  
When Kāṃsa's foe followed *Rādhikā*  
As she left in a choking veil of tears,  
His body hairs seemed to bristle  
From his steps touching her footprints  
And from her calmed, loving looks—  
May you prosper from Krishna's innocent plea! (2)



From the *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana (mid-ninth century):<sup>24</sup>

Say, friend, if all is well still with the bowers  
that grow upon the Jumna bank,  
companions to the dalliance of cowherd girls  
and witnesses to Rādhā's love.

Now that there is no use to cut their fronds  
to make them into beds for love,  
I fear their greenness will have faded  
and they grown old and hard. (2.6)

Gracious love, Rādhā is difficult indeed to please—  
her tears fall even as you wipe them away  
With the cloth that covered some true love's loins.  
"Women's hearts are hard, so enough flattery! Leave me alone!"  
He was told this whenever Hari tried to placate her—  
May he grant you his blessing! (3.41)

From the *Dhvanyālokalocana* of Abhinavagupta (early tenth cen-  
tury):<sup>25</sup>

Then when demon Madhu's foe had gone to Dvāravatī,  
Rādhā embraced a sweet vine growing on the Jumna bank,  
A little bent from the way he made it quiver—  
Rādhā's lamenting  
In a faltering voice choked by heavy tears  
Made even the waterbirds wail regretfully.

From the *Kāvyamīmāṃsa* of Rājaśekhara (late ninth or early tenth  
century), as an illustration of the poetic figure *tulyadehitulya*, an imita-  
tion that resembles the similarity between two similar persons:<sup>26</sup>

Then we are going to give the different types of the imitation *tulyadehi-  
tulya*. . . . the change of subjects gives a different shape to the same  
theme: this is the change of subject.

Similarity  
to Bacchus  
cults.

May the winds of Śiva's sighs protect you  
As they arise from the hollow of his right nostril,  
Making lines in the ash-dust on his body,  
Disrupting his yogic breathing exercise,  
Licked by the serpent sheltered in his ear,  
Stealing coolness the moon gives,  
Witnessing the agony his mind suffers  
When his body is parted from angry Pārvatī.  
May Hari's sighs protect you  
As they burn from the fire deep within,

Boiling the lotus-honey from his navel,  
Wilting the garland on his breast,  
Drunk in and spit out because of their heat  
By the trembling serpent who forms his couch,  
Witnessing his memory of Rādhā's love,  
And heard jealously by goddess Śrī.

