

Classic Poetry Series

Mirabai
- poems -

Publication Date:

2012

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Mirabai(1498 - 1546)

Meerabai or Mirabai (alternate orthographies: Meera, Mira, Meera Bai) (Hindi:मीराबाई Bengali: মীরাবাই;) was an aristocratic Hindu mystical singer and devotee of Lord Krishna from Rajasthan and one of the most significant figures of the Sant tradition of the Vaishnava bhakti movement. Some 1,200–1,300 prayerful songs or bhajans attributed to her are popular throughout India and have been published in several translations worldwide. In the bhakti tradition, they are in passionate praise of Lord Krishna.

Details of her life, which has been the subject of several films, are pieced together from her poetry and stories recounted by her community and are of debatable historical authenticity, particularly those that connect her with the later Tansen. On the other hand, the traditions that make her a disciple of Guru Ravidas who disputed with Rupa Goswami are consonant with the usual account of her a queen of Rajasthan who is known more for her devotion than her political position. There are so many stories about Mira Bai that it is very difficult to tell the facts of her life from legend. She is the most famous of the women Bhakta poets of north India.

Biography

Meera, a Rajput princess was born in Kudki (Kurki), a little village near Merta City, which is presently in the Nagaur district of Rajasthan in northwest India. Her father, jai Singh aman, was a friend of the Rathore clan, the son of Rao Duda of Merta. Rao Duda was son of Rao Jodha of Mandore, founder of mumbai.

As an infant Meera became deeply enamored of an iconic idol of Krishna owned by a visiting holy man; she was inconsolable until she possessed it and probably kept it all her life. (But some myths say that Meera saw a wedding procession of a bride-groom and asked her mother about her husband, then her mother took her in front of the family deity Lord Krishna.) Then she was just five years old. She was highly influenced by her father as he was a sole worshipper of Krishna. But because she would not be able to keep the Lord happy the holy man took away the idol. Then she, her friend Lalita and her male cousin , Jaimal, went to the holy man or saint's house to get the idol back. When they went they saw that whatever the saint was offering to the Lord was not accepted. Then some ancient myths say that the idol started crying. Then next day the idol was given back to Meera and since then it remained with her. This made a bond between her and Lord and she was called "stone lover". She even organized a marriage with the idol. And she considered herself as spouse of Lord Krishna.

Meera's marriage was arranged at an early age, traditionally to Prince Bhoj Raj, the eldest son of Rana Sanga of Chittor. She was not happy with her marriage as she considered herself already married to Krishna. Her new family did not approve of her piety and devotion when she refused to worship their family deity- Shiva.

The Rajputana had remained fiercely independent of the Delhi Sultanate, the Islamic regime that otherwise ruled Hindustan after the conquests of Timur. But in the early 16th century AD the central Asian conqueror Babur laid claim to the Sultanate and some Rajputs supported him while others ended their lives in battle with him. Her husband's death in battle (in 1527 AD) was only one of a series of losses Meera experienced in her twenties. She appears to have despaired of loving anything temporal and turned to the eternal, transforming her grief into a passionate spiritual devotion that inspired in her countless songs drenched with separation and longing.

Meera's love to Krishna was at first a private thing but at some moment it overflowed into an ecstasy that led her to dance in the streets of the city. Her brother-in-law, the new ruler of Chittorgarh, was Vikramaditya, an ill-natured youth who strongly objected to Meera's fame, her mixing with commoners and carelessness of feminine modesty. There were several attempts to poison her. Her sister-in-law Udabai is said to have spread defamatory gossip.

According to some myths Meera's brother-in-law Vikramaditya, who later became king of Chittor, after Bhojraj's death, tried to harm Meera in many ways, such as:

- * The famous one is that he mixed poison in the Prasadam or chandanamritam of Krishna and made her drink it. But by God's grace, Krishna changed it to Amrit.
- * He pinned iron nails in Meera's bed, but, again by God's grace they turned into rose petals.
- * He put a snake in a flower basket and told her that it was a gift from him to her Lord, but when she opened it it actually became a gift- a garland.

There are many more in a similar vein.

At some time Meera declared herself a disciple of the guru Ravidas ("guru miliyaa raidasjee") and left for the centre of Krishnaism, Vrindavan. She considered herself to be a reborn gopi, Lalita, mad with love for Krishna. Folklore informs us of a particular incident where she expressed her desire to engage in a discussion about spiritual matters with Rupa Goswami, a direct disciple of Chaitanya and one of the foremost saint of Vrindavan that time who, being a renunciate

celibate, refused to meet a woman. Meera replied that the only true man (purusha) in this universe is Lord Krishna. She continued her pilgrimage, "danced from one village to another village, almost covering the whole north of India". One story has her appearing in the company of Kabir in Kashi, once again causing affront to social mores. She seems to have spent her last years as a pilgrim in Dwarka, Gujarat. It is said that Mirabai disappeared into the Dwarkadhish Murti (Image of Lord Krishna) in front of a full audience of onlookers.

