Poems
of
Mirabai

Dedicated to
Sant Kirpal Singh
“Perhaps the most remembered and quoted woman in the history of India is a sixteenth century poet, singer and saint called Mirabai, or Meera. Versions of her songs are sung today all over India, and she appears as a subject in films, books, dances, plays and paintings.

Mirabai's Rajputi grandfather, created the fortress city of Merta, where Mirabai's father, Ratan Singh, ruled. Mirabai was born in Merta about 1498. The family worshipped Vishnu as their primary deity.

Her mother died when Mirabai was about four, and Mirabai was raised and educated by her grandparents.

At age 13 or 18 (sources vary), Mirabai was married to a Ranjputi prince. Her husband died only a few years later.

His family was shocked that, first, she did not commit sati, burning herself alive on her husband's funeral pyre, as was considered proper for a Rajputi princess. Then they expected her to remain secluded as a widow, and to worship his family's deity, the goddess Durga or Kali.

Instead of following these traditional norms for a widowed Rajputi princess, Mirabai took up enthusiastic worship of Krishna as part of the Bhakti movement. She identified herself as the spouse of Krishna. Like many in the Bhakti movement, she ignored gender, class, caste, and religious boundaries, and spent time caring for the poor.

Mirabai's father and father-in-law were both killed as a result of a battle to turn away invading Muslims. Her practice of Bhakti worship horrified her in-laws and the new ruler of Mewar. The legends tell of multiple attempts on her life by Mirabai's late husband's family. In all of these attempts, she miraculously survived: a poisonous snake, a poisoned drink, and drowning.

Mirabai returned to her home city of Merta, but her family also opposed her turning from traditional religious practices to the new Bhakti worship of Krishna.

Mirabai's songs express her love and devotion to Krishna, almost always as Krishna's wife. The songs speak of both the joy and the pain of love.
After some years of wandering, Mirabai died in the year 1550.

Mirabai's willingness to sacrifice family respect and traditional gender, family, and caste restrictions, and to devote herself completely and enthusiastically to Krishna, made her an important role model in a religious movement that stressed ecstatic devotion and that rejected traditional divisions based on sex, class, caste, and creed.”
(http://womenshistory.about.com/od/hinduismandwomen/p/mirabai.htm)

Master Kirpal Singh referred to Mirabai as a “great saint”. The Master wrote the following in reference to Mirabai’s initiation by Ravi Das: “One great spiritual Master, Ravi Das, was a poor cobbler who lived on whatever he earned from his work. Mira Bai was a princess and also a queen by marriage, but she accepted him as her Guru.”
(http://www.ruhanisatsangusa.org/birthday.htm)

Mirabai - 1498-1550, India
O Master, what kind of love has been awakened in me?  
I am blessed with both the bliss of meeting You  
and the pain of Your separation.

O Master, what kind of love is this?  
The pain of separation has not left me,  
but still the happiness of Your memory is incessant.  
What kind of love has been awakened in me?
O Master, what kind of love is this?
I am suffering from the pain of separation, yet I am so ecstatic.
I am ecstatic and miserable at the same time.

O Master, what kind of love is this?
My body is burning with the fire of love.
My eyes are glowing with the light of love.
It seems that all the sins and sorrows and cravings
of my life have been used as fuel for the fire of this love.
Don't forget love; it will bring all the madness you need to unfurl yourself across the universe.

Come to meet me, my Magnificent One, I have fallen in love with Thy beauteous form. Enquire my name. I am known as she whom absence drove to madness.
One night as I walked in the desert the mountains rode on my shoulders and the sky became my heart, and the earth - my own body, I explored.

Every object began to wink at me, and Mira wisely calculated the situation, thinking: My charms must be at their height, now would be a good time to rush into His arms, maybe He won't drop me so quick.
As the lotus dies without water, as the night is blind without the moon, so is my heart without You, Beloved. I wander alone at night, driven by my longing for You. I hunger for You all the day, I thirst for You all the night. My grief is beyond words; my mind is beyond rest.

Come and end my grief, Beloved. Come and bring joy to my heart. You know my inmost secret; then look at me with eyes of love, Your slave for countless lives since the dawn of time.
I feel restless all the day and get no sleep at night. By constant waiting and watching have I grown lean like a thorn. The arrows of love have pierced my heart and I cannot for even a moment forget the love pangs.

Another night wasted. Years pass and not one sign. Mira is a slave to her Lord, her life one long night of craving.
Listen, my friend, this road is the heart opening, kissing His feet, resistance broken, tears all night.
Mirabai says:
The heat of midnight tears will bring you to God.

