

Sublimity of Thought and Expression in Mira Bai

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ABSTRACT

Mira's poetry stands unique in the long tradition of Indian religious poetry. Mira's spiritual yearning, condensed effort and perfectly calibrated inquiry on the spiritual path presents her life as a convincing story of struggle and determination to reach and achieve the divine like the crystal-clear dew drop on the lotus petal. Mira carved a niche in the history of religion and she became an icon of supreme devotion and submission to God. Her poetry abounds with the āgār (dwelling) of pain and the ocean of rasa (essence) which make it sublime.

The present paper explores the sublimity of thought and expression in Mira's poetry. The first section details with Mira's life and Bhakti movement; the second, defines 'sublime' with special reference to Bhamaha and the third describes sublimity in Mira's poetry and the fourth concludes the discussion.

Keywords: Mira, Poetry, Sublimity.

I

Introduction

Mira Bai is an important figure in medieval Hindi literature. She is known to have crossed boundaries of caste, creed, colour showing great courage to become a *bhakta* (devotee) renouncing family honour and comfort. She earns a special honour incomparable with any other saint-poet of North India. Mira's fame spread far and wide. Her dauntless devotion and surrender to Lord Krishna; her radiance of spirit, self-confidence; evolved consciousness, concentrated effort to achieve the divine – is outstanding.

Mira Bai, a 16th century Indian princess was an exclusive aficionado of Sri Krishna. She was spiritual aspirant of love; the most celebrated of the women poets of medieval times. She is placed in the era of 1300 A.D. to 1650 A.D. known as the *Bhakti* movement. Most historians believe that Mira was born in (*Vikram Samvat* 1555) 1498 A.D. in village Kudaki, near Medata, a small state in Marwad, Rajasthan. Mira was the daughter of Ratan Singh Rathod and the grand-daughter of Dudaji of Medata. The Rathods of Medata were great devotees of Lord Vishnu. Mira Bai grew up amidst *Vaiṣṇava* (devoted to Lord Vishnu) influence which moulded her life towards devotion for Lord Krishna. Etymologically, Mira means 'light' in Hindi; 'sea' or 'ocean' in Sanskrit; used as a short form of names beginning with the Slavic element *mīr*, meaning 'peace'. Mira started to worship Sri Krishna since her childhood. She has also been regarded as an incarnation of Radha. Krishna P. Bahadur opines "Mira did not deliberately choose her words to create an effect" but measured her poetry to be "the spontaneous outburst of her heart" which "achieved perfection because of her artless

and deep emotions” (Bahadur 31). She herself believed to have been a *Gopī* (cowherd maid driven mad on hearing the sweet melody of Lord Krishna’s flute) in a former birth like the *Ālvār* poetess Goda.

Mira Bai: A Saint of *Bhakti* Movement

The glory of *Bhakti* movement is most resplendent in the history of religion in India. Saints of *Bhakti* movement like Ramananda, Kabir, Mira, and Vallabhacharya in North, Chaitanya in Bengal, Vedanta Desika and many others in South gave strength to Hinduism.

It is pertinent to note here that the liberal nature of this religious movement ignored the restraints of caste, gender, and creed. The emphasis of *Bhakti* movement was on the equality of all castes. There is no distinction between high or low class. Another prominent feature of the movement has been Hindu-Muslim unity.

Mira’s *bhakti* is manifested through public, ecstatic, religious songs and dance. *Bhakti* (devotion), etymologically, germinates from the root ‘*√bhaj*’ (to share). *Bhakti* is love for love’s sake. According to Narada,

“all human striving should be a constant and unbroken offering

to God whose memory should never lapse even for the briefest interval...”

(Kumar 9)

Lord Krishna defines doctrine of *Bhakti* in the 18th chapter of *Bhagavad Gita* as:

“*manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṅ namaskuru*

māṅ evaiśyasi satyaṅ te pratijāne priyo `si me.”

(Always fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me and prostrate (bow)

unto Me. Thus you shall come to Me without fail. I truly promise you this,

for you are very dear to Me.)

