Gita Govinda and the Scribal Fashioning of the Ideal Listener

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Writing sometime in the 18th century, Dharanidhara would have found himself at an exciting moment in the history of Odia Vaishnava literature, post-Chaitanya. While the Bhagavata Purana was making headway in the bhakti ecosphere through the great Sanskrit commentaries of famous Gaudiya Vaishnavas such as Baladeva Vidyabhusana the Gita Govinda continued to circulate in the Odisha region through popular literary spin-offs such as the numerous Radha Krishna lila performances, the earliest being, perhaps, the recitals in the natamandira of the Jagannath Temple, Puri[1]. Jagannath Dasa's Odia Bhagabata too had gripped the popular imagination. It is not too difficult, therefore, to imagine the liberative environment that Dharanidhara might have experienced to embark on his translation of Jayadeva's Gita Govinda. In this paper, we shall do a close reading of the scribal copies of Dharanidhara's Odia translation of the Gita Govinda to argue that that the pre-modern scribal readers of the Gita Govinda not only sustained a unique tradition of bhakti[2] in Odisha but also, very carefully, constructed a distinct legacy for the Gita Govinda in the region. For the purpose, our scribe who was both a translator and a commentator, very carefully, embedded the figure of the sujana, a paradigmatic individual with certain attributes, in Jayadeva's composition. The translation of Dharanidhara exists currently in multiple scribal versions, which originated in the 17th century and continued up till the early 20th century in Odisha, and constitute the typical Odia repertoire[3] of the Gita Govinda. With regard to the role of the scribal copies of these commentaries/ translations in forging a devotional sensibility in the region, this corpus has been largely overlooked.

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Gita Govinda: The Text and its Reception

Unlike the plebian Cnaeus Flavius (73 A.D.) who, thanks to his diligent learning and writing, finds himself a place in the Roman senate (Hartmann)[4], our scribe, who is no less diligent, can boast of no such dramatic rise in life. He is happy being a copyist, making use of the opportunity, however, to carefully, silently and firmly guide the readers of one of the most revered compositions of India, the *Gita Govinda*, towards a definitive epistemological understanding of *bhakti*. We felt it necessary to bring Flavius and our scribe together to draw attention to the overwhelmingly pervasive nature of specific discourses in their own separate contexts such as that of the legal discourse in ancient Roman politics which was being controlled by famous Republicans in the case of the former and of the *bhakti* discourse in pre-modern India which was being controlled by saints and pundits in the case of the latter and the significant contrast in their social and political status.

Various scholars of the Biblical textual tradition, besides Egyptologists and papyrologists, have explored how scribes were instrumental in dissemination of texts and propagation of textual traditions.[5] but the study of scribal role in the manuscript tradition of India remains a dead spot. Tracing the origin of scribes as a group of professionals in ancient India, Meera Visvanathan[6] cites Kautilya's *Arthashastra* 2.9.28 which mentions scribes (*lekhaka*) as lower-level court functionaries involved with the inspection of official work. Given the value invested with the role of a scribe in ancient India, as in the *Arthashastra*, cited by Visvanathan, it is ironical that there exists no systematic study of scribal interventions and

innovations in textual transmission in the 'chirographic'[7] era in India. Kumkum Chatterjee writes:

> Clearly, a degree of training was needed to become a lekhaka, but we know next to nothing about such forms of training or the institutions which undetook them. We possess no manuals written for the benefit of scribes; we do not even know if they were in use. There is simply an absence of that degree of bureaucratic enumeration which could have told us something about the position of scribes, their salaries, the organization of their duties, their positions of authority, or even the life-history of an individual scribe. Scribes existed in ancient India, but it is hardly what can be called a 'scribal society' (qtd. in Visvanathan 35).

The absence of "bureaucratic enumeration" notwithstanding, there perhaps were scribal societies organized around specific functions such as the one in pre-modern Odisha in which local scribes collaborated in directing reader's reception of the *Gita Govinda* of Jayadeva. In this paper, I shall do a close reading of scribal statements and their editorial or annotative interventions in their vernacular translations of the original Sanskrit composition to show how they took care to propagate the composition through a deliberate manner of representation. The manuscript copies chosen for this study are selective and not exhaustive. The selection was largely dependent on accessibility and manuscript condition.

Scholars of the *Gita Govinda* have broadly tended to the erotic but solemn human longing for the divine, a story in which Radha and Krishna become the "vehicles (vibhava) for the universalization of erotic emotion".[8] The solemnity derives from the process of "searching, or quest, and a journey back to each other, fraught with pain, agony, and intense longing"[9]. Still, scholars of both the East and the West have found themselves on a spectrum while discussing the mundane and spiritual dimensions of the poetic representation of the relationship between Radha and Krishna and asking of both as Vilwamangal asks of Krishna (qtd. in Siegel).[10] "What's with you (*kutas tvam*)?" Mangrulker introduces the *Gita Govinda* as a "devotional-cum-erotic poem" in which the mood is one of "Bhakti through Srngara" (150) but goes on to argue the centrality of the musical artistry in the composition. Jayadeva exploits his artistic skills to edify the mundane, according to Mungrulker. So it is that, as Vatsyayan[11] says, "the enigma and the mystery of the *Gita Govinda* continues today in the recesses of the dark womb houses of temples, in international theatres and as scholarly enterprise". But before going on to describe the circumstances of the Western scholar's (William Jones, the Oriental scholar) discovery of the *Gita Govinda*, Vatsyayan makes it a point to draw the reader's attention to "an impressive tradition of interpretation of the text in commentaries." (citation for quotes)