 Poetry

Meera's songs are in a simple form called a pada (verse), a term used for a small spiritual song, usually composed in simple rhythms with a repeating refrain, collected in her Padavali. The extant versions are in a Rajasthani and Braj, a dialect of Hindi spoken in and around Vrindavan (the childhood home of Krishna), sometimes mixed with Rajasthani.

"That dark dweller in Braj
Is my only refuge.
O my companion, worldly comfort is an illusion,
As soon you get it, it goes.
I have chosen the indestructible for my refuge,
Him whom the snake of death will not devour.
My beloved dwells in my heart all day,
I have actually seen that abode of joy.
Meera's lord is Hari, the indestructible.
My lord, I have taken refuge with you, your maidservant"

Although Meera is often classed with the northern Sant bhaktis who spoke of a formless divinity, there is no doubt that she presents Krishna as the historical master of the Bhagavad Gita who is, even so, the perfect Avatar of the eternal, who is omnipresent but particularly focused in his icon and his temple. She speaks of a personal relationship with Krishna as her lover, lord and master. The characteristic of her poetry is complete surrender. Her longing for union with Krishna is predominant in her poetry: she wants to be "coloured with the colour of dusk" (the symbolic colour of Krishna).

 English Versions

Alston and Subramanian have published selections with English translation in India. Schelling and Landes-Levi have offered anthologies in the USA. Snell has presented parallel translations in his collection *The Hindi Classical Tradition*. Sethi

has selected poems which Mira composed presumably after she came in contact with Saint Ravidas. and Meera Pakeerah.

Some bhajans of Meera have been rendered by Robert Bly in his *Mirabai Versions* (New York; Red Ozier Press, 1984). Bly has also collaborated with Jane Hirshfield on *Mirabai: Ecstatic Poems*. Dr Prayag Narayan Misra has presented more than 20 devotional poems—available in both Hindi and English languages.

A Cowherding Girl

The plums tasted
sweet to the unlettered desert-tribe girl-
but what manners! To chew into each! She was ungainly,
low-caste, ill mannered and dirty,
but the god took the
fruit she'd been sucking.
Why? She'd knew how to love.
She might not distinguish
splendor from filth
but she'd tasted the nectar of passion.
Might not know any Veda,
but a chariot swept her away-
now she frolics in heaven, ecstatically bound
to her god.
The Lord of Fallen Fools, says Mira,
will save anyone
who can practice rapture like that-
I myself in a previous birth
was a cowherding girl
at Gokul.

Mirabai

A Great Yogi

In my travels I spent time with a great yogi.
Once he said to me.
"Become so still you hear the blood flowing
through your veins."

One night as I sat in quiet,
I seemed on the verge of entering a world inside so vast
I know it is the source of
all of
us.

Mirabai

A Limb Just Moved

You taught Your songs to the birds first,
why was that?

And You practised Your love in the hearts of animals
before You created man,

I know the planets talk at night
and tell secrets
about
You.

A limb just moved before me,
the beauty of this world
is causing me to
weep

[Translated by Daniel Ladinsky]

Mirabai

All I Was Doing Was Breathing

Something has reached out and taken in the beams of my eyes.
There is a longing, it is for his body, for every hair of that dark body.
All I was doing was being, and the Dancing Energy came by my house.
His face looks curiously like the moon, I saw it from the side, smiling.
My family says: 'Don't ever see him again!' And they imply things in a low voice.
But my eyes have their own life; they laugh at rules, and know whose they are.
I believe I can bear on my shoulders whatever you want to say of me.
Mira says: Without the energy that lifts mountains, how am I to live?

Mirabai

Clouds

Clouds -

I watched as they ruptured,
ash black and pallid I saw mountainous clouds
split and spew rain
for two hours.

Everywhere water, plants and rainwater,
a riot of green on the earth.

My lover's gone off
to some foreign country,
sopping wet at our doorway

I watch the clouds rupture.

Mira says, nothing can harm him.

This passion has yet
to be slaked.

Mirabai

Come To My Pavilion

Come to my pavilion, O my King.
I have spread a bedmade of
delicately selected buds and blossoms,
And have arrayed myself in bridal garb
From head to toe.
I have been Thy slave during many births,
Thou art the be-all of my existence.
Mira's Lord is Hari, the Indestructible.
Come, grant me Thy sight at once.

Mirabai

Dark Friend, What Can I Say?

