

CONTRIBUTION OF MIRABAI AS A SAINTESS IN MEDIEVAL ERA

Parvinder Sharma

Ph.D (Research Scholar) Department of Religious Studies & Guru Gobind Singh Punjabi University, Patiala.
Email - parvindersharma173@gmail.com

Abstract: *Mirabai is a Lord Krishna devotee. She was born in Rajasthan. She worships Krishna as her husband from her childhood. She get married against her will to the crown prince of Mewar, Bhoj Raj. She was the personality who sacrifices her life to her Krishna love. This research paper focuses mainly on Mirabai's work, life and songs/padas sung by her.*

Key Words: *Poetess, Krishna devotee, pada (Vedic poetic meter).*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Mirabai (also known as Meerabai, Meera, Mira) is widely known Hindu devotional saintess of India. According to old tradition, dates of birth and death of Mirabai are not known exactly but many researchers assume they are 1498 and 1547 respectively. This 15th century royal enthusiast of Lord Krishna was born in Merta in Rajasthan in the realm of Marwar, as the only daughter of Ratan Singh, a Rajput noble of the House of Rathor.

As a woman poetess she was the first one who reflect to mankind, nature and God in creative unity and as a poetess of divinity. She was the first to discover diversity and disharmony between the mankind and nature. The poetry of Mirabai exhibit an complete sense of decorative beauty and indicate a sense of quest. The form of the poetry/songs written by Mirabai is traditionally known as *pada*. One of the *pada* sung by Mirabai is as follows:

*Mere to girdhar gopala
Dusara na koi, sakala loka joi |
Bhai chorya bandhu chorya, chorya saga soi |
Sadhu sanga baithi baithi loka laga koi |
Bhagta dekhi raji bhai, jagata dekhi roi |
Asavana jala simca-simca prema beli hoi |
Dadhi matha ghrta karhi liyo, dara diyo choi |
Rana visa ko pyalo bhejiyo, piya mangane hoi |
Aba to bata phaila gai, janai saba koi |
Mira prabhu lagana lagi, honi ho so hoi ||*

[I only have Krishna to know. I have nothing to do with all other relations. People scold me when I dance among saints and I do not care about that. I have sympathy for those who are tied in worldly affairs and have love for those who are loyal. I live for only love to my Lord now and have left everything. The Rana sent poison to kill me but it does not affect me as I am bound in love to my Lord Krishna. This is all what I have.]

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Scholars believe that the songs/poems sung by Mirabai were in Marwari, Gujarati and Braj Bhasha language. This is territorial language spoken in the province in which Mirabai lived. The founder of this traditional language was 13th century poet Jayadeva, who wrote the poems in Sanskrit language. The poets such as Narsi, Vidyapati and Chandi das appreciated Jayadeva's work Geeta Govinda as the model for their songs, written in Maithili, Gujarati and Bengali language. In expressing admiration of Krishna through songs/*padas*, Mirabai followed and continued a living intellectual tradition, although unlike those predecessors, she did not write down the *padas* of praise for Krishna. According to Usha S. Nilsson, the *padas* of Mirabai are the mixture of Mirabai's religious skills at various stages in her spiritual life.

3. LIFE:

Mirabai was a Rajput princess who became greatly involved in her religious devotion for the Krishna cult. Considered as a pronounced saintess of India, her outflow of this Krishna love touched the hearts of millions of people. It is said that when she was very young, a passing austere once gave her an icon of Krishna, the little girl showed an immediate interest for the idol, saw holiness in its compact form and kept in close to her for many years to come.

One day when she was about 5 years old, Mira saw a marriage party of bridegroom. There was loud music. Mira asked her mother about it. Her mother explained to her what it was all about and hearing that little Mira wondered whom she would marry. Her mother jest fully said, " You have Lord Krishna as your husband." Mira took

this solemnly and started to regard Krishna as her bridegroom from that moment on. Mira now started to play with and think of Krishna as her dear husband. Sometime later, a wandering sage came to Merta. He had an idol of Lord Krishna with him. Before leaving the fortress town, he handed over the icon to Mira. He also told her how to adore the Lord Krishna. Mira was very grateful. Recalling her mother's words, Mira began to worship the idol of Krishna as she would serve her husband. Time passed and Mira's devotion to her Lord grew to such an extent that she began to see herself as married to him.

Be all that as it may, the historians tell us that Mira when in her teens, was married to Bhoja Raj, the crown prince of Mewar in 1516. Bhoja Raj, her husband was the elder son of Rana Sangha. It was clear that nobody in her in-laws family liked Mira's contradictory behavior because it put their dignity at stake. There were attempts to cause her suffering and there were even attempts to kill her. Her husband and father-in-law had a soft corner in their hearts for Mira, but to some extent Mira was a powerful Rajputani ultimately. She didn't allow any interference in her spiritual life. It was believed that she was already married to Krishna and had no interest in the families selfish settlement for kingdoms. To Mira, only truth and love of Lord Krishna mattered.