(Gita, 18.65)

One of the chief characteristics of *Bhakti* movement is the monistic belief in God. *Atharva Veda* (13.4, 16-21) also puts the monistic belief very clearly:

Neither second, nor third, nor yet fourth is he called;

He is called neither fifth, nor sixth, nor yet seventh

He is called neither eighth, nor ninth, nor yet tenth.

He watcheth over creatures, all that breatheth and that breatheth not.

This conquering might hath entered him. He is the sole, the simple One, the One alone,

In him these Deities become simple and One.

(Griffith 124)

Bhakti opens the door to divinity. It elevates the spirit of persona and creates sublimity of thought and expression. It is love for love’s sake. It is a sacred feeling with

sublime sentiments that unites the devotees with the Lord. The ultimate aim of life is to attain salvation, possible through sublime acquisition, *bhakti*.

Bhakti period certainly provided a platform for Mira Bai to rise as a poet-saint through her *bhajan*-s (religious songs). She participated whole-heartedly in this movement.

II

What is Sublime?

Aesthetics, from Latin *sublīmis*, describes ‘sublime’ as the quality of greatness or vast magnitude, whether physical, moral, intellectual, metaphysical, aesthetic, spiritual or artistic. The term refers to the incomparable greatness beyond all possibility of calculation, measurement or imitation. It is evident in the plethora of literary discourse that the question of how to achieve sublimity has been a primary concern in the oriental and the occidental. Poets, critics, rhetoricians, linguists, grammarians, stylisticians etc. have talked about the element of sublimity in their own way. “Otto wrote about the connection between paradox and sublime in 1923. Jahan Ramazani explains the interdisciplinary character of the theory of the sublime: The sublime is not a genre, and its theorists are happy to emphasize its fluid movement across generic boundaries” (Holmqvist, 6).

An early Indian poetician of sixth century, Bhamaha wrote *Kāvyaḷankāra*. Bhamaha, an Indian thinker emphasises in *Kāvyaḷankāra* that word and meaning taken together constitute *kāvya*. He asserted that poets should use elegant words. He tells about the *doṣa* generally found in poetry and gives instructions for the poets. Bhamaha discusses various aspects, attributes, rules, principles and theories related to *kāvya* which indirectly show the features of sublime *kāvya*.

On the other hand, in the West, “the idea of sublimity stems from the rhetoricians’ distinctions of various styles of speech: namely, high, middle and low. From the 17th century onwards it held a particular fascination for people. As an intellectual concept and as an attainable quality in art and literature it was equally attractive to writers of the romantic period. Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) was an important contribution on the subject and the ideas were of great interest to literary critics and those concerned with aesthetics. Burke distinguished between the sublime and the beautiful” (Cuddon 875). Sublimity is a quality of both mind and soul. It is a fusion of different elements in a single whole.

“Miscellaneous approaches to the sublime have been given by Blake, Wordsworth, Schiller, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Mallarme, Freud, and Benjamin, however, these authors do not always refer directly to the sublime. The picture is clouded because the sublime can be found, according to some scholars, in theological and religious conceptions of different cultures and epochs. The theme of the sublime might be discovered for instance in the Tao te Ching, in the tradition of Zen Buddhism, or in the Revelations of St. Teresa (cf. Sircello). Some philosophers, such as Wittgenstein, are engaged in the theme of presenting the unrepresentable” (Holmqvist 4).

III

Sublimity in Mira Bai's Verses

Mira's poems display sublimity of thought and sublimity of expression outstandingly linked with each other. For example,

“*Soṇā rupām sūm kām ṇā mahāre, hīrām ro baupārāmṛī
bhāg hamāro jāgyām re, ratnākar mahārī sīryāmṛī.*” (Chaturvedi 101)

(Gold and silver are of no use to me,
I am a dealer in diamonds.
I am lucky indeed!
I am connected with the *Ratnākar*.)