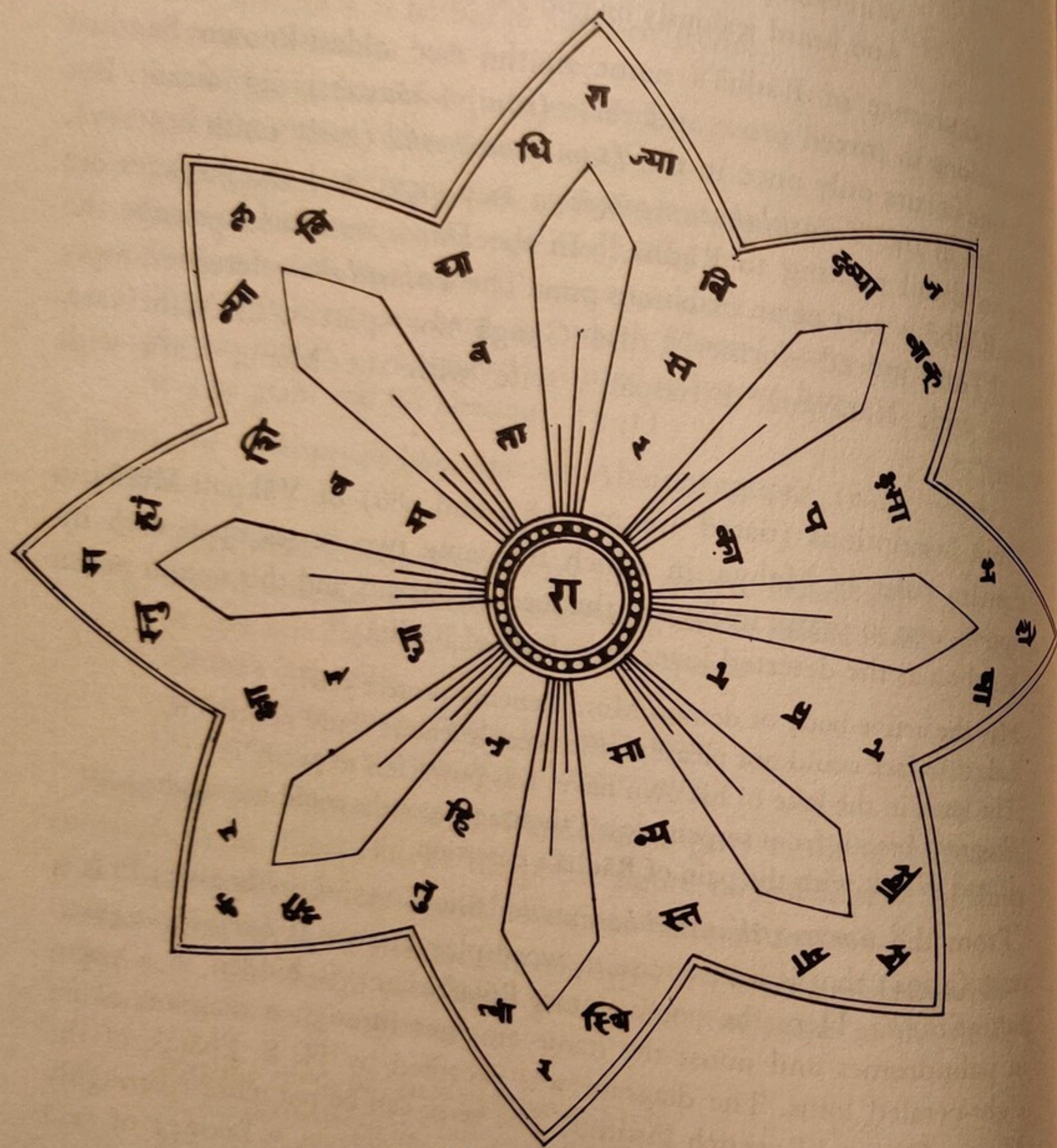
The occurrence of Rādhā's name in the two oldest-known Sanskrit  
compositions in mixed prose and verse (*campū-kāvya*) is significant. But  
the name occurs only once in the *Damayantīkathā* (early tenth century),  
and once in the *Yaśastilakacampūkāvya* (A.D. 959) and the passages are  
spare in detail relating to Rādhā.<sup>27</sup> In the *Damayantīkathā* passage the  
name Rādhā is part of an elaborate pun. The *Yaśastilaka* reference simply  
says, "Thus indeed—formerly, did Gaṅgā not sport with Mahēśvara,  
Rādhā with Nārāyaṇa, Bṛhaspati's wife with the Moon, Tārā with  
Valin?"

From inscriptions (dated A.D. 974, 982, and 986) of Vākpati-Muñja, a  
Paramāra ruler of Malwa, in which the same two verses open each in-  
scription, one in praise in Śiva as the lord of Pārvatī and this one in praise  
of Krishna as the deserted lover (*virahin*) of Rādhā:<sup>28</sup>

May the active body of demon Mura's enemy protect you!  
Lakṣmī's face could not please it, the ocean's waters could not cool it,  
The lotus in the lake of his own navel was powerless to pacify it,  
Fragrant breath from serpent Śeṣa's thousand mouths could not soothe it—  
It was so sick with the pain of Rādhā's desertion.