I beg you, Beloved Master, come to me at the last moment and meet me in death.
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.
I pray to meet Thee Beloved, when will Thou meet Thy humble maid, Mira? As the dawn in beauty breaks, I move out, every day, to seek Thee! Ages have I spent in quest of Thee, Beloved!

My eyes do ache for a sight of Thee! When, O when will Thou come, Beloved? Within me throbs the ache of longing and love for Thee! And I wander far and wide! I cry, who will cure my wounded heart?
To love the Master, O sister, is to love only sorrow. He murmurs sweet words while He’s with you, then forgets and departs. Mira says to her Lord, bring back Your beauty. When I can’t see You, that absence knifes open my heart.

I know no peace without seeing Thee, for I know the deep anguish in my heart. Over and over again I go to the housetop to see if Thou art coming; and my eyes have swollen red with weeping.
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 jeweler knows the value of the jewel, not the one who lets it go.

O friend, I sit alone while the world sleeps. In the palace that held love’s pleasure the abandoned one sits. She who once threaded a necklace of pearls is now stringing tears. He has left me. The night passes while I count stars. When will the hour arrive? This sorrow must end. Mira says: My Beloved Lord, please return.
The dagger of love has pierced my heart.
My Master has bound me by the thin thread of love,
and wherever He draws me, there I go.

Only he knows the bitterness of love who has deeply felt its pangs.
Love shows no external wound, but the pain pervades every pore.
Mira offers her body as a sacrifice to her Lord for ever.
O my companion, the Beloved shot an arrow that has pierced me through. The fire of longing is burning in my heart and my whole body is in torment. My roving mind cannot stir, fettered in the chains of love.

No one but myself and my Beloved knows the extent of my pain. I can do nothing, my companion, but weep copious tears. Mira says, “My Lord, unless You come my life cannot endure.”
O friends, I am mad with love, and no one sees.  
My mattress is thorns, is nails:  The Beloved spreads open His bedding elsewhere.  How can I sleep?  Abandonment scorches my heart.

Only those who have felt the knife can measure the wound’s deepness.  Only the jeweler knows the nature of the lost jewel.  
I have lost Him - anguish takes me from door to door,  
but no doctor answers.  Mira calls her Lord:  
O Master, only You can heal this pain.
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?
I’m not sure, dear friend, how this will go between my Lord and me. My dear Lover came to me. Then He slipped out of the courtyard, while I, unlucky as ever, was sleeping.

What I have now is separation. It hurts through the night and through the day. I am sad every moment of the day. Mirabai says: O God, You keep stealing away. You know once lovers come together, they should not be kept apart.
I am in one place now, and the next minute in another. I have no rest. I am like a person who has been stabbed, and no one can understand my condition of restlessness.

O crow, I am prepared to take out my heart and place it before you. Please take it to the place where my Beloved abides and eat it in His presence and before His eyes. My only attachment is to Naam. I have no other connections. O Mira, I am restless in separation from my Beloved.
I have been counting the stars and passing the whole night in wakefulness. When will the time of happiness come, O God! My Lord, meet me and be never separated from me.

O Lord, since You have been separated from me, I have been restless. If I listen to hymns in Your praise, my mind becomes restless, for I find solace only in songs of intense longing for You. With my eyes open wide I am looking at the path whence You will be coming and the night has become as long as half a year. O my friend, to whom should I relate the story of my separation and intense longing? It is cutting through my heart like a saw. When will Mira’s Lord meet her and give her joy by removing her anguish?
With my tears, I watered the creeper of love that I planted;
Now the creeper has grown and spread all over
and born the fruit of bliss.

Some absence inside me is eating me away.
You know a fish thrown on the bank does not go on breathing,
it flaps its tail up and down and dies. I go into the high trees and
listen for the Beloved’s flute. My dear husband and Lord,
find Mira now!
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.
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.
You taught Your songs to the birds first, why was that?
And You practiced 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.
O Master, give my Thy darshan. My heart is full of the sweet picture of my Lord, and it has become entangled in it.

Standing on the roof of my house I am looking at the path along which You will come. How can I remain alive without my Beloved?
Come to my pavilion, O my King. I have spread a bed made 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.
I will fasten the bells of His love to my feet and dance in front of my Beloved. 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 honor. I cannot forget, even for a moment, the beauty of my Lover. I am dyed in God's color.
Cruel parrot, did you suddenly remember the season only to hurt me?  I slept in my house, at last I slept - then your cry:
“Beloved!  Beloved!”

Salt to a wound!  Saw-blade cutting my heart!
You perch on your branch in a high tree, singing of love full-throated, and Mira wakes remembering she is alone.
Love in which there is laughter and sobbing, moaning, throbbing and clasping in tight embrace, that alone is liberation for me, I care for no other.

