

Vidyapati-The Poet(Part-1)

M.A.(HISTORY) SEM-2 PAPER CC:7

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Life and works

- ▶ **Vidyapati** (c 1374-1460) the poet, was born in a scholarly Shaivite Brahmin family in the village of Bisfi in the Sitamari subdivision of Mithila. His father's name was Ganapati. The family, whose title was 'Thakkar' or 'Thakur', were employed in high positions at the court of the rulers of Mithila and had made many important contributions in military matters as well as artistic and cultural areas. Vidyapati himself was a member of the court of the kings

Life and works

Dev Singh and Shivosing. He studied under Sri Hari Mishra. Vidyapati wrote in Maithili, abahattha, and Sanskrit. Since he was born in a Shaivite family, he also wrote many Shaivite songs. However, the verses on Radha-Krishna that are written in brajabuli are considered his masterpieces. It is due to these grew a type of Vaisnava verse language known as Brajabuli. Through Vaishnava verses that he has gained great reputation.

Life and works

- ▶ These songs, in metrical feet and written in Maithili, gradually became popular all over Bengal. However, they were later transformed by the influences of local dialects and the singers of kirtan. Although Brajabuli is mainly a mixture of Bangla and Maithili, it also includes some Hindi words. Vaisnava verses continued to be written in Brajabuli till the nineteenth century.

Life and works

- ▶ Rabindranath Tagore wrote the *Bh'a'nusingha Th'a'kurer Pad'a'val'i* in this language. Sri chaitanya himself was fond of listening to the songs of Vidyapati. Kirtan and Padasabgit were the main pillars of the vaisnavism.

Life and works

- ▶ Vidyapati's fame spread all over Bengal. Later, many Bengali and non-Bengali poets wrote verses in imitation of Vidyapati. Research on Vidyapati started in the late nineteenth century. Nagendranath Gupta was the first to publish an authentic version of the songs written by Vidyapati.
- ▶ Apart from writing songs, Vidyapati also wrote books on ethics, history, geography and law. Among his books are

Life and works

- ▶ *Puru's'par'i'k'sa* (moral teaching), *Likhan'a'bal'i* (on writing), *K'i'rttilat'a'* (history), *Bh'u'-Parikram'a* (geography), *D'a'nb'a'kyabal'i* (on charity), *Ga'b'g'a'b'a'kyabal'i* (on holy sites). *Durg'a'bhaktitara'b'gin'i* and *Bibh'a'gs'a'r* are autobiographical in nature.
- ▶ Little detail is known of his early life, though his status as a Brahman undoubtedly meant rigorous training in Sanskrit and other such marks of scholarship.

Life and works

- ▶ Likely through his father's efforts, he received a commission from the king during the reign of Kirti Simha (ruled c. 1370–80). The result of this commission was the long poem *Kirtilata* ("Vine of Glory"). Vidyapati became a court scholar under Kirti Simha's son, Deva Simha, for whom he composed *Bhuparikrama* ("Around the World"), a group of romantic stories that also contained advice to the king.
- ▶ The poetry for which Vidyapati is best remembered, however, is a collection of love poetry written between 1380 and 1406.

Life and works

- ▶ This collection expands on what had become the cult of Radha and Krishna, subject also of the 12th-century Bengal poet Jayadeva's celebrated *GitaGovinda* ("Song of the Cowherd") [Govinda is another name for Krishna]. According to the English scholar W.G. Archer, Vidyapati's work is distinct from that of Jayadeva in both form and voice. Unlike Jayadeva's work, which is a unified dance-drama, Vidyapati's offering is a collection of separate love songs that examine the many moods and seasons of love and lovemaking.

Life and works

- ▶ Jayadeva's viewpoint is also unremittingly masculine, while Vidyapati finds Radha's feminine sentiments and observations the more nuanced, and he does not esteem Krishna over Radha.

(To be continued)