

## Classic Poetry Series

# Mirabai

- poems -

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## **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

## **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

## **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

## **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 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

## **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

## 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



## **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 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

## **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  
nows the secret of Mira's pain.

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 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 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

## **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

## **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