Where did You go, Holy One, after You left my body? Your flame jumped to the wick, and then You disappeared and left the lamp alone. You put the boat into the surf, and then walked inland, leaving the boat in the ocean of parting. Mira says: Tell me when You will come to meet me.
To be born in a human body is rare,  
don’t throw away the reward of your past good deeds.

Life passes in an instant - the leaf doesn’t go back to the branch.

The ocean of rebirth sweeps up all beings hard,  
pulls them into its cold-running, fierce, implacable currents.

My Lord, Your Name is the raft, the one safe-passage over.  
Take me quickly.

All the awake ones travel with Mira, singing the Name.  
She says with them: Get up, stop sleeping -  
the days of a life are short!
O my Beloved, I have felt the attraction of the holy Name.  
I have heard that those who take the Name are saved.  
I have earned no merit and have amassed much demerit through sin.

You recognize faith when You see it, and grant boons to those who seek refuge with a pure heart.  Mira is Your servant, accept her as Your own!
In all my lives You have been with me; whether day or night I remember. When You fall out of my sight, I am restless day and night, burning. I climb hilltops; I watch for signs of Your return; my eyes are swollen with tears. The ocean of life - that’s not genuine; the ties of family, the obligations to the world - they’re not genuine. It is Your beauty that makes me drunk.

I am dancing only for my Master, all I want is to please Him and keep His eyes. The gold chains I wear on my ankles are love of Him, my dancing dress is my faithfulness to Him. I’ve stripped off shame and family custom to go to the bed of the Beloved. Body and mind, Mira wears only the color of God.
I go to the house of my one true Lover. When I see His beauty, I only crave Him more. At dusk I go to Him, at dawn I return. Whatever His pleasure, day and night I am His.

The clothes He gives me, I wear. The food He offers, I eat. Where He wants me to be, I stay. If He wants to sell me, I want to be sold. Mira says, my love for the Beloved has lasted through many rebirths, without Him I scarcely breathe. She offers herself to Him in all of her lives.
My friend, He looked, and our eyes met; an arrow came in. My chest opened; what could it do? His image moved inside. I’ve been standing all morning in the door of my house, looking down the road. The One I love is an herb growing in secret places, an herb that heals all wounds.

My Master, the love that binds us cannot be broken. It is hard as the diamond that shatters the hammer that strikes it. As polish goes into the gold, my heart has gone into You. As a lotus lives in its water, I am rooted in You. Like the bird that gazes all night at the passing moon, I have blinded myself in giving my eyes to Your beauty. She who offers herself completely asks only this: That her Lord love Mira as fully as He is loved.
O Master, for a loving friend, Thy ways are devious indeed. I stand waiting for Him at the door, and sweep the path and thus my mind gains peace. Only Thou knowest my heart, and hence I breathe freely.

Add a curtain to your house; I am weak and half-mad. An arrow from His bow hit me; now I’m certifiably crazy. I’ve given body and soul to the saints; I hold on to the lotuses of their feet. The Lord has saved Mira; He knows well that she is His servant.
Friend, listen: this love doesn’t come or go.
One sip from the cup of that sweetness, the world starts to spin.
Now I’m drunk for life - unsoberable.

I’m associated now with the King’s court;
It must have been some work in a previous life.
My time of good luck is come; the ocean that stores jewels
is nearby.
Don’t go, don’t go.
I touch Your soles. I’m sold to You.
No one knows where to find the bhakti path, show me where to go.
I would like my own body to turn into a heap of incense and sandalwood and You set a torch to it.

When I’ve fallen down to gray ashes, smear me on Your shoulders and chest. Mira says: Beloved, I have some Light, I want to mingle it with Yours.
The colors of the Dark One (Krishna) 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 gemstones.

Meditation beads and the forehead streak, those are my scarves and my rings. That’s enough feminine wiles for me.

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?
Love has stained my body to the color of the One I love. When I dressed in the world’s five fabrics, I only played hide and seek - for disguised though I was, the Beloved caught me, and seeing His beauty, I offered Him all that I am.

Friends, let those whose Beloved is absent write letters - mine dwells in the heart, and neither enters nor leaves. Mira has given herself to her Lord. Day or night, she waits only for Him.
My Beloved threw me a glance like a dagger today. Since that moment, I am insane; I can’t find my body. The pain has gone through my arms and legs, and I can’t find my mind.

If He is gone, how shall I live? I can’t live without Him. Go and speak to the dagger-thrower: Say, Mira belongs to You.
O Master, I have heard that You save sinners, and rescue them from the miseries of worldly existence.