(Kumar, K. 48)

This striking linguistic expression coupled with elevated thought of true love for Lord Krishna results in an elevating effect morally, linguistically and artistically. The choice of such linguistic expression exhibits that her love for Lord Krishna is platonic not carnal. This builds a platform of divine understanding of the nature of love. Mira is the moth that burnt itself on the flame of love for *Giridhar*. She pines for meeting with *Giridhar* and burns herself like incense which fills the temple of devotion with the fragrance of love. Some of the main traits which make Mira's poetry sublime are as follows:

1. Elegant words and elegant ideas –

A very important quality of sublimity is *pratibhā* (genius). Indian rhetoricians and poeticians have argued at length the significance of poetic genius. It is *pratibhā* which provides the vision and chiselled linguistic expression. The attribute of *pratibhā* empowers a poet/poetess to make the language a transparent garb of thoughts and not like tedious dross. Bhamaha speaks:

“Poets do not employ (language susceptible of the following defects, viz.,) - *Neyārtha* (non-sense expression), *Kliṣṭa* (conduit expression), *Anyārtha* (obtruse expression), *Avācaka* (profane expression), *Ayuktimat* (absurd expression) and *Gūḍhasabdābhidhāna* (incomprehensible expression)” (Sastry 13).

He also declares four other defects of speech - *Śrutiduṣṭa* (offensive to the ear), *Arthaduṣṭa* (of improper meaning), *Kalpanāduṣṭa* (objectionable construction), and *Śrutikaṣṭa* (painful to the ear).

Mira Bai was undoubtedly an inherited expert. Her verses are free from poetic flaws. Her poetry stands appropriate on all the aforesaid grounds. Mira Bai is able to distinguish between celestial (God) and territorial being (Rana, an ordinary being) as she says:

“*Gaj se utar ke khar nahi chaṛsayām, ye to bāt ne hoī.*” (Chaturvedi 103)

“I will not descend from the back of an elephant
To ride upon an ass.”

(Alston 43)

Her graceful words express her graceful ideas. The words used in the poem are so elegant and simple that even an amateur person can comprehend them easily.

2. Inspiration –

Mira’s poetry displays her spiritual intensity springing from poetic inspiration.

Bhamaha in his treatise *Kāvyaalankāra*, describes three basic qualities of a good poet viz: *pratibhā* (poetic genius), *abhyāsa* (practice) and *vyutapatti* (absolute proficiency). He also talks about *prairnā-pakś* (faculty of inspiration). Bhamaha emphasises that *pratibhā*, *abhyāsa* and *vyutapatti* remain passive until there is no *prairnā-lehar* (fountain of inspiration) in a poet.

Mira is an inborn genius. She is cognizant of the fact that *bhakti* and *jñān* are not separate from one another. These are the two wings of transcendence and when love attains fruition, *bhakti* is born. Mira knows that one who loves God attains salvation. The verse 9.26 of Bhagavad Gita states:

“*Patraṃ puṣpaṃ phalaṃ toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati
tad ahaṃ bhatyupahṛtam aśnāmi prayatātmanah*”
(If anyone offers me with love and devotion, a leaf, a flower,
a fruit or even water, I accept such devotional offerings that
are offered with love). (9.26)

She was well versed in music due to *abhyāsa* (practice) at home required for her as a princess. She has *vyutapatti* because of having inspiration from her inner soul for love and devotion to God. She knows that love is the door and chanting is the key to attain the Divine. She says:

“*jahaṃ baiṭhāve tithī baiṭūṃ, baiche to bik jāū.*
Mīrām ke prabhu Giridhar Nagar, bār bār bali jāū.” (Chaturvedi 101)
(I sit where He commands me to sit, I would let myself
be sold if He sold me. Mira’s Lord is Giridhar Nagar, I
offer myself to Him again and again.) (Kumar, K. 48)

Mādhurya Bhāva (melody; harmony) is prominent in her poetry which is one of the most sublime and sweetest of all the *bhāva*-s. “Mira’s *bhajan*-s, in Indian and Western notation are offered as a melodic outline of suggestion” (Levi 72). “According to Vallabha, a master of Poetics --- there are three levels of literary expression in Indian system: *anu bhāva* (ensuant suggestion), *bhāva bhāvnī* (intense emotional disposition) and *kalpanā*

(imagination). Mira's work considered to be of the first order, the *anu bhāva* which means the text written or recorded by one who has attained the supreme understanding and whose language is, thus, revered as a manifestation of his or her enlightened mind" (Levi 62-3).