As ill-luck would have it, her husband had died in a battle after five years of marriage. He died before the death of Rana Sangha in 1528. In her poems, Mira speaks of herself as a virgin. According to historians, after the death of Bhoj Raj in battle, Mirabai refused to commit *sati*, or self-immolation. *Sati pratha* was very much popular at that time, where a widow sacrifices herself on her husband's pyre. It may be notable that during the rule of Vikramaditya, her brother-in-law, who became the ruler after the untimely death of her husband (Bhoj Raj), she suffered forceful opposition from her in-law's family. An attempt was made to poison her, but it had no effect on her as she was bound in love to Lord Krishna. A flower garland was sent to her which there was a snake in reality but she received it as a gift from Krishna and made a necklace out of it. Then her in-laws family decided to leave her to her parental house. However, her relatives too disowned her. So, Mira decided to go away from Rajasthan and go to Vrindavan, where her Lord had spent his days.

There are some incidents happened in Mirabai's life which brought a complete change in her spiritual interpretation. She came in touch with *Ravidas* in Kashi, the cobbler saint and was began by him into the approach of *Shabd Yoga*. Some states that *Raidas* was her guru but in actual *Raidas* and *Ravidas* are the names of one single person. It is only with the company of Ravidas that Mira could achieve her goal:

I kept searching for the secret Of that Realm,
but none could reveal it.
When Saint Raidas, my master, I met
He gave my soul the clue to that Eternal Abode.
Then I ascended and met my beloved;
And my anguish was finally allayed.
When Raidas, the perfect master, I met,
The severed twig joined again the tree.
My master revealed the sect of the Name,
The flame of Mira merged into the flame.

4. THE PADAS: (Vedic poetic meter).

Some of the padas sung by Mirabai is as follows:

mham mohana ro rupa lubhani |
sundara badana kamara dala locana,
bamkam citavana naina samani |
jamana kinare kanha dhenu caravan
bansi bajavan mithi boni |
tana mana dhana girdhara para varam
carana kamvala mira bilamani ||

[Mira addressed Lord Krishna's eyes as soft as rose petals. He piping away when his cows are grazed near Yamuna river. She surrendered herself totally to Lord Krishna. Her thoughts got wings to embrace him.]

mam girdhara rangarati saiyam main giradhara rangarati |
pacaramga cola pahera sakhi mai
jharamita khelna jati |
va jharamita mam milyo samvaro,
khola mili tana gati |
jinake piya paradesa basata haim,
likha likha bhejem pati |
mere piya mere hiya basata hai,
na kahu ati jati ||

[Mira said that my heart is absorbed in Krishna's love. I wrap my eyes to play hide-and-peek. I saw my Krishna there and gave my body to him for keep. Other may send letters to reveal their love but I don't need to go anywhere as I have my lover in my heart.]

*piya itani binati suno mori |
aurana sum rasa batiyam karata ho,
hama se rahe cita cori |
tuma bina mere aura na koi,
main saranagata tori |
avana kaha gaye ajahum na aye,
divasa rahe aba thori |
mira ke prabhu kaba re miloge,
araja karum kara jori ||*

[Mira prayed to her lover that why you give yourself to others but when its my turn why you turn away ? If you refused me then who is going to give me shelter to live ? You promised me that you would come but why you have still stayed away from me ? I am waiting for you, Lord Girdhara, when will you come to me? Do not delay any more to come.]

5. DEATH:

Mira, however, was too absorbed in her love for Lord Krishna and leave the worldly life, family life, friends and others. It is said that the Lord Krishna finally absorbed her in Him at the Dwarka temple.

6. CONCLUSION:

Like all other saints, Mirabai also gives importance to only human birth which she narrates as a rare chance to achieve self-determination from the infinite cycle of birth and death. She believes that one cannot realize the lord without any one's guidance who has himself absorbed into the lord.

REFERENCES:

1. Dr. Prabhat, *Mirabai (Shodh Prabandh)*, Yashodra Modi, Delhi, 1965.
2. Krishandev Jhari, *Krishan Kaav of Middle age*, Shardha publisher, Delhi, 1976.
3. Kuldeep Singh Sethi, *Mirabai -Life and Poetry*, Kuldeep press, Amritsar, 1956.
4. Ragini Partap, *Contribution of Spiritual Practice of Meera and Haridas in Music*, Shalab publication, Meerut, 2012.
5. Ram Chandra Verma, *Kishan Kaav of Medieval Period*, Surya publisher, Delhi, 1974.
6. S.R. Bakshi, Sangha Mittra, *Encyclopedia of Saints of India (Mirabai)*, Criterion publications, New Delhi, 2002.