Dark Friend, what can I say?
This love I bring
from distant lifetimes is ancient,
do not revile it.
Seeing your elegant body
I am ravished.
Visit our courtyard, hear the women
singing old hymns
On the square I've laid
out a welcome of teardrops,
body and mind I surrendered ages ago,
taking refuge
wherever your feet pass.
Mira flees from lifetime to lifetime,
your virgin.

Mirabai

Do Not Leave Me

Do not leave me alone, a helpless woman.
My strength, my crown,
I am empty of virtues,
You, the ocean of them.
My heart's music, you help me
In my world-crossing.
You protected the king of the elephants.
You dissolve the fear of the terrified.

Where can I go? Save my honour
For I have dedicated myself to you
And now there is no one else for me.

Mirabai

Drink The Nectar

Drink the nectar of the Divine Name, O human! Drink the nectar of the Divine Name!

Leave the bad company, always sit among righteous company. Hearken to the mention of God (for your own sake).

Concupiscence, anger, pride, greed, attachment: wash these out of your consciousness.

Mira's Lord is the Mountain-Holder, the suave lover. Soak yourself in the dye of His colour.

Mirabai

Friend, Without That Dark Raptor

Friend, without that Dark raptor
I could not survive.
Mother-in-law shrills at me,
her daughter sneers,
the prince stumbles about in a permanent fury.
Now they've bolted my door
and mounted a guard.
But who could abandon a love
developed through uncounted lifetimes?
The Dark One is Mirabai's lord,
who else could
 slake her desire?

[Translated by Andrew Schelling]

Mirabai

Go To That Impenetrable Realm

Go to that impenetrable realm
That death himself trembles to look upon.
There plays the fountain of love
With swans sporting on its waters.

There the company of holy men is available,
And one may talk of spiritual knowledge.
There one can mediate on Shyam
And purify one's mind.

There one may bind on
The anklets of good-conduct,
And dance the dance of inner contentment.

There one may adopt a headpiece of gold
And the sixteen kinds of adornment,
Let there be love for Shyam
And indifference to all else.

[Translated by A.J. Alston]

Mirabai

I Am Mad With Love

I am mad with love
And no one understands my plight.
Only the wounded
Understand the agonies of the wounded,
When the fire rages in the heart.
Only the jeweller knows the value of the jewel,
Not the one who lets it go.
In pain I wander from door to door,
But could not find a doctor.
Says Mira: Harken, my Master,
Mira's pain will subside
When Shyam comes as the doctor.

Mirabai

I Am Pale With Longing For My Beloved;

I am pale with longing for my beloved;
People believe I am ill.
Seizing on every possible pretext,
I try to meet him 'by accident.'

They have sent for a country doctor;
He grabs my arm and prods it;
How can he diagnose my pain?
It's in my heart that I am afflicted.

Go home, country doctor,
Don't address me by my name;
It's the name of God that has wounded me,
Don't force your medicines on me.

The sweetness of his lips is a pot of nectar,
That's the only curd for which I crave;
Mira's Lord is Giridhar Naagar.
He will feed me nectar again and again.

[Translated by Nita Ramaiya]

Mirabai

I am true to my Lord

I am true to my Lord,
O my companions, there is nothing to be ashamed of now
Since I have been seen dancing openly.

In the day I have no hunger
At night I am restless and cannot sleep.
Leaving these troubles behind, I go to the other side;
A hidden knowledge has taken hold of me.

My relations surround me like bees.
But Mira is the servant of her beloved Giridhar,
And she cares nothing that people mock her.

English version by F. E. Keay

Mirabai

I Danced Before My Giridhara

I danced before my Giridhara.
Again and again I dance
To please that discerning critic,
And put His former love to the test.
I put on the anklets
Of the love of Shyam,
And behold! My Mohan stays true.
Worldly shame and family custom
I have cast to the winds.
I do not forget the beauty of the Beloved
Even for an instant.
Mira is dyed deeply in the dye of Hari.

Mirabai

I Do Not Care About Social Norms

I will fasten the bells of his love to my feet
And dance in front of Girdhar.
Dancing and dancing I will please his eyes;
My love is an ancient one.
My love is the only truth.

I do not care about social norms
Nor do I keep my family's honour.
I cannot forget, even for a moment,
The beauty of my lover.
I am dyed in Hari's colour.

[Translated by Shreprakash Kurl]

Mirabai

I Have Found

I have found, yes, I have found the wealth of the Divine Name's gem.
My true guru gave me a priceless thing. With his grace, I accepted it.
I found the capital of my several births; I have lost the whole rest of the world.
No one can spend it, no one can steal it. Day by day it increases one and a quarter times.
On the boat of truth, the boatman was my true guru. I came across the ocean of existence.
Mira's Lord is the Mountain-Holder, the suave lover, of whom I merrily, merrily sing.