From the *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharana* of Bhoja (ca. A.D. 1000-55)<sup>29</sup> is a  
verse (2.294) that is an exercise in word play known as *ṭaṭṭa-  
patrabandha*. Here the poet's name, Rājaśekhara, is hidden in a poem  
in palindromes and puns; the name emerges through a diagram of an  
eight-petaled lotus. The diagram was executed by H. S. Phatak of the  
Mysore Oriental Research Institute. The verse can be paraphrased roughly  
as follows: "She who bestowed a kingdom of defects, a knower of *rasa*  
that gives expansion (*√ra*), who speaks pretentious speech, who does  
wrong to the world, the full-moon maiden, whose eyelashes are like ser-  
pent Śeṣa, whose eye leads to *nītiśāstra*, she who travels in the sky, whose  
love is praiseworthy, who is charming, whose penance is several, carrier  
of the moon, Śrī, whose sword is sharp—let Rādhā protect me; she is  
the incarnation who brings down serpent knowledge for masters of will  
who have their egos centered in Śiva." Also, from the same text:





राजशेखरकमलबन्धः

"Are you comfortable, Rādhā?" "Are you happy, Kāṁsa?"  
 "Kāṁsa?" "What is the difference between Kāṁsa and Rādhā?"  
 With these retorts of the cowherdess Pārī,  
 Hari triumphs in self-conscious laughter. (2.351)

As he tries repeatedly to lift  
 The raincloud-dark reflection of his own bright form,  
 Mistaking it for the black border of a garment  
 On the golden globe of Rādhā's breast,  
 Hari triumphs,  
 Laughing in shame as his love laughs at him. (3.110)

You left the house for the river to fetch water—you do not return.  
 Saying, "I shall bathe," you stop at bowers of vines on the Jumna bank.  
 Tethering the cows, you enter the thick woods of Mt. Govardhana.  
 Rādhā, didn't you catch sight of Krishna, Devakī's son? (4.177)

May the god who gracefully toys with Rādhā's cloth  
 On the surface of her breasts protect you!  
 Hari's hand is trembling  
 With sudden fear at their first encounter. (5.235)

Fear of the  
 Divin

"I have recently left Gokula, and the thought of Rādhā  
 Confounds me out of sleep—let it leave my bed and let 'Rādhā'  
 Stop coming in place of other names by day! I am afraid of this!"  
 May Hari's fatigue protect you!  
 He is spending sleepless nights, repeating Lakṣmī's name alone by day,  
 Trying to forget Rādhā, and delighting goddess Śrī. (5.448)

Seeing how thin Hari's arms were as he carelessly lifted Mt. Govardhana,  
 She rested her hand on Hari's shoulder and placed her feet on his,  
 Wanting to help him lift the mountain that was out of her reach—  
 Let the empty motions of Rādhā's hands in the sky triumph forever! (5.493)

From the *Daśāvatāracarita* of Kṣemendra (composed in A.D. 1066).<sup>30</sup>

While Krishna was kissing swarms of glowing nubile women,  
 Rādhā became most beloved for his joy—like jasmine for a bee. (83)

Then in the morning, having mounted the armed chariot,  
 Akrūra, Balarāma, and Krishna went to Mathurā with their retinue. (169)

"How could I have come here without bidding farewell to Rādhā?"  
 Mādhava sighed, felt discontent, languid, anxious at leaving. (170)

Going by way of hidden places in secret thickets of Gokula,  
 Krishna looked longingly, his face turned back,  
 The border of his garment held by his friend the forest earth—  
 He recalled Rādhā's "No! No! No!" while he loosened her skirt knot,



Her syllables marked by her confusion,  
 Her body wondrous in fear of love, her words barely intelligible. (171)  
 Filled with fire of Krishna's desertion when he left for Kāṁsa's city,  
 Like antelopes lying on smooth green banks in secret coves of the Godāvari,  
 Secretly, in Gokula grass, cowherdesses passionately sang Krishna's virtues,  
 Heard by herds of cows standing ruminating, ears intimately erect. (172)  
 "His love is new and graced by shining youth,  
 Seductive to young women in the easy play of its gentle enchantment;  
 He subjugates the family of serpent Kāliya in turbulent Jumna waters,  
 Black as swarms of bees, cuckoos, dark lotuses, and kohl;  
 He is harsh in killing great demons like Keśi and his sons,  
 Tearing dangers from Gokula, upholding Mt. Govardhana—  
 Could anyone's eyes help drowning in him when he is addicted to passion,  
 A trembling wave of love, delighting delightful young women?" (173)  
 While each virtue in Krishna's ocean of virtues  
 Was sung with passionate feeling,  
 Passion rose secretly in the cowherd girls  
 And frenzy struck them again and again. (174)  
 Since Krishna had gone away without speaking  
 In his zeal to show deference in the presence of the elders,  
 Doe-eyed women who carelessly slept on cool ground under bakula trees,  
 When they met him in dream embraces,  
 Made their slender creeper bodies echo their words by writhing—  
 "Rogue, let go! Let go, cheat!" the young women loudly cried. (175)  
 With tears, flowing away like life in Mādhava's desertion,  
 Falling on her breasts' firm tips, Rādhā was like a laden kadamba tree  
 As tears were strewn by her endless sighing and trembling gait—  
 Darkened by the delusion that was bound to all her hopes,  
 She became like the new rainy season engulfed in darkness. (176)