Barbara Stoller Miller, the author of *The Love Song of the Dark Lord* (1977), the most well-known English translation of the *Gita Govinda*, lists long and short recensions comprising only the Sanskrit commentaries on the composition[12]. But while the Sanskrit commentaries have been the most important references for scholars studying the translocal reception of the *Gita Govinda* in India, not much is known about the local reception of the composition as evident in the vernacular commentaries and translations. This paper, for the first time, examines scribal practices adopted for the dissemination of the idea of the *Gita Govinda* in the Odisha region. Where the material condition of the transmission of the textual heritage of India is concerned, having come down through numerous scribal copies in palm leaf manuscripts, one can hardly afford to ignore the tradition of collaborative action which was permeated with a high degree of openness and fluidity in interpretive practices. Therefore, for a reader, to achieve a sharpness of focus with respect to the function of a text as Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda,* it would be helpful to study the composition not as the "product" of an individual mind but as an idea constantly evolving through collaborative action. It would be helpful, then, to approach *Gita Govinda* as an imagination which finds expression through several moments of original reading and scribal performance with each moment shaping the indigenous legacy of the *Gita Govinda*.

Gita Govinda in Odisha: The Bhakta and the Critic

The earliest reference to Jayadeva's Gita Govinda in any Odia text discovered so far is in Vaishnava Lilamruta by Madhav Patnaik who is believed to have witnessed the life and activities of Sri Chaitanya when the latter visited Odisha in early 16th century[13]. Patnaik traces the origin of the "Gita Govinda nata seba" (the ritualistic performance of Gita Govinda in the Jagannath Temple) to the reign of Anangabhimadeva III of the 13th century. He introduces Jayadeva as a brahmin pundit who arrived in khetrabara, Puri (Bipra je Jayadebanama, khetrabarakuagamana) — which could mean either the Puri region (holiest of all places; also famous as srikhetra) which is known from the earliest times as an important centre of pilgrimage or the broader Odisha region, with several distinguished centres of pilgrimage, was his karmabhoomi or karmakshetra (place of work) —and settled in Kendulishasana (brahmin settlement) on the banks of Prachi river. He worshipped Niali Madhaba[14], performing the daily rituals. He was well-versed in the shastras but wanted to compose a song which is when he shifted to Puri to be near Lord Jagannath

(Sastra purine bichakhyana, Kabitvamaargetaara mana. / Geeta se rachibaboila, Khetrabaasaku mana dela / Sri Jagannatharasamipe, suddhasaatvikamatibhabe). He composed Srigeetagobinda, singing the pastimes of Radha and Madhaba in melodious tunes (rachila Sri Gitagobinda, labhila parama ananda / Sri Radhamadhaba ra leela, madhura svarare gaila) while his wife Padmabati danced to the song, skilfully enacting the divine love between Radha and Madhaba (Patni taharaPadmabati, Geetaratаale se nrutyati / Rahasanrutya kala jani, naata se kalakanachuni). The dance recital by Padmabati in the temple premises (possibly of the temple of Madhab in Niali) became popular which led Bhimadeba (most likely a reference to Anangabhima III, 1211-1238 AD[15]) to make it a part of the seva (rituals) in the famous Jagannath temple of Puri, as can be deduced from Patnaik's BaishnabaLilamruta[16]. Madhav Patnaik ends his account thus: Thus it is with great fame that Bhimadeba passed / Now listen to rasa, the rasa of Sri Bhagabata Gita (Bhimadebara e kirati, Kaale se gala kirtithaapi / Ethuantaresuna rasa, sribhagabatageeta rasa). Evidently, Madhav Patnaik draws attention to a certain tradition of reading of the Gita Govinda, inspired by the commentarial gloss on the Bhagavata Purana which calls on the listener / reader to partake of the "aesthetic experience, allowing the devotee to taste the bliss of relationship with the Lord" (Edelmann 445)[17]. What deserves our attention is not the truth value of Vaishnava Lilamruta but the Lilamruta as an instance of the scribal attempt to install and perpetuate a memory.