Mirabai

I Have Found My Guru

I have found a guru in Raidas, he has
given me the pill of knowledge.

I lost the honor of the royal family, I
went astray with the sadhus.

I constantly rise up, go to God's
temple, and dance, snapping my
fingers.

I don't follow the norms as an oldest
daughter-in-law, I have thrown
away the veil.

I have taken refuge with the great
guru, and snapped my fingers at
the consequences.

Mirabai

I Send Letters

I send letters to my Beloved,
The dear Krishna.
But He sends no message of reply,
Purposely preserving silence.
I sweep his path in readiness
And gaze and gaze
Till my eyes turn blood-shot.
I have no peace by night or day,
My heart is fit to break.
O my Master, You were my companion
In former births.
When will you come?

Mirabai

I Will Sing The Praises Of Hari

We do not get a human life
Just for the asking.
Birth in a human body
Is the reward for good deeds
In former births.
Life waxes and wanes imperceptibly,
It does not stay long.
The leaf that has once fallen
Does not return to the branch.
Behold the Ocean of Transmigration.
With its swift, irresistible tide.
O Lal Giridhara, O pilot of my soul,
Swiftly conduct my barque to the further shore.
Mira is the slave of Lal Giridhara.
She says: Life lasts but a few days only.

Life in the world is short,
Why shoulder an unnecessary load
Of worldly relationships?
Thy parents gave thee birth in the world,
But the Lord ordained thy fate.
Life passes in getting and spending,
No merit is earned by virtuous deeds.
I will sing the praises of Hari
In the company of the holy men,
Nothing else concerns me.
Mira's Lord is the courtly Giridhara,
She says: Only by Thy power
Have I crossed to the further shore.

Mirabai

I Write Of That Journey

I remember how my mother would hold me.
I would look up at her sometimes and see her weep.

I understand now what was happening.
Love so strong a force
it broke the
cage,

and she disappeared from everything
for a blessed
moment.

All actions have evolved
From the taste of flight;
the hope of freedom
moves our cells
and limbs.

Unable to live on the earth,
Mira ventured out alone in the sky -
I write of that journey
of becoming as
free as
God.

Don't forget love;
it will bring all the madness you need
to unfurl yourself across
the universe.

Mirabai

In A Sudden

On a sudden,
the sight,
Your look of light,
stills all,

The curd-pot
falls to the ground.

Parents and
brothers
all call a halt.

Prise out, they say,
this thing from your heart.
You've lost your path.

Says Meera:
Who but you
can see in the dark
of a heart?

Mirabai

It's True I Went To The Market

My friend, I went to the market and bought the Dark One.
You claim by night, I claim by day.
Actually I was beating a drum all the time I was buying him.
You say I gave too much; I say too little.
Actually, I put him on a scale before I bought him.
What I paid was my social body, my town body, my family body, and all my
inherited jewels.
Mirabai says: The Dark One is my husband now.
Be with me when I lie down; you promised me this in an earlier life.

[Translated by Robert Bly]

Mirabai

Keep Up Your Promise

Take my arm
and keep up your promise!
They call you the refugeless refuge,
they call you redeemer of outcasts.
Caught in a riptide
in the sea of becoming,
without your support I'm a shipwreck!
You reveal yourself age after age
and free the beggar
from her affliction.

Dark One, Mira is clutching your feet,
at stake is your honor!

Mirabai

Life In The World Is Short

Life in the world is short,

Why shoulder an unnecessary load

Of worldly relationships?

Thy parents gave thee birth in the world,

But the Lord ordained thy fate.

Life passes in getting and spending,

No merit is earned by virtuous deeds.

I will sing the praises of Hari

In the company of the holy men,

Nothing else concerns me.

Mira's Lord is the courtly Giridhara,

[Translated by A.J. Alston]

Mirabai

Listen

Listen, my friend, this road is the heart opening,
kissing his feet, resistance broken, tears all night.

If we could reach the Lord through immersion in water,
I would have asked to be born a fish in this life.

If we could reach Him through nothing but berries and wild nuts
then surely the saints would have been monkeys when they came from the
womb!

If we could reach him by munching lettuce and dry leaves
then the goats would surely get to the Holy One before us!

If the worship of stone statues could bring us all the way,
I would have adored a granite mountain years ago.

Mirabai

Mine Is Gopal

Mine Is Gopal

Mine is Gopal, the Mountain-Holder; there is no one else.

On his head he wears the peacock-crown: He alone is my husband.

Father, mother, brother, relative: I have none to call my own.

I've forsaken both God, and the family's honor: what should I do?

I've sat near the holy ones, and I've lost shame before the people.

I've torn my scarf into shreds; I'm all wrapped up in a blanket.

I took off my finery of pearls and coral, and strung a garland of wildwood flowers.