From the *Subhāṣitaratnaṣa* compiled by Vidyākara (latter half of eleventh century);<sup>31</sup> these three references have not been noted in earlier works:

"O Lakṣmaṇa, these clouds distress me who have lost my Sītā.  
 The cruel kadamba-scented breezes cut me to the quick."  
 So speaking, in his sleep, of separation  
 suffered in a former birth, may Hari,  
 glanced at jealously by Rādhā, bring you joy. (131)

"Go on ahead, milkmaids, taking home the pots already full.  
 Rādhā will follow later when the older cows are milked."  
 May Krishna, who by subterfuge thus made the cattle station

deserted but for Rādhā and for him,  
 the god, foster-son of Nanda,  
 steal away your ills. (139)

The pilgrims in the street have warded off the painful cold  
 with their broad quilts sewn of a hundred rags;  
 and now with voices clear and sweet  
 they break the morning slumber of the city folk  
 with songs of the secret love of Mādhava and Rādhā. (980)

From the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* of Bilhaṇa (late eleventh century):<sup>32</sup>

Let Krishna's sword, "Delighter," reflecting joyful Lakṣmī } violence imagery -  
 In its blade, hold out intense joy for you— } penis = sword  
 For demon Mura's enemy it perpetually revives  
 The memory of graceful Rādhā in the Jumna river's flow. (I.5)

[On his journey southward from Kashmir, Bilhaṇa stops at Brindaban.]

Broken by Rādhā's broad hips, which sway as she swings them,  
 Even now the trees in Krishna's playground have not recovered—  
 When the circle of Mathurā's sages was shaken by playful banter,  
 The poet spent several days in wandering around Brindaban. (XVIII.87)

From the *Siddhahemaśabdānuśāna* of Hemacandra (A.D. 1088-1172):<sup>33</sup>

Hari danced in the courtyard; the world was wonder-struck.  
 Let the glow of Rādhā's breasts endure! (4.420.2)

Though Hari sees every person with full regard,  
 Still his glance goes wherever Rādhā is—  
 Who can arrest eyes ensnared by love? (4.422.5)

From the *Naiṣadhiyacarita* of Śrīharṣa (latter half of twelfth century)<sup>34</sup>  
 is a verse based on the double meaning of the names Rādhā and Śrīvatsa.  
 The name Rādhā here refers to both Krishna's consort and Karṇa's foster  
 mother in the *Mahābhārata*; the enemy of Rādhā's son Karṇa is Arjuna.  
 Śrīvatsa means "Śrī's child" and the curl of hair on the chest of Vishnu  
 or Krishna.

Rādhā is as dear to you as your life—  
 Your friendship with Arjuna, foe of Rādhā's son, is unfitting.  
 But is it fitting for Śrī's lover  
 To hold "the child of Śrī" on your own heart forever?

From the *Āryasaptāṣatī* of Govardhana (late twelfth century):<sup>35</sup>

K betrays R  
 fundamentally  
 as Bacchus  
 betrayed  
 Agave?