Just as the fragrance is the most important out of the four qualities of flowers for the Garland-Maker — so is meaning (*arthatva*) - the soul of the word for the poet, says Bhamaha. The poet must know which words are *prayojya* (usable) and *aprayojya* (unusable). Three factors are important for both the Garland-Maker & the poet:

- i. The Science of Beauty
- ii. The Cultural Values
- iii. The human Psychology (Sastri 50)

We can see the beauty of Mira's poem which depicts Indian culture:

"My Dearest, come grant me your vision...

In the month of *Jeth*,

The birds are suffering without water...

The showers come in *Sāvan*,

My friends celebrate the festival of *Tij*...

The *Basant Pancamī* comes in *Māgh*...

The longing arose in my heart in *Cait*

Grant me your vision, please!..."

(Kumar, K. 81)

This poem is beautifully organized which depicts Indian names of months describing festivals associated with them. It also suggests the metaphor of life in which Mira is longing to meet the divine.

3. Diction –

Diction refers to the choice of words. It conveys a certain mood and atmosphere through a particular choice of words. Mira used everyday vocabulary for singing *bhajan-s*. She did not write to show her poetic talents but sang for self-attainment. Bhamaha also emphasises that diction needs to be simple. Before unfolding his opinion on metre, he divides *kāvya* on four bases (Sastri 13-14):

1. On the basis of metre: (a) Poetry (b) Prose
2. On the basis of language: (a) Sanskrit (b) Prākṛit (c) Apbhraṅś
3. On the basis of subject: (a) *Khayātvrit* (famous; celebrated) (b) *Kalpit* (imaginary) (c) *Kalāśrit* (relative of arts) (d) *Shāstrāśrits* (literature based on sciences)
4. On the basis of nature and form: (a) *Mahākāvya* (b) *Rupak* (c) *Ākyāyikā* (d) *Kathā* (e) *Muktak*

Mira used at least fifteen types of metre in her poetry: *Sār chand*, *Sarsī chand*, *Vishṇūpad*, *Dohā chand*, *Upmān chand*, *Samān savauyā*, *Śhobhan chand*, *tāṅṅk chand*, *kuṇal chand*, etc. (Chaturvedi 2008).

Most of Mira's poems available are in Western Rajasthani — the dialect spoken in the area where she originally lived. But we find some traces of Braj *Bhāśā* (language), Gujarati,

Rajasthani and Panjabi in some poems as she has spent some time in Vrindaban and Gujarat also. She accompanied *sādhu*-s of various places; so she may have borrowed some words and sentences from their languages. For instance,

- Braj *Bhāsā*: “*Sakhīrī lāj bairaṇ bhai
Śrīlāl Gopāl ke saṅg, kāhe nāhī gaī.*” (Chaturvedi 149)

 (“O friend, my modesty became my enemy.
Why did I not go with Śrī Lāl Gopāl.”) (Kumar, K. 105)
- Gujarati: “*Premnī Premnī Premnī re, mane lāgī katārī premnī
Jal Jamunā māṅ bhavām gayām tāṅ hatī gāgar mātthe hemanī re.*” (Chaturvedi 146)

 (“The dagger of love, of love, of love,
The dagger of love has pierced my heart through.
I was on my way to *Jamunā* to fetch water,
A golden pitcher was on my head.”) (Kumar, K. 102)
- Rajasthani: “*The to palak ughāro Dīnānāth, main hājir nājir kab kī kharī
sājnyām dusmaṅ hoy baithyā sabne lagūṅ karī.*” (Chaturvedi 131)

 (“O Lord of the Destitute, open Your eyes,
Since long I have been standing,
Waiting to serve and obey.
My relatives have turned my enemies;
I am disliked by one and all.”) (Kumar, K. 83)
- Panjabi: “*Ho kānām kin gūthūṅ julfām kāriyām.*” (Chaturvedi 143)
 (“O Kānhā, who plaited your dark black locks?”) (Kumar, K. 98)

We can bifurcate Mira’s poetry according to different themes as: *Satutī-vandanā* (praise and prayer of God), *premāsakti* and *premābhilāṣā* (Love for Lord Krishna), *apnā mārga* (her own way of thinking and living), *Parīkṣā* (Test of God), *viyoga* (separation from God), *āśā kiraṇ* (a ray of hope), *viśvās* (belief in God), etc. (Chaturvedi 2008).