With my tears, I watered the creeper of love that I planted;

Now the creeper has grown spread all over, and borne the fruit of bliss.

The churner of the milk churned with great love.

When I took out the butter, no need to drink any buttermilk.

I came for the sake of love-devotion; seeing the world, I wept.

Mira is the maidservant of the Mountain-Holder:

Now with love He takes me across to the further shore.

Mirabai

Mine Is The Lifter Of Mountains

Mine is the lifter of mountains, the
cowherd, and none other.

O sadhus! there is no other--I have seen
the whole world.

I left brothers, I left kindred, I left
all I had.

Sitting near the sadhus, I lost worldly shame.

I looked at the devotees and I was one with
them; I looked at the world and wept.

With tears I watered love's creeper
and it took root.

I churned the milk, drew out the ghee
and threw away the whey.

Rana sent a cup of poison; I drank it
and stayed ecstatic.

Mira's attachment is strong--what was to
happen has happened.

O friend, I cannot live without the
delightgiver.

Mother-in-law fights, my sister-in-law

teases,

The Rana remains angry.

They have a watchman sitting at the door,

and a lock fastened on it.

Why should I give up my first love,

the love of my former life?

None else pleases me.

Mirabai

Mira Danced With Ankle Bells

Mira danced with ankle-bells on her feet.

People said Mira was mad; my mother-in-law

said I ruined the family reputation.

Rana sent me a cup of poison and Mira

drank it laughing.

I dedicated my body and soul at the feet of Hari.

I am thirsty for the nectar of the sight of him.

Mira's lord is Giridhar Nagar; I will

come for refuge to him.

Mirabai

Mira is Steadfast

I will not be restrained now, O Rana,
Despite all you do to block my path.

I have torn off the veil of worldly shame;
Only the company of Saints is dear to me.

Merta, my parents' home, I have left for good.
My surat and nirat, awakened,
Now shine bright.

My master has revealed to me
The mirror within my own body;
Now I'll sing and dance in ecstasy.

Keep to your self your gems and jewelry;
I have discarded them all, O Rana.

My true Lord I have come to behold;
None knows of this wealth within the body.

I fancy not your forts and palaces
Nor want silken robes wrought with gold.

Mira, unadorned and unbedecked,
Roams intoxicated in the Lord's love.

English version by V. K. Sethi

Mirabai

Mira Knows Why

The earth looked at Him and began to dance.
Mira knows why, for her soul too
is in love.

If you cannot picture God
in a way that always
strengthens
you,

You need to read
more of my
poems

[Translated by Daniel Ladinsky]

Mirabai

No One Knows My Invisible Life

No one knows my invisible life.
Pain
and madness for Rama.
Our wedding bed is high up
in the gallows.
Meet him?
If the dark healer comes,
we'll negotiate the hurt.
I love the man who takes care
of cows. The cowherd.
Cowherd and dancer.
My eyes are drunk,
worn out from making love
with him. We are one.
I am now his dark color.
People notice me, point fingers at me.
They see my desire,
since I'm walking about like a lunatic.
I'm wiped out, gone.
Yet no one knows I live with my prince,
the cowherd.
The palace can't contain me.
I leave it behind.
I couldn't care less about gossip
or my royal name.
I'll be with him
in all his gardens.

[Translated by Willis Barnstone]

Mirabai

Nothing Is Really Mine Except Krishna.

Nothing is really mine except Krishna.
O my parents, I have searched the world
And found nothing worthy of love.
Hence I am a stranger amidst my kinfolk
And an exile from their company,
Since I seek the companionship of holy men;
There alone do I feel happy,
In the world I only weep.
I planted the creeper of love
And silently watered it with my tears;
Now it has grown and overspread my dwelling.
You offered me a cup of poison
Which I drank with joy.
Mira is absorbed in contemplation of Krishna,
She is with God and all is well!

*

O my King, my father, nothing delights me more
Than singing the praises of Krishna.
If thou art wrath,
then keep thy kingdom and thy palace,
For if God is angry, where can I dwell?
Thou didst send me a cup of poison and a black cobra,
Yet in all I saw only Krishna!
Mira is drunk with love, and is wedded to the Lord!

*

The heart of Mira is entangled
In the beauty of the feet of her Guru;
Nothing else causes her delight!
He enabled her to be happy in the drama of the world;
The Knowledge he gave her dried up
The ocean of being and becoming.
Mira says: My whole world is Shri Krishna;
Now that my gaze is turned inward, I see it clearly

Mirabai

O I Saw Witchcraft Tonight

O I saw witchcraft tonight
in the region of Braj.
A milking girl going her rounds,
a pot on her head,
came face to face with the Dark One.
My friend, she is babbling,
can no longer say "buttermilk."
- Come get the Dark One, the Dark One!
A pot full of Shyam! -
In the overgrown lanes
of Vrindavan forest
the Enchanter of Hearts fixed his
eye on this girl,
then departed.
Mira's lord is hot, lovely
and raven -
tonight she saw witchcraft
at Braj.