Friend, Tulasī, garland on the head of Madhu's foe,  
Why compare yourself in vain with Rādhā?  
All the outpouring of your fragrance  
Is just to perfume her feet. (431)

When stories of how his head was washed  
In royal ablution are told about Krishna,  
Rādhā, her eyes slowed by the weight of pride,  
Looks down at the lotus of her own feet. (488)

In order to shame demon Madhu's enemy,  
Whose mind was drunk with all the cowherd girls,  
Rādhā, feigning innocence, asked for the story of Śiva,  
Who was satisfied with half his wife. (508)

Lovely women on shores of the milky sea  
Eat balls of milk made thick  
By hot winds of Lakṣmī's sighing,  
And they sing the praises of Rādhā. (509)

When Krishna is wandering in search  
Of Rādhā's impassioned quivering eyes,  
The god of love is creating an arrow  
Perfect to pierce the ten directions. (530)

Violence in love -  
the whole idea  
of an arrow -

also shows  
up as  
Cupid in  
6r relig

Through  
suffering  
comes  
pur.

To complement Krishna's role as the dramatic hero (*nāyaka*) and the embodiment of erotic mood (*śṛṅgāramūrtiman*), Rādhā is the dramatic heroine (*nāyikā*) and is identified with passion (*rati*), the emotion (*bhāva*) through which erotic mood (*śṛṅgārarasa*) develops. As passion personified, she is also consort to Kāma. When Rādhā fulfills Krishna's passion, she provides the emotional means for a sympathetic audience (*rasikajana*) to enjoy the extraordinary experience of Krishna's spring-time love. Through her suffering during Krishna's desertion, as described by her to her friend (*sakhī*) and by her friend to Krishna, she is transformed into a powerful consort, appropriate to share Krishna's divine love.<sup>36</sup>

Rādhā is referred to by the standard forms of address for a dramatic heroine. Among them are "foolish woman" (*mugdhavadhū*, I.38\*; *mugdhā* V.17; X.11,12; XI.2\*), "fiercely angry woman" (*caṇḍī*, X.11,13; XI.7),<sup>37</sup> "proud woman" (*mānini*, IX.2\*), and "emotional woman" (*bhāvinī*, XII.6).

Rādhā plays the classical heroine in seven of the eight stylized psychological states of relation to the hero (*nāyikāvasthā*) that are delineated by

theorists of Indian drama.<sup>38</sup> Each of the states is identified in the text by Jayadeva with reference to its technical name or to its characteristic sign. The increasing intensity of Rādhā's desolation is dramatized by concrete manifestations of her condition in the various states.<sup>39</sup> The culminating emotional intensity of her divine love with Krishna is not effected through psychological depth. It is effected through the accumulation of sensuous details expressing the chaos of feeling and fantasy a deserted woman suffers.

After their first night of love, Krishna deserts Rādhā to play with other cowherdresses. Her demand for Krishna's exclusive love, in the context of his common love (*sādhāraṇapranaya*, II.1) with the other cowherdresses, generates her state of envy (*īrṣyā*). A deserted cowherdess longing for love (*utkaṇṭhitagopavadhū*, II.18) is her basic condition throughout the night of the drama. The power of her longing makes Krishna reciprocate her love and suffer as much as she does in their separation. The longing is emotionally amplified by the other states. She waits in vain for Krishna, dressed and ornamented for love (*vāsakaśajjā*, VI.8). She feels herself deceived (*vañcitā*) by her friends (VII.3\*) and by Krishna (VIII.7,9).<sup>40</sup> She is jealously enraged (*khaṇḍitayuvati*, VIII.9), imagining the marks of love a rival has inflicted on Krishna. She is remorseful after quarreling (*kalahāntarītā*, IX.1). At her friend's urging, her modesty abandons her (*salajjā lajjā vyagamad iva*, XI.33) and she goes to meet her lover.<sup>41</sup> After their ecstatic reunion, she feels her lover in her power (*svādhinabhartṛkā*, XII.11). The graceful intimacy of Rādhā's triumph gives Jayadeva's drama its unique flavor.

The character of Rādhā in the *Gītagovinda* established her as Krishna's consort within later traditions of the Krishna cult. Her relative obscurity in earlier literature encouraged the view that Jayadeva had invented "Rādhā." Although he clearly did not invent her, he did create a unique heroine for Indian devotional literature.<sup>42</sup>