The controversy about the authenticity of Vaishnava Lilamruta notwithstanding, that the Gita Govinda was already a popular composition in the Odisha region and was an important seva in the Jagannath temple when Chaitanya arrived in Puri in early sixteenth century is well-known. In Chaitanya Charitamrita[18], the most authoritative account of Chaitanya's life and written in the later half of 16th century, the author Krishnadas Kaviraj recounts the days when Chaitanya used to spend time with Raya Ramananda and SvarupaDamodar, listening to Sri Gita Govinda, the compositions of Chandi Das and Vidyapati as well as to Jagannatha Vallabha Natakam composed by Ramananda himself. Raya Ramananda also read out to him Lilashuka's [also known as Vilvamangala] Krishnakarnamrita[19] a manuscript which Chaitanya had brought back from his travels in South India. In trying to trace the sources of Chaitanya's bhakti "back through his gurus to their original provenance" (23), Hardy[20] cites Raya Ramananda as a direct influence (33), from which one may deduce Chaitanya's acquaintance with Gita Govinda. No commentary or discussion on Gita Govinda by Raya Ramananda himself has been discovered in any manuscript so far. However, the only long composition known to be written by Raya Ramananda, a five-act play Jagannath VallabhaNatakam (JVN henceforth)[21], seems most certainly to have been influenced by the Gita Govinda. It is well-known in history that King Prataparudra Deva (1497-1540 AD), through a royal order in 1499 AD, had prohibited the recital of Gita Govinda in the Jagannath temple and had arranged for the recital of Abhinava Gitagovinda (Abhinava henceforth)[22], which was written by Kavichandra Raya Divakar Mishra at the behest of his king Purushottama Deva (1466-1497 AD; Prataparudra Deva's father) of the Suryavamsa (solar) dynasty. But widespread criticism and popular demand forced Prataparudra to discontinue Abhinava and continue the Gita Govinda seva[23]. Gaganendra Nath Dash argues that the rejection of Abhinava and the reinstatement of Gita Govinda was the outcome of a power structure among the king and the temple priests. However, reinstating the Gita Govinda may well have had a practical purpose. The strong tradition of tantra worship, along with its complicated association with the later'sahajiya' practices, in the Jagannath temple also may have made it necessary to recall the Gita Govinda for ritualistic worship.

It was perhaps to arrest a 'sahajiya' reading of the Gita Govinda, that Prataparudra, through JVN, made an effort to bring into currency a subtly modified version of the sum and substance of the Gita Govinda, which by then had acquired the status of a "quasi-scriptural text" (Dash 239)[24]. In the introductory scene of JVN, the sutra (stage director), by way of speaking to nati, his female companion, announces that the king has ordered him to stage "some new composition dedicated to Hari"[25] … a composition which "must not be cast in the shadow of some old composition" (abhinavakrtimanyayachhayaya no nibandha)[26] and so he has chosen to compere the "Ramanand sangeet natak" which is "so dear to the king [Prataparudra Deva]"[27]. The double allusion to Gita Govinda and the Abhinava which, perhaps by then, was well-known as an imitation of the Gita Govinda, cannot be missed. But the influence of Gita Govinda on JVN[28]is all too evident. Below is a brief summary of the five acts of JVN:

(i) Krishna enters the scene, along with his friend and jester Madhumangal. Krishna describes the beauty of the garden of Vrindavan and plays his flute. One notices signs of Radha's entry into the garden. Madanika (Madanmanjari), Radha's friend and messenger is seen extolling the beauty and virtues of Krishna. Krishna catches a glimpse of Radha from afar.

(ii) Madanika and Ashokmanjari describe Radha's love and passion for Krishna. Madanika goes to Krishna

with a love letter from Radha. Krishna is overwhelmed by Radha's love for him but feigns displeasure saying that Radha should refrain from displaying such passion and emotion. Go tell her, it is objectionable for a married woman like her to indulge in such secret pleasures with a man who is not her husband, Krishna says. Further, if she is not mindful of the reputation of her family, should I forget all propriety of behaviour?[29]

(iii) Shashimukhi and Madanika use their wiles to lure Radha into a heightened passion for Krishna.

(iv) Krishna gets anxious to meet Radha. Madhumangal and Madanika each play their part in heightening the emotions of love in the minds of Krishna and Radha. Finally, Madanika leads the lovers into the secret bower to make love.

(v) Radha sangam - The play ends with the evocation of veera rasa through Krishna's fight with the mighty Aristasur who is killed. Madanika brings Radha to Krishna and asks her to soothe him with her love because he has fought so hard and is exhausted.

Unlike in the Gita Govinda, Krishna, in JVN, is not eager for amorous dalliances, is not given to impetuous displays of love towards multiple gopis; he gives in to Radha only after repeated entreaties from her, and is serious about preserving 'order' in Vrindavan. His love-making with Radha is made evident only through the on-stage conversations between Shashimukhi and Madanika. The play ends with a note from Krishna himself: [Madanika,] Bestow your kindness on him who, with reverence and with his mind fixed on me, partakes of the sweetness of my secret Gopal lila, such that he can fulfil his desire in Vrindavan. Madanika replies: Thus it will be. Curiously enough, although Raya Ramananda has been described mainly as a Sahajiya who awakened Chaitanya to the "Radha-aspect"[30], JVN does not support the figure of the Radha who dominates the love scenes, even dominates Krishna in the act of love-making, in the Gita Govinda. About Radha in Gita Govinda, Majumdar has this to say:

> He [Jayadeva] treats Radha as an ordinary girl whom Krsna enjoyed for a short time. Her passions are entirely human and nowhere is there a hint that there is anything divine about her. She is never given the dignity nor the grace of Sakuntala far less that of a goddess. In a story of forbidden love and its sensuous enjoyment the hero Krsna is elevated to his classical sphere by the Dasavatarastotra, but not a single hymn is dedicated to cast the halo of divinity around Radha (240)[31]

Unlike the Gita Govinda which contains explicit descriptions of the act of love-making between Radha and Krishna and Krishna and the other gopis, JVN seems to attempt to resolve the readings of bhakti as enshrined in the Bhagavata (Purana) in which "Krsna tells the Gopis that chastity is the prime religion of women, and that they should return to their homes"(cited in Majumdar 243), and the bhakti which finds expression in the free-flowing amorous passions in the Gita Govinda.