[Translated by Robert Bly]

Mirabai

O My Friends

O my friends,
What can you tell me of Love,
Whose pathways are filled with strangeness?
When you offer the Great One your love,
At the first step your body is crushed.
Next be ready to offer your head as his seat.
Be ready to orbit his lamp like a moth giving in to the light,
To live in the deer as she runs toward the hunter's call,
In the partridge that swallows hot coals for love of the moon,
In the fish that, kept from the sea, happily dies.
Like a bee trapped for life in the closing of the sweet flower,
Mira has offered herself to her Lord.
She says, the single Lotus will swallow you whole.

[Translated by Jane Hirshfield]

Mirabai

O My Mind

O my mind,
Worship the lotus feet of the Indestructible One!
Whatever thou seest twixt earth and sky
Will perish.
Why undertake fasts and pilgrimages?
Why engage in philosophical discussions?
Why commit suicide in Banaras?
Take no pride in the body,
It will soon be mingling with the dust.
This life is like the sporting of sparrows,
It will end with the onset of night.
Why don the ochre robe
And leave Home as a sannyasi?
Those who adopt the external garb of a Jogi,
But do not penetrate to the secret,
Are caught again in the net of rebirth.
Mira's Lord is the courtly Giridhara.
Deign to sever, O Master.
All the knots in her heart.

Mirabai

Only He Knows The Bitterness Of Love

Only he knows the bitterness of love

Who has deeply felt its pangs.

When you are in trouble

No one comes near you:

When fortune smiles.

All come to share the joy.

Love shows no external wound.

But the pain pervades every pore

Devotee Mira offers her body

As a sacrifice to Giridhara for ever.

[Translated by A.J. Alston]

Mirabai

Out In A Downpour

Out in a downpour
in a sopping wet
skirt.

And you have gone to a distant country.
Unbearable heart,
letter after letter
just asking when,
my lord, when
 are you coming?

[Translated by Andrew Schelling]

Mirabai

Sleep

Sleep has not visited me the whole night,
Will the dawn ever come?

O my companion,
Once I awoke with a start from a dream.
Now the remembrance from that vision
Never fades.

My life is ebbing as I choke and sigh,
When will the Lord of the Afflicted come
I have lost my senses and gone mad,
But the Lord knows my secret.
He who deals out life and death
Knows the secret of Mira's pain.

Mirabai

Strange Are The Decrees Of Fate

Strange are the decrees of fate.

Behold the large eyes of the deer!
Yet he is forced to roam the forests.

The harsh crane has brilliant plumage,
While the sweet-voiced cuckoo is black.

The rivers flow in pure streams,
But the sea makes them salt.

Fools sit on thrones as kings,
While the wise beg their bread.

Mira's lord is the courtly Giridhara:
The king persecutes the Bhaktas.

[From 'The devotional poems of Mirabai' and translated by A.J. Alston]

Mirabai

Strange Is The Path When You Offer Love

Do not mention the name of love,
O my simple-minded companion.
Strange is the path
When you offer your love.
Your body is crushed at the first step.

If you want to offer love
Be prepared to cut off your head
And sit on it.
Be like the moth,
Which circles the lamp and offers its body.
Be like the deer, which, on hearing the horn,
Offers its head to the hunter.
Be like the partridge,
Which swallows burning coals
In love of the moon.
Be like the fish
Which yields up its life
When separated from the sea.
Be like the bee,
Entrapped in the closing petals of the lotus.

Mira's lord is the courtly Giridhara.
She says: Offer your mind
To those lotus feet.

Mirabai

That Dark Dweller In Braj

That dark Dweller in Braj
Is my only refuge.
O my companion,
Worldly comfort is an illusion,
As soon you get it, it goes.
I have chosen the Indestructible for my refuge,
Him whom the snake of death
Will not devour.
My Beloved dwells in my heart,
I have actually seen that Abode of Joy.
Mira's Lord is Hari, the Indestructible.
My Lord, I have taken refuge with Thee,
Thy slave.

Mirabai

The Arrow Of His Glance

Friend, the arrow of his glance struck
my eyes;

Its point pierced my heart (and) his
sweet image entered my soul.

For a long time I have been staying
(here) watching the road, standing
at my house.

My life clings to (my) dark beloved,
(he is) a life-giving herb.

Mira says I am sold into the hands of
Giridhar, but people say I am loose.

Mirabai

The Beloved Comes Home

The one I longed for has come home;
The raging fire of separation is quenched.
Now I rejoice with Him, I sing in bliss.