You remove the afflictions of Your devotees and remove the sufferings of the afflicted.

Says Mira: My Lord, You know my request. Why delay any further?
I stood on the path, no one saw my pain.
A guru passed. He gave me medicine, every pore found peace.

The only doctor is a Satguru.
His permanent residence, the House of Bliss.
I have grown pale like a betel leaf.  
People think that I am ailing.  I even fasted secretly in this separation from You.  My father called a doctor who felt my pulse.  
But the poor doctor cannot diagnose my malady.  
My trouble is in my heart.

O doctor, go back to your home and do not talk about me.  
I am burning on account of separation.  What medicine can you give me!  My body has become only bones and my throat is choked with sighs.  The ring on my finger can now fit over my wrist, 
I have grown so emaciated.
O Satguru, I scan the road searching for Thee day and night. 
My feet will not tread the difficult path: it is strange, 
and has many pitfalls.

A Master came to the city, but found not love in my heart and left. 
Artless as I was, I failed to entrap and hold Him. 
Since then I have searched for many days, 
but still He has not returned.

Come and quench the longing in my heart, 
a veritable fire is raging in my body. What can I do? 
Where shall I go?

Sister, tears have rendered my eyes useless.

My Lord, I long for Thee in my heart. 
Mira feels abandoned and perplexed. Without Thee, 
she can only pant and sigh.
Once they are fixed upon the Master my thirsty eyes do not waver. They drink in every atom of His body, ranging with anxious longing from head to toe.

Do not lose hold of such a gracious Master! Offer your body, mind and wealth to Him alone. Cherish His image in your heart. Come, my companion, look at His face, drink in the beauty with your eyes. Act only to please Him, in every way.
My thirsty eyes are longing for His sight. Whole days have I passed, sister, in scanning the road. The pain in my eyes is great. A cuckoo has been singing from a branch, and its song has pierced me deeply. The elders speak bitter words and crack jokes at my expense. But Mira is sold into God’s hands, His slave for birth upon birth.

Do not go off and abandon me, my Lord. Weak woman as I am, my Master is my strength.

I am quite without merit while my Guru possesses every virtue. His presence bejewels my heart.

You are the savior of the world and the remover of all afflictions. I place my ruined life in the shadow of Your protection.
Sister, behold how my Beloved has hardened His heart!
He said He would come, but has not done so.  That was His promise when He went.  Food, drink and my surroundings are all forgotten.  Why does my life go on?  Thy actions belie Thy words, my Master.  How could You have forgotten me?  Mira says: Without You I am heart-broken.

To fall in love with a Master is to court pain.  I loved, but it has brought me no joy.  The Master befriends no one.  Until I meet You again, I shall have no rest, day or night.
Never again in this world have I beheld beauty like Yours.
Mira says: My Lord, when shall we meet?
Great will be the joy of that meeting.

O Master, I know Your ways of love, know them well.
Mine is the Path of Love and Devotion, I know no other.
Why, having first plied me with nectar, do You serve me with poison now?
My Master, You have inspired me with love, where have You now gone? You have abandoned me, Your faithful companion, having lit the flame of love.

You have set the boat of love in motion and abandoned it on the ocean of longing. My Master, when can I meet You? Without You, I cannot survive.
O Master, why have You become angry with me?
Recount some of my faults, I am eager to hear. I have been Your slave for many births and You are my beloved Master.

Take my arm immediately, if only to preserve Your own reputation. O Master, they call You the Refuge of the Afflicted. You have promised to save the fallen. I am plunged in the ocean of transmigration without a support. Without You, I shall suffer a mighty disaster. You save Your devotees from their afflictions in every age, appearing before them to grant them release. Mira has taken refuge with You, and is grasping Your feet.
Redeem Your pledge, O Master.
The Beloved has come to my house.
After many an age of expectation, the abandoned one has found her Lover. The Beloved is compassionate and sent me a message.

My Beloved has come, every limb in my body throbs with joy. My love is for that Ocean of Love, the Beloved. His love has entrapped my eyes. Says Mira: He is joy abundant, I have enrowned Him on my brow.
I offer a thousand thanks to the astrologer who predicted my Beloved would come. My joy is overflowing, my soul has access to an incalculable storehouse of joy!

O my dear companion, now that I have seen the Lord, all my desires are fulfilled and my sufferings forgotten. My Master, the Ocean of Joy, Mira’s Lord, has entered her home.
May your soul be happy; journey joyfully.
(Rumi)

Home: http://kirpalsingh.org/Booklets.html

Kirpalct@yahoo.com