Whether Radha was a real character or the result of a coalescence of the 'gopi bhava' expressed in centuries of imaginative literature will perhaps continue to be debated further but Krishna's sexual exploits in imaginative literature and the several bardic and poetic explorations of his colourful persona over the centuries most certainly caused his fama malum. The notorious reputation, perhaps, had gained wide currency already during the reign of Kapilendra Deva, a son of the soil, who ruled Odisha from 1434-1466 AD (more than half a century before Chaitanya's arrival in Puri) and is known in history as one who laid the foundation of the Suryavamsi dynasty by overthrowing the Gangas. This may also explain the tone of irreverence in Sarala Das's (believed to have lived during Kapilendra's time) portrayal of Krishna in his Mahabharata Purana. Among the several textual evidences cited by Panigrahi (pp. 2-3)[32] indicating the influence of Gita Govinda on later Odia compositions is the Khalyakar[33] episode in the Adi parva of Sarala Mahabharata (15th c.), which Panigrahi argues is a contemptuous spin-off of the "parakiyaprema" (amorous relationship with another's wife) between Krishna and Duti in the Gita Govinda. Chemburkar argues that it is for this reason (Krishna's bad reputation) that it must have become necessary for the Vaishnavas to change "the status of Radha to evade the lapse in social morality. This they seem to have done by raising Radha to the status of Divinity by deifying her" (112)[34]. The fast and wide spread of the culture of bhakti in the length and breadth of Odisha, especially after Chaitanya's arrival, and more so after his passing away, must have spurred fears of superficial and crass readings of the bhakti epistemology by the laity which perhaps explains the birth of Odia commentaries on the Gita Govinda, 18th century onwards. As a cheap printed edition of Natuchori[35] and multiple manuscript copies of Panasachori andKumbhachori[36] show, there indeed was in circulation a "very obscene"[37] body of literature based on the sexually expressive and insinuative narration of the Gita Govinda. It is also possible that the proliferation of 'obscene'readings may have happened rapidly only after there arose an opportunity for the text, the recital of which had been confined to the garbagriha[38] of the temple, to be thrown open for public discourse beginning with the theatrical performance of Raya Ramananda's JVN or his engagement with the text in the presence of Chaitanya's disciples and followers as cited in Chaitanya Charitamruta. A Western scholar would argue that there always has been an attempt to modify the

sexually expressive and insinuative narration and "make potentially pornographic subject matter the material of esthetic and religious experience" (Miller 15). I would argue that the Odia commentator-scribe tried to preserve "a material of esthetic and religious experience" as such, preventing it from being downgraded as "pornographic subject matter."

Gita Govinda and the Scribal Agency

Scholars have brought to light several compositions of the Odisha region which were inspired by the subject and style of Gita Govinda, the most well-known being the Sanskrit Rukmini Parinaya Mahakavyam by Narayana Bhanja (early 16th c.)[39] and Kelikallolini by Anadi Mishra[40] (Anadi was a descendant of Kavichandra Raya Divakar Mishra, the author of Abhinava; 17th-18th c.), and the Odia Rasakalpalata by Kavi BrajasundarPattanaik[41] (court poet of PurushottamA nangabhima Deva (1728-1776 AD)), Navanuraga by KarttikaDasa (18th c.)[42] and Gopinath Ballav Nataka by Raghunath Parichha (19th c.)[43]. One of the manuscript copies of Navanuraga contains excerpts from the Odia commentary of the Gita Govinda by Dharanidhara.

Among the Odia readers of the Gita Govinda, Dharanidhara's commentary is the most popular, followed by that of Jagannath Misra and BajariDasa. I chose to classify their works as commentary because of the actual nature of the texts to which we have access today. Their texts exist in multiple manuscripts copied by scribes who evidently were reciters and have made "critical interferences" (Beit-Arie)[44] although modern scholars[45] have compiled 'standard editions', calling them both translations and commentaries of Dharanidhara, Jagannath and Bajari.

Through a study of the paratext in select scribal copies of Dharanidhara's commentary[46] , I will argue that the scribes were not only "faithful labourers"[47] but also made active use of their authorial power to participate in meaning-making. It is but stating the obvious that there is at least an historical distance between the Gita Govinda's author and the reader/listener and that the author no longer directly speaks to his reader/listener. From the perspective of the reader, who is also an inheritor of the composition, the reception of the 'original' composition is heavily mediated, through commentators, religious masters, and the copyists/scribes. The scribes, who were the closest to their readers/listeners took care to preserve the aesthetic and functional value of the Gita Govinda even as they contributed to the fecundity of the interpretive field surrounding the composition. In so doing, the boundaries between the text and the paratext kept shifting. The scribes attempted to mold the form and content so as to help the reader/listener validate their life practices in a distinctive socio-religious milieu.