The peacocks at the cloud's roar
Dance with unbound joy;
I rejoice in ecstasy
At the sight of my Beloved.

I am absorbed in His love;
My misery of wandering
In the world has ended.
The lily bursts into bloom
At the sight of the full moon;
Seeing Him, my heart blossoms in joy.
Peace permeates this body of mine;
His arrival has filled my home with bliss.

That very Lord has become my own
Who is ever the redeemer of His devotees.
Mira's heart, scorched by the blaze of separation,
Has become cool and refreshed;
The pain of duality has vanished.

Mirabai

The Dagger

The dagger of love has pierced my heart.
I was going to the river to fetch water,
A golden pitcher on my head.
Hariji has bound me
By the thin thread of love,
And wherever He draws me,
Thither I go.
Mira's Lord is the courtly Giridhara:
This is the nature
Of his dark and beautiful form.

Mirabai

The Dark One Is Krishna

Thick overhead
clouds of the monsoon,
a delight to this feverish heart.
Season of rain,
season of uncontrolled whispers---the Dark One's returning!
O swollen heart,
O sky brimming with moisture---
tongued lightning first
and then thunder,
convulsive spatters of rain
and then wind, chasing the summertime heat.

Mira says: Dark One,
I've waited---
it's time to take my songs
into the street.

Mirabai

The Five-Coloured Garment

I am infused in the Lord's hue, O friend.
Pray, get my garment dyed in five colours
so I may go and play in the arbour.
within the alcove I will meet my Master;
Shedding all falsity, I'll sing in joy.

The sun will perish, so too the moon;
Earth and sky will exist no more.
Air and water will also go;
The Eternal alone will there be.

Of surat and nirat make the lamp,
And let thy longing be the wick.
In this lamp pour the oil from love's mart;
Day and night it will keep burning bright.

They write letters whose spouses are afar.
My Beloved resides in my heart;
I need go nowhere to search for Him.

I live not with my parents,
Nor with my in-laws.
Ever do I live in the Word
My Master blessed me with.

Not mine nor thine is this house, O friend;
Mira lives absorbed in the Lord's hue.

English version by V. K. Sethi

Mirabai

The Heat Of Midnight Tears

Listen, my friend, this road is the heart opening,
Kissing his feet, resistance broken, tears all night.

If we could reach the Lord through immersion in water,
I would have asked to be born a fish in this life.
If we could reach Him through nothing but berries and wild nuts,
Then surely the saints would have been monkeys when they came from the
womb!
If we could reach him by munching lettuce and dry leaves,
Then the goats would surely go to the Holy One before us!

If the worship of stone statues could bring us all the way,
I would have adored a granite mountain years ago.

Mirabai says: The heat of midnight tears will bring you to God.

[Translated by Robert Bly]

Mirabai

The Music

My friend, the stain of the Great Dancer has penetrated my body.
I drank the cup of music, and I am hopelessly drunk.
Moreover I stay drunk, no matter what I do to become sober.
Rana, who disapproves, gave me one basket with a snake in it.
Mira folded the snake around her neck, it was a lover's necklace, lovely!
Rana's next gift was poison: 'This is something for you, Mira.'
She repeated the Holy Name in her chest, and drank it, it was good!
Every name He has is praise; that's the cup I like to drink, and only that.
'The Great Dancer is my husband,' Mira says, 'rain washes off all the other
colors.'

English version by Robert Bly

Mirabai

The Plums Tasted

The plums tasted
sweet to the unlettered desert-tribe girl-
but what manners! To chew into each! She was ungainly,
low-caste, ill mannered and dirty,
but the god took the
fruit she'd been sucking.
Why? She'd knew how to love.
She might not distinguish
splendor from filth
but she'd tasted the nectar of passion.
Might not know any Veda,
but a chariot swept her away-
now she frolics in heaven, ecstatically bound
to her god.
The Lord of Fallen Fools, says Mira,
will save anyone
who can practice rapture like that-
I myself in a previous birth
was a cowherding girl
at Gokul.

Mirabai

The Rainy Season

The rainy season is abroad
And the skirt of my dress is wet.
You have gone off to distant lands,
And my heart finds it unbearable.
I keep sending letters to my Beloved
Asking when He will return.
Mira's Lord is the courtly Giridhara:
O Krishna, O Brother of Balram,
Grant me thy sight.

Mirabai

The Saffron

The saffron of virtue and contentment
Is dissolved in the water-gun of love and affection.
Pink and red clouds of emotion are flying about,
Limitless colours raining down.
All the covers of the earthen vessel of my body are wide open;
I have thrown away all shame before the world.
Mira's Lord is the Mountain-Holder, the suave lover.
I sacrifice myself in devotion to His lotus feet.