4. Figures of speech –

Judicious use of figures of speech make a literary discourse sublime (cf. Longinus). Quintilian also makes a distinction between figures of sound and figures of sense in his *Institutio Oratoria* (9.1.17). Classical Indian Poetician also talk “*Alaṅkāra* is the super-dominant school, and *Rīti* and *Vakrokti* are its off-shoots” (Suresh Kumar 40).

Bhamaha also classifies literary embellishments into two classes- *Śabdālaṅkāra* (figures of sound) and *Arthālaṅkāra* (figures of speech). Alliteration, zeugma, chasms and other charming arrangements of sound come under *Śabdālaṅkāra*. Simile, metaphor and other tropes come under *Arthālaṅkāra*. Bhamaha talks of five figures of speech (Sastry 22):

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| (1) <i>Anuprāsa</i> (alliteration) | (2) <i>Yamak</i> (pun) | (3) <i>Rūpaka</i> (metaphor) |
| (4) <i>Dīpak</i> (illuminator) | (5) <i>Upmā</i> (simile) | |

Bhamaha places *Anuprāsa* (alliteration) and *Yamaka* (repetition of word/syllable) in *śabadālāmkāra* (a literary embellishment bearing upon sound) and *Rūpak* (metaphor), *Dīpak* (predicative attribution) and *Upmā* (simile) in *arthālāmkāra* (a literary embellishment bearing upon sense). These five figures of speech are further divided into a number of parts by Bhamaha. He elaborates the types of *alaṅkāra*-s in chapters third and fourth of *Kāvyaalaṅkāra*. These figures of speech are necessary for the creation of a sublime *kāvya*. They are “pollinate of language”.

The language of Mira’s verses is orchestrated with proper choice of words, use of similes, metaphors etc. being the language of vehement expression and reverence for the Lord. For instance:

- *Anuprāsa*: “*Sūno gāvm̐ des sab sūno, sūnī sej atārī.*” (Chaturvedi 118)
“Lifeless is the village,
Lifeless the entire land,
Lifeless the bed and the attic.” (Kumar, K. 68)
- *Rūpaka*: “*Lāl Giridhar taraṇ tārāṇ, veg karsayo pār.*” (Chaturvedi 153)
“O Lāl Girdhar, the navigator of human life
Quickly take me across.” (Alston 110)
- *Upmā*: “*Pana jyun pīlī padī rī, log kahe piṇḍvāy.*” (Chaturvedī 117)
“I turned yellow like a leaf,
And people thought I had jaundice.” (Kumar, K. 66)
- *Utprekṣā* (Hyperbole): “*Dhartī rūp navām̐ navām̐ dharyā Indra miḷaṇ re kāj.*” (Chaturvedi 138)
“Earth assumes ever-new forms
For meeting and greeting Indra.” (Kumar, K. 92)

Mira’s poems have rhythm and harmony which make them sublime. Taking an example from Mira’s *Padāvalī*:

“*Mira lāgo raṅg Hari, auran anṁtak parī*
Chūdo mahām̐r tilak arū mālā, sīl barat sinṅgārī
Aur singār mahām̐re dāy ne āvai, yo gūrū gyān hamārī...” (Chaturvedi 103)

5. Style –

“Longinus distinguishes between ‘persuasive style’ and ‘sublime style’. The sublime is evocative, transporting and overwhelms us with its power of wonder. It is a product of both nature and art” (Kapoor 128). Bhamaha does not use the term *rīti* but he talks about two types of styles: *Vaidarbhi* and *Gaudī*. “In comparing the style ‘Vaidarbhi’ with ‘Gaudī’ he calls the former ‘Avakrokti’. According to him strikingness of meaning is at the root of all Poetic Figures” (Sastry XV). In chapter 5th also, verse 66th, he says that the employment of words or meanings out of the fashion imparts beauty to the statement.