Gaganendranath Dash, in arguing that the Gita Govinda was originally a literary text which acquired "quasi-scriptural" status much later, identifies significant moments in history when janashruti(popular lore) may have led to multifarious notions about both the meaning and significance of the text as well as the authorial identity and intention. Dash's argument that the transformation of the status of the Gita Govinda was a result of power struggle among the temple priests and the kings falls within the realm of meta discourse, yet his citation of textual evidences and the extra-textual discourse on the composition approaches the textual scholar's preoccupation with the 'original' text. We propose a point of departure by drawing attention to the actual condition of the text as it appears before us at present. Within the perspectival constraints of a reader who is also an inheritor of a textual tradition, a backward (in time) reading of the Gita Govinda corpus in Odia, the materiality of which is constituted only by scribal copies, including the illustrated copies, (of which only a handful were chosen for the 'standard editions') may lead to a realistic evaluation of the textual function and a better understanding of how the Gita Govinda may have come to acquire a certain status. What Dash cites as janashruti may be re-categorized as, to borrow from Lotman et al., "non-texts" to explain the scholarly emphasis on certain kinds of texts, those "with the most coefficients of value and truth" (Lotman et al. 239)[48], as objects of study and the accompanying negligence of certain other kinds of texts which include the commentaries and the scribal copies. So, for example, if Jayadeva's Gita Govinda is 'the text', the commentaries and the scribal copies of the same fall within the category of non-texts. Although the exact nature of Raya Ramananda's engagement with the Gita Govinda is not known, yet his JVN, which is known to have been staged several times in the precincts of the Jagannath temple[49] may be understood as the first ever attempt to create a "non-text" in a syntagmatic relationship with the Gita Govinda, facilitated in no small measure by the cultural institution of the natamandira. The proliferation of the "non-texts" with respect to the Gita Govinda, thus, may be said to have started with Raya Ramananda. A textual critic normally is given to two kinds of activities: one, is to adhere to the "linguistic message" and discredit interpretive activities which keep happening all the time, the more so, as the chronological distance between the author and the reader grows; the other is to justify as Ray says, "his own perception of the literary work through a variety of strategies which aim at reconciling the text's polysemic urgings and his own predispositions" (22)[50]. The Gita Govinda's commentators

clearly fall in the second category but they also did something more. They inserted elements into the text so as to create a "semiosphere" which Lotman describes in terms of a room in a museum:

> In the reality of the semiosphere, the hierarchy of languages and texts, as a rule, is disturbed: and these elements collide as though they coexisted on the same level. Texts appear to be immersed in languages which do not correspond to them, and codes for deciphering them may be completely absent. Imagine a room in a museum, where exhibits from different eras are laid out in different windows, with texts in known and unknown languages, and instructions for deciphering them, together with explanatory texts for the exhibitions created by guides who map the necessary routes and rules of behaviour for visitors. If we place into that room still more visitors, with their own semiotic worlds, then we will begin to obtain something resembling a picture of the semiosphere (Lotman 213).[51]

Gita Govinda and its Ideal Listener

In this semiosphere, the commentators and the scribes are observed to have chosen specific processes of signification by drawing on the prevailing religio-cultural code. They not only anticipate the listener's predisposition but also motivate him/her towards a certain mindset.

CANTO 1

śuṇa he sujana jane, hoiṇasanṭośa[52]

(Listen y'all *sujana*, in contentment; my trans.)

śuṇa he sujaneethunrasabachana[53]

(Listen y'all *sujana*, to these words filled with *rasa;* my trans.)

CANTO 2

śuṇasujana hoi sābadhanakahilāsajani jete bachana[54]

The commentator-scribe positively defines the ideal listener as *sujana*, one who is blessed with stillness of mind, one who has fixed his mind on bhakti for Hari, and one who has an ear for music. The *sujana* is the perceptive listener who is to enter a specific mental and emotional realm while listening to the *Gita Govinda*. It is well known that the union of the human soul with the divine has traditionally been conveyed through erotic imagery and the ultimate union as an orgasmic experience (cite)[55]. So, *śuṇa he sujana jane* or *śuṇa he sujane*is a call to attention for the listener to be mindful of the a-corporeal aspect of human experience, to see through the mind's eye because *je brahmankuhinagochara*[56] (that which cannot be perceived even by Brahma). The figure of the *sujana*, therefore, is invoked to convey expectations for a particular mode of response from the listener to the r*asabachana*. And for that, the sujana has to be *sabadhana* (attentive), *hoiṇasanṭośa* (in an undisturbed state of mind) so as to allow the *ratikrida* (amorous play) of Radha and Krishna to play out to its fullest potential in the sujana's mind for him to partake of the delight which the *ratikrida*stirs. It is to set the tone for a solemn atmosphere, for the *sujana* is expected to have his mind fixed on "that Krishna"(*chatu rdasalokaalokitaja'radhyāna / se Krushna mana diasadhujana*), the Krishna, the thought of whom lights up the fourteen worlds. Without *Harirasa*, the *sujana*should not expect to pass his days in happiness: *se krushna mana diasadhujana / harirasabinuehidibasadurdina [keep your mind fixed on that Krishna / without Harirasa, adversities will claim your life].*[57]

