Reading guide, study questions – Mirabai’s poetry

Two issues seem especially important when considering Mirabai’s poetry: *transcendence*  and  *interiority*. We’ve seen that these concepts are different in an Indian context – think of the Mahabharata and Krishna’s role. Think of our conversations about the caste system. Think too about Hindu philosophy. Let *The Consolation of Philosophy* rattle around in your head insofar as its ethical system – care not for the things of this world – seems both alike and different from a Hindu one. Now consider Mirabai. Note that Mirabai writes poetry, and also that for Hindus Mirabai is considered divine.

Reading guide, study questions -- Shakespeare’s sonnets

You can find Shakespeare’s sonnets – all of them – online [here](http://shakespeare.mit.edu/Poetry/sonnets.html) and [here](https://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/views/sonnets/sonnets.php). I prefer the first online source because it gives first lines. The goal for this assignment – putting Mirabai and Shakespeare together – is to look at love poetry from two traditions. Hence, our challenge is to define, evaluate, understand both “love” and “poetry,” perhaps not in that order but certainly in tandem.

Shakespeare's sonnets have an interesting history. First published in 1609, they represent more than youthful musings if we accept the premise that Shakespeare had consciously produced them over time as a collection, and that he wanted them published. However, some argue that the sonnets, which had circulated privately, were not intended for public consumption. Notice the metaphors Shakespeare uses: which ones are familiar from our earlier readings? Would you say that the controlling theme in the sonnets is immortality conferred by words, wherein poetic power is figured through birth? Or do you detect another controlling metaphor? In light of these sonnets, what differentiates secular from divine love? What difference does it make that the bulk of the sonnets are addressed to a man?

Reading guide and study questions -- Mirabai and Shakespeare together

Notice the metaphors Shakespeare uses: which ones are familiar from our earlier readings? Would you say that the controlling theme in the sonnets is immortality conferred by words, wherein poetic power is figured through birth? Or do you detect another controlling metaphor? In light of these sonnets, what differentiates secular from divine love? What difference does it make that the bulk of the sonnets are addressed to a man? Think about transcendence and interiority: what’s more important for Shakespeare, and for Mirabai? Does gender matter?