By analysing Mira's poetry, it can be said that she breaks the tradition of *Siddha-s* writing. In the verses of *Siddha-s*, there is no 'tek' (refrain) and there is one simple metre throughout the whole *pada* (song). But in Mira's poetry there is one 'tek' and then three or four feet or quarters are added to it which shows the deviation in her poetry, an important factor of creating style. For instance:

Sthāyī: Pag Bānmdh Ghūmghryām nāchyām rī. (Tek)

Antarā: Log kahām Mira bāvarī, sāsū kahām kulnāsī rī

Vikh ro payālo sRāṇā bhajayām, pīvām Mīrām hāmsām rī... (Chaturvedi 207)

There were different musical styles in which *bhajan-s* were sung at that time but some styles were prominent. "Anthologies of the sixteenth century list the poetry of the period according to the *raga-s* which were employed and not according to the individual poets, which is a clear indication of the great importance which music had for the sensibility of the time" (Levi 71). Mira modifies some words to make her poetry more musical. For instance:

- *Papaiyā* rather than *Papīha* (Common Hawk cuckoo)
- *Kivario* rather than *Kivāra* (door)
- *Nehrā* rather than *Sanaha* (love)
- *Kirpānidhān* rather than *Kripānidhān* (Merciful Lord) etc. (Sharma, K. 75)

The qualities of sublime poetry possessed by a poet can be seen in Mira. Levi remarks:

"Educated to be the first Hindu Queen of the sixteenth century, Mira had been trained in poetics, music and dance" (61). Her *bhajan-s* composed centuries ago still capture the thoughts and emotions of devotees today. Her songs, highly regarded for the mystic quality as well as rich inherent meanings make them *sublime*. "Millions have memorized and sung the poems of Mirabai's passion, each finding in her words some intimate and individual truth, and also some companionship along the path of awakening. To read Mirabai is to awaken more deeply into your own life" (Bly and Hirshfield xiii).

6. **Theme:** It is one of the important elements to make any literary discourse sublime. The main elements which make Mira's poetry sublime are as follows:

(i) **Love:**

Sublimity, generally speaking, depends on grandeur of thought and nobility of nature. Nobility and sublimity in love take a person to the higher path of consciousness and unite man to God. Love is one thing which everybody craves for and Mira Bai is no exception. In fact, Mira's love for Lord Krishna is unsurpassable. Mira's expression of her love and the agony of separation from Lord Krishna through her poetry are ethereal. During the month of *Chaitra* (March-April) she feels despondent and says:

Kiṅ saṅg khelūn holī, piyā tāji gaye hein akeli (Chaturvedi 119)

(The Beloved has abandoned me, With whom could I play Holi?) (Alston 67)

(ii) **Mysticism:**

Mira Bai's poetry is full of mystic elements. Her poetry reveals love independent of logic, senses and reason consequently entering the realm of mysticism through spiritual

insights. There are traces of supernaturalism too. Rāṇā was always busy in inventing new forms of torture for her. Rāṇā sent her a basket containing snake with a message that it contained a garland of flowers. Mira, after performing her ablutions, sat before it. On opening it she discovered *Śāligrām* (a beautiful image of her Divine Beloved). When Rāṇā sent her a poisoned drink, she drank it as *Charṇāmṛta* (the water in which Lord Krishna's idol had been bathed; equivalent to nectar). Due to the grace of Lord Krishna, that poisoned drink transformed into nectar and did not harm Mira at all.

“Rāṇo bhaijayā vikh ro payālo, Charṇāmṛt pī jāṇā
Kālā nāg pitāraymā bhaijayā, sālgrām pichanā.” (Chaturvedi 109)

In the absence of reliable information about Mira's death, there is a legend which tells that her body melted physically into the image of the deity in the temple of *Raṇachor* (Alston 2008). The poet Iqbal's lines appropriately support this legend:

“Tū hai muhīte bekarām, main hūm jarā-sī ābjū
yā mujhe humkinār kar, yā mujhe bekinār kar.” (Osho 26)

(You are a vast ocean, and I am but a meagre stream

Drown me or let me be unfathomed.)