śuṇa he sujana is a rhetorical stimulus for the listener to make a transition from the experience of the mundane to an experience which transcends bodily limitations. He is constantly reminded of Krishna, as *ishwara* or *mayadhara*, one who creates *maya* (illusion) as in making it look as if the clouds have engulfed the sky so that it is dark all around for the *lila*to begin: *maya rachiledebamāyādhara, meghaāsiācchāḍilaambara.*[58]

The figure of the *sujana* is briefly addressed by Satpathy[59] who identifies him as "a model human" in the context of Jagannath Dasa's (Odia) *Bhagabata*. The *sujana* is one whose life pursuits include *sukha* and *moksha* and is to be cultivated from among the *jantu*s (living beings). For this he has to engage in *abhyasa* (practice) of *jnana* and *bhakti,* possess *samadrushti* (equanimity), and adopt *utsava* as a mode of life to include *nrutya* (dance) and *abhinaya* (dance drama). The *Bhagabata* sets up a model of human conduct through the figure of the *sujana*, according to Satpathy.

The scribe of *Gita Govinda*, however, sets up the figure of the *sujana* as serving two important functions: one, it serves as a reminder of the Krishna persona; two, the character of the *sujana* is brought to inhabit a specific community whose members are assumed to be socialising a theological enterprise of seeking a loving union of the human with the divine. For the loving union to achieve a crescendo, the poet adopts a necessary method which is to multiply the scenes as descriptive of the various rasas as expressions of love for Krishna. So the figure of the *sujana* is both to induce alertness to the real nature of the love play between Radha and Krishna as well as to help activate a desired affect so as to arrest the possibility of the *premalila* of Radha and Krishna sliding into profanity. In this sense, the *sujana* is also expected to be a *rasika*. The scribal address to the *sujana*, while rooted in awareness about the conventional social mores, seeks to encourage an idealised projection of the amorous acts of Radha and Krishna. The scribal invitation to the *sujana* but all else seeks to activate a cognitive process in which multiple parties are brought into contiguous involvement such that the *premalila* has to be eminently transmissible in a manner

it can be received and enjoyed while serving a pedagogic and social function. Additionally, the invitation of the *sujana* is a pre-emptive strategy to neutralise the desire to naturalise the lila, as also to "expurgate undesirable narratives."[60]