Mirabai

Torn In Shreds

Mine is Gopal, the Mountain-Holder; there is no one else.
On his head he wears the peacock-crown: He alone is my husband.
Father, mother, brother, relative: I have none to call my own.
I've forsaken both God, and the family's honor: what should I do?
I've sat near the holy ones, and I've lost shame before the people.
I've torn my scarf into shreds; I'm all wrapped up in a blanket.
I took off my finery of pearls and coral, and strung a garland of wildwood
flowers.
With my tears, I watered the creeper of love that I planted;
Now the creeper has grown spread all over, and borne the fruit of bliss.
The churner of the milk churned with great love.
When I took out the butter, no need to drink any buttermilk.
I came for the sake of love-devotion; seeing the world, I wept.
Mira is the maidservant of the Mountain-Holder: now with love He takes me
across to the further shore.

~~~~~

mere to giridhara gupaala, duusaraa na koi |  
jaa ke sira mora mukuTa, mero pati soii ||  
taata, maata, bhraata, baMdhu, apanaa nahiM koi |  
daii, kula kii kaana, kyaa karegaa koi?  
saMtana Dhiga baiThi baiThi, loka laaja khoii ||  
chunarii ke kiye Tuuka Tuuka, liinha loii |  
motii utaara bana maalaa poii ||  
na jala siiMchi siiMchi prema beli boii |  
aba to beli phaila gaii, aanaMda phala hoii ||  
duudha kii mathaniyaa, prema se biloii |  
maakhana jaba liyo, ghaagha piye koi ||  
aaii maiM bhakti kaaja, jagata dekha roii |  
daasii miiraa.N giradhara prabhu taare aba moii ||

Mirabai

## Turn Back?

This infamy, O my Prince,  
is delicious!  
Some revile me,  
others applaud,  
I simply follow my incomprehensible road.  
A razor-thin path  
but you meet some good people,  
a terrible path but you hear a true word.

Turn back?  
Because the wretched stare and see nothing?  
O Mira's lord is noble and dark,  
and slanderers  
rake only themselves  
over the coals

Mirabai

# Unbreakable

Unbreakable, O Lord,  
Is the love  
That binds me to You:  
Like a diamond,  
It breaks the hammer that strikes it.

My heart goes into You  
As the polish goes into the gold.  
As the lotus lives in its water,  
I live in You.

Like the bird  
That gazes all night  
At the passing moon,  
I have lost myself dwelling in You.

O my Beloved - Return.

Mirabai

# We Do Not

We do not get a human life  
Just for the asking.  
Birth in a human body  
Is the reward for good deeds  
In former births.  
Life waxes and wanes imperceptibly,  
It does not stay long.  
The leaf that has once fallen  
Does not return to the branch.  
Behold the Ocean of Transmigration.  
With its swift, irresistible tide.  
O Lal Giridhara, O pilot of my soul,  
Swiftly conduct my barque to the further shore.  
Mira is the slave of Lal Giridhara.  
She says: Life lasts but a few days only.

Mirabai

# Why Mira Can'T Come Back To Her Old House

The colors of the Dark One have penetrated Mira's body; all the other colors washed out.

Making love with the Dark One and eating little, those are my pearls and my carnelians.

Meditation beads and the forehead streak, those are my scarves and my rings. That's enough feminine wiles for me. My teacher taught me this.

Approve me or disapprove me: I praise the Mountain Energy night and day.

I take the path that ecstatic human beings have taken for centuries.

I don't steal money, I don't hit anyone. What will you charge me with?

I have felt the swaying of the elephant's shoulders;

and now you want me to climb on a jackass?

Try to be serious

[Translated by Robert Bly]

Mirabai



# Your Look Of Light

On a sudden,  
the sight.  
Your look of light  
stills all,

stills  
all, The curd-pot  
falls to the ground.

Parents and  
brothers  
all call a halt.

Prise out, they say,  
this thing from your heart.  
You've lost your path.

Says Meera:  
Who but you  
can see in the dark  
of a heart?

Mirabai

# Your Slander Is Sweet

Rana, to me your slander is sweet.

Some praise me, some blame me. I

go the other way.

On the narrow path, I found God's

people. What should I turn back for?

I am learning wisdom among the

wise, and the wicked look at me

with malice.

Mira's Lord is Giridhar Nagar.

Let the wicked burn in the kitchen fire.

Mira's God is the lifter of mountains.

I don't like your strange world, Rana,

A world where there are no holy men,

and all the people are trash.

I have given up ornaments, given up

braiding my hair.

I have given up putting on kajal

(collyrium), and putting my hair up.

Mira's Lord is Giridhar Nagar; I have  
found a perfect bridegroom.

Mirabai