(iii) A Voice for Social Equality:

Mira Bai discarded the caste system and worked for the liberation of women from the *pardā* (veil) system that prevailed at that time in Rajasthan. She believes that all are equal in God's eyes as it is stated in *Bhagvad Gita*:

“mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye `pi syuḥ pāpayonayaḥ
striyo vaiśyās tathā śūdrās te `pi yānti parām gatim.”

(Because O *Partha*! Even women, *Vaishyas* (merchants), *Śūdras* (laborers) and those of the sinful clan, whoever they may be, they also can attain the Supreme goal by surrendering unto Me). (9.32)

“The sociologist Parita Mukta said that Mira Bai was at the core of things. When Mira snubbed the *Rāṇā*, it was not just a rejection of patriarchal conventions but a rejection of social injustice broadly – of caste” (90-110).

Mira's poetry highlights the voice of common man and talks about the injustice against females by the male chauvinists. This trait makes her poetry sublime.

(iv) Perpetual Bliss and Relevance (to the Modern World):

Mira's songs are pure bliss. Though, some songs of Mira show her struggle in life yet the utter joy, melody and delight of all her *bhajan*-s is par excellence. To borrow from P.B. Shelley's 'To the Skylark':

“Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.” (306)

In an era when the minds of the people are pre-occupied for power and pelf, it is high time to return to the *Bhakti* literature to repose. In the present time, when technology has robbed man of the joy of reading poetry, there is still an escape route for the seekers of the peace of mind. Listening or singing these *bhajan*-s certainly work as a stress buster for the new generation. Mira's poems can not only restore the equilibrium of the mind of the modern reader but it will also keep the young minds in touch with our rich heritage. The new generation can be conversant with the legends and myths related to their culture and they would also not feel helpless in the hazy world of doubts and fears. The relevance of her *bhajan*-s is universal as well as eternal.

In this way, this important feature makes Mira's poetry sublime.

7. Avant-garde and Revolutionary Approach:

An emancipated soul, Mira, emerged out of a *Rājput* family (an environment of inequality for women) was very strong and a revolutionary woman. The details of Mira's life reveals that she violated the rules of Manu according to which a woman was not allowed to go outside the home or to refuse conjugal rights to her husband. She refused to adopt the religion of her husband's family as they were devotees of *Devi* (Hindu Goddess). She challenged the existing ill-adapted rules for women, for instance, she discarded *Satī Prathā* (the burning of widows on the husband's funeral pyre). She discarded all the ill-adapted moral duties of so-called *bahū* (daughter-in-law) of *Rajput* family and paved the way for women to speak for their rights.

She is the role model of today's women who are fighting for their empowerment. She did not represent only her own problems through poetry but also of all women of the medieval time. She had sown the seeds of revolt against injustice towards women in a time when the questions related to patriarchal system was unheard of. She did not care for society and said:

“*Koī nindo koī bindo mahe to, guṇ Govind kā gāsaya*

jiṅ mārg mharā sādḥ padhārai, uṅ mārg mahe jāsaya.”

(Chaturvedī 103)

(Some blame me, some praise me, But I will only sing

The praise of Govind. The path that the saints have

trodden upon, That path I will follow.)

(Kumar 49)

“Mira did not want to marry Bhoj Raj, a worldly bridegroom but there is no monastic structure in Hinduism, for either men or women. The religious life is lived as a wandering holy man (*sādhu*) or renunciate (*saṃyāsī*), and is for the most part only available to men; there are some women *saṃyāsīn*-s but only very few” (Klostermaier 1998).

IV

Conclusion

Mira's poetry stands apart in Indian religious literary tradition by its sublimity of thought and expression. Since aesthetic goals in Indian literature are not determined by mere

linguistic devices or figures of speech, it goes to the credit of saint-poets like Mira for the effulgence of spirit and elevated style marked by an individual identification with the higher consciousness in the form of God. Mira's poetry evokes through her sublime ideas and style. Her poetry is a proof that emotions can take one to the stage of *bhakti*, elevated thoughts to the stage of transcendence and expression to the stage of knowledge. Her *bhajan*-s, highly regarded for the mystic qualities and rich inherent meanings make them sublime. These are the basic foundations of Mira's poetry, which make her a saint for all times and all places.

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