Notes

1. According to the famous Odia historian Kedarnath Mahapatra, it was through the efforts of Kaviraja Narayana Dasa, the court poet of the Ganga king Narasimha II (1279-1307 AD), that the recitation of the Gita Govinda was introduced in the Jagannatha Temple and became an important part of the daily seva of the Lord. See Mahapatra, Kedarnath. Little Known Aspects of Orissan Culture, Vol. III, Kedaranath Gaveshana Pratisthan, Bhubneswar, 1990, p. 21.
2. Bhakti dharma, which entailed the circulation of a range of religious texts and scriptures through scribal referencing.
3. See note 47.
4. Benjamin Hartmann. The Scribes of Rome: A Cultural and Social History of the Scribae, Cambridge University Press, 2020.
5. See in this regard, Gary Greenberg, *The 101 Myths of the Bible: How Ancient Scribes Invented Biblical History*, Illinois: Sourcebooks, 2000; Martha Himmelfarb, *Between Temple and Torah: Essays on Priests, Scribes, and Visionaries in the Second Temple Period and Beyond*, Mohr Siebeck, 2013; Gloria Taylor Brown & Ellis Normandi, *Invoking the scribes of ancient Egypt: the initiatory path of spiritual journaling*, Bear & Company, 2011; David W. Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah: A Socio-Archeological Approach (The Social World of Biblical Antiquity Series, 9)*, Sheffield Academic Press, 1991.
6. Visvanathan, Meera. "From the 'Lekhaka' to the Kayastha: Scribes in Early Historic Court and Society (200 BCE-200 CE)". Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, vol. 75, 2014, pp. 34–40. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44158358.
7. Walter Ong defines 'Chirography' as the writing of words that is otherwise imagined in an oral setting. See Ong, Walter J. and John Hartley. *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word*. Routledge, 2012, p. 26.
8. Jayadeva. *Gītagovinda Of Jayadeva: Love Song of the Dark Lord*. Edited by Barbara Stoler Miller, Motilal Banarsidass, 2007, p. 15.
9. Sinha, Lalita. *Unveiling the Garden of Love Mystical Symbolism in Layla Majnun& Gita Govinda*. World wisdom, 2008, p. 4.
10. Siegel, Lee. *Gita Govinda: Love Songs of Rādha and Krishna*. United States, NYU Press, 2017, p. xxvii.
11. It's a transcultural comparative study of *Gīta Govinda* between India and the West that studies the text under a diachronic setting, considering the genre, form, metaphor and imagery of the song. Vatsayan's work is a case study on the tradition of interpretation of the Sanskrit poem of cross-borders and cultures and different time settings (See Vatsayan, Kapila. "The Gita-Govinda, a twelfth century Sanskrit poem travels West." *Astha Bharati*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2008. https://doi.org/http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_Jul%2008/kapi.htm)
12. Miller makes a passing reference to "more than fifty manuscripts" in the Orissa State Museum in Bhubaneswar and in the Raghunandan Library in Puri. See p.178.
13. See Pattnaik, Madhab. BaishnabLilamruta, trans. Brundaban Chandra Acharya. Sambalpur, Pradeep Publication, 1986, p. 34.
14. The Madhava Temple at Niali is around 40 miles from Kendulishasan and it is not practicable that he would have travelled from Kenduli to Niali for worship. It is possible that the brahmin pundit shifted to Niali when he wished to compose a song and, so, wanted to live in the vicinity of Lord Jagannath at Puri.
15. The Natamandira (dancing hall attached to a temple) was built during his reign (see Donaldson, T. E. Hindu Temple Art of Orissa, Volume One. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1985, p. 404).
16. Bhagatedhanyadhanya kale, bhagatibhabebhola hele / Geetagobindanaataseba, mandirepratyahahoila / Raja se sebabhiaila, kenduli saree jogaila, Srigeetagobinda rasa e, Srijagannatharapriya e / Bolikalaka e bhiana, bhagate hele tosamana / Kale se kabi swarga gala. / Khetrabare ta gatihela / Gitagobindanaatapuna, naata mandira kala bhiana / Rahasanrutyaranimitta, Gitagobinda kale nrutya (These lines and the lines cited in-text are from lines 56-75, pp. 8-10)
17. Edelmann, Jonathan. "Hindu Theology as Churning the Latent." Journal of the American Academy of Religion, vol. 81, no. 2, [Oxford University Press, American Academy of Religion], 2013, pp. 427–66, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24486018.
18. Read Swami Prabhupāda, A.C. Bhaktivedanta, translator. *Śrī Caitanya Caritamrta*. India, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1996.
19. caṇḍīdāsavidyāpatirāyeranāṭaka-gīti / karṇāmṛtaśrī-gīta-govinda / svarūpa-rāmānanda-sanemahāprabhu rātri-dine,gāya, śune paramaānanda. (See Swami Prabhupada, A. C. Bhaktivedanta, translator. "Madhya Lila Chapter 2.77." *Śrī Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1996.)
20. Read Hardy, Friedhelm. "MādhavêndraPurī: A Link between Bengal Vaiṣṇavism and South Indian Bhakti." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, vol. 106, no. 1, 1974, pp. 23–41., doi:10.1017/S0035869X00131375.
21. All references to *JVN* are from the Hindi translation (of the Sanskrit original) by Sri Krishnadas Baba. See Raya, Ramananda. *Jagannatha Vallabha Natakam*. Translated by Krishnadas Baba, Shri Gaurahari Press, 1964.
22. Read Mohapatra, Kedarnath. "Abhinava Gitagovinda by Gajapati Purushottama Deva (1466-1497 A.D.)." *The Orissa Historical Research Journal*. Edited by Harekrushna Mahtab, The Superintendent of Museum Orissa, Bhubaneswar, 1982, pp. 248-49.
23. See in this context, Tripathy, K.B. *The Evolution of Oriya Language and Script*, Bhubaneswar, 1962, pp.300-301 along with Dash, G.N. "The King and the Priests: An Analysis

of a Gita Govinda Tradition", *The Visva Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 1976, pp. 227-246 and "The Evolution of the Priestly Power: The Suryavamsi Period", *CJRTO*, 1978, pp. 209-221.

24. See the article "The King and the Priests"
25. *śrī-haricharaṇamadhikṛtyakamapiprabandhamabhinetumadiṣṭo' smih*(See Raya 4).
26. *Madhuripupadalīlāśālītattadguṇāncya / sahṛdayahṛdayānaṁkā-maṁāmodahetum / abhinavakrtimanyacchhayaya no nibandha / samabhinayanaṭānāṁvaryaakiñcitprabandham* (See Raya 5)
27. *gajapati-rudra-manoharamharaharidamanurasikasamajam ramanandarayakavibhanitamviharatuharipadabhajam* (See Raya 16)
28. Since the *Abhinava Gita Govinda* remains unpublished, we are unable to comment on the actual nature of allusions to *Abhinava*in *JVN*. However, Panda (1974), perhaps based on his reading of OSM Mss. No. L-211, briefly describes the*Abhinava* as a "Mahakavya based on the divine love of Sri Radha and Srikrsna" which is "divided into ten cantos and contains 150 verses in different metres and 72 songs composed in 58 ragas"(vi). Panda also lists the names of the ten cantos and the 58 ragas used in *Abhinava*.
29. Raya *JVN* (trans., pp. 17-18); see note 20.
30. Dimock 148, citing the *Chaitanya Charitamrta*, an important text of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas.
31. Majumdar, Asoke Kumar. "A Note on the Development of Radha Cult." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, vol. 36, no. 3/4, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1955, pp. 231–57, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44082959.
32. Panigrahi, Krishna Chandra. "Odisha Re Gita Govinda Ra Prabhaba [The Influence of Gita Govinda in Odisha]." *PrabandhaManasa*, Kitab Mahal, Cuttack, Odisha, 1972, pp. 1–20.
33. Khalyakar was born as a result of the sexual union between Krishna and Duti an old woman whom Krishna misrecognised as Radha.
34. See Chemburkar, Jaya. "Sriradhikanamasahasram." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, vol. 57, no. 1/4, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1976, pp. 107–16, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41692239.
35. Published by Radharaman Pustakalaya, Cuttack, 1964.
36. *Panasacori* by Gaura Dasa OL/1630-A and Balarama Dasa OL/687-C, OL/724-C, OL/1630-A and OL/2208-C; *Kumbhacori* by Apartti Dasa OL/1220. These extant copies are of palm leaf manuscripts in the Odisha State Museum.
37. Robert Needham Cust, a 19th century British writer and administrator in colonial India, writes in his book *Linguistic and Oriental Essays: 1847-1887* about the gullibility of the ignorant and half-educated Indian reading public, "entirely devoid of the critical faculty or the means of testing the truth of statements, swallow what they read, and the understanding of the reading portion" (110). Interestingly, Cust describes the registered printed copies of *Gita Govinda* as a "very obscene" Sanskrit book, having 1000 copies and costing 8 *annas* (117)
38. The sanctum sanctorum where resides the deity of Lord Jagannātha in the Jagannātha temple, Puri. The performance of *Gīta Govinda* was reserved nocturnally in the innermost and secretive reigns of *Garbagriha*
39. Cat. No. L./183-A in the Odisha State Museum
40. Cat. No. L./319 in the Odisha State Museum
41. Pattanaik, Kavi Brajasundar. *Rasakalpalata*. Edited by Bhagaban Panda, Sreema Printers, 1999.
42. Cat. No. O. L. / 322, O. L. /521 in the Odisha State Museum.
43. Cat. No. O. L./143 and O. L./682-A in the Odisha State Museum. A print edition of the composition, dated 1868, was edited by G. S. Ray and published by Odisha Sahitya Akademi in 1959.
44. Beit-Arie 157. Beit-Arié, Malachi. "How Scribes Disclosed Their Names in Hebrew Manuscripts". *Studia Rosenthaliana*, vol. 38/39, Peeters Publishers, 2005, pp. 144–57, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41482672.
45. Dharanidhara. *Sri Gitagovinda [Sri Gitagovinda]*. Edited by Nilamani Misra, Grantha Mandir, 1995; Mishra, Jagannath. *Sri Geeta Govinda*. Edited by Pramila Mishra; Das, Bajari. *Artha Gobinda*. Edited by Dukhishyam Pattanayak, Directorate of Culture, Bhubaneswar, 1999.
46. Cat. no. L/127, L/148, L/323, L/326, OL/302, ORMS/82
47. Borrowed from Leonard, John. *Faithful Labourers: A Reception History of Paradise Lost, 1667-1970: Volume I: Style and Genre; Volume II: Interpretative Issues*, Oxford University Press, 2013.
48. Yu. M. Lotman, et al. "Text and Function." New Literary History, vol. 9, no. 2, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978, pp. 233–44, https://doi.org/10.2307/468572.
49. Raya, Ramananda. Jagannatha Vallabha Nataka. Translated by Bishnupriya Otta, Cuttack, 1982 pp. 6-9.
50. Ray, William. "Recognizing Recognition: The Intra-Textual and Extra-Textual Critical Persona." Diacritics, vol. 7, no. 4, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977, pp. 20–33, https://doi.org/10.2307/464854.
51. Lotman, Juri. "On the Semiosphere." Sign Systems Studies, Translated by Wilma Clark, vol. 33, no. 1, 2005, pp. 205–229.
52. Cat. No. L/127, Descriptive Catalogue, Odisha State Museum, Bhubaneswar, p. 49.
53. Dharanidhara edited by Nilamani Misra, p. 11.
54. Dharanidhara edited by Nilamani Misra, p. 21.
55. See Carr, David McLain. "Rethinking Sex and Spirituality: The Song of Songs and Its Readings." Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal, vol. 81, no. 3/4, Penn State University Press, 1998, pp. 413–35, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41178847.
56. BajariDasa. *ArthaGobinda*, Adhyaya 1, l. 97, Pattanayak ed., p. 6. See note 45.
57. Dharanidhara edited by Nilamani Misra, p. 10.
58. *Dharanidhara* edited by Nilamani Misra, p. 1.
59. Satpathy, Siddharth. "The Polite World of the Bhagavata: Homo Religiosus in Colonial Cuttack". *YouTube*, 08 Feb. 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cunLGeXlUbE
60. Jawhar Sircar, "Krishna's Long Journey: From Sacred Text to the Popular Arts", *VMH*, 2017, p. 11.