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Mirabai and the Spiritual Economy of *Bhakti*

Kumkum Sangari

In an economy where the labour of women and the surplus production of the peasant and artisan are customarily and 'naturally' appropriated by the ruling groups, the high Hindu traditions sought to encompass and retain the management of spiritual 'surplus', and to circumscribe its availability along lines of caste and gender. In this spiritual economy, the liberalising and dissenting forms of bhakti emerge as a powerful force which selectively uses the metaphysic of high Hinduism in an attempt to create an inappropriable excess or transcendent value grounded in the dailiness of a material life within the reach of all.

This paper attempts to understand the specific character of Mirabai's bhakti as it finds shape within the overlapping yet contradictory configuration of the patriarchal assumptions of the medieval Rajput state, prescriptive brahminical texts, and the female devotional voice as it develops in earlier and contemporary compositions of male bhaktas. What emerges is, firstly, that though the prescriptions of the smritis and puranas do not survive as law, they are available as ideology which shapes the customary domain and self-description of Rajput ruling groups and constitute the historical moment in which Mira lives. Secondly, in the breaking and remaking of patriarchal relations, Mira's bhakti marks as well as belongs to a longer historical moment in which the prescriptions of the smritis and puranas are selectively internalised, and the customary nexus of religious practice is translated into metaphors and emotional structures. Thirdly, though Mira's compositions are themselves ambivalently situated, there are significant differences in her personal practice and in her ideological location when compared to earlier and contemporary male bhaktas. And, finally, etched into Mira's enterprise is not only the difficulty of being 'original' in an oral tradition, but also the recalcitrance and the precariousness of personal rebellion.

[The paper is published in two parts. The second part will appear next week.]

THE ideological diversity and contradictory locations of *bhakti* are startling. Already embedded in vedic and puranic literature *bhakti* is not restricted to what have been specified as movements: it is a structure of personal devotion which enters into the formation of new groups or classes, into the protests against elite hegemonic groups as well as into the redefining of dominant classes,¹ and is also central to the production of a syncretic vocabulary in accessible vernacular languages. Though often a mode of dissent which expresses dissatisfaction with certain orthodox, caste-based modes of social ordering, brahminical Hinduism, 'exclusive' religious institutions, and, at least apparently, patriarchy, the difficulties of measuring the '*bhakti* movements' potential for change in a pre-industrial formation are enormous. This would involve ascertaining which areas of meaning, social agency and interaction, political participation, power, and prescriptive Hindu orthodoxy are prised open by/for the lower caste peasants, artisans and women who were involved in each movement. It would entail an evaluative description of the nature of the social transformations taking place, with the gradual and differential establishment of feudal structures as the field from which *bhakti* emerges and to which it responds. Finally, this would involve seeing *bhakti* as a product and partaker of a changing society, which emerges alongside feudal structures—whether assisting or resisting them—for several centuries. *Bhakti* can neither be understood solely in terms of its social content and ideology, nor evaluated

separately from the social practices in which it is implicated.

Within an economy where the labour of women and the surplus production of the peasant and artisan are customarily and 'naturally' appropriated by the ruling groups, the high Hindu traditions sought to encompass and retain the management of spiritual 'surplus', and to circumscribe its availability along lines of caste and gender. In this spiritual economy, the liberalising and dissenting forms of *bhakti* emerge as a powerful force which selectively uses the metaphysic of high Hinduism (*maya*, *karma* and rebirth), in an attempt to create an inappropriable excess or transcendent value grounded in the dailiness of a material life within the reach of all. Even if *bhakti* does not substantively break the boundaries of high Hindu traditions it redefines these in content, modality and address, i.e. in what is said, how it is said (orally—in defiance of the centralisation of knowledge in written texts), and who it is said to.

Bhakti makes a language for aspiration and desire, through a notion of personal devotion and more direct communication with a compassionate god, which is *embedded* within an experiential base—particular sorts of hierarchical, patriarchal and feudal relations—a location which defines both the power and the vulnerability of such a language. Once assimilated into mainstream Hinduism, the critical edge of dissenting forms of *bhakti* is blunted, yet the language remains evocative, long after the movements have themselves waned, *precisely because* its

experiential base has altered but not disappeared.

This essay attempts to understand the specific character of Mirabai's *bhakti* as it finds shape within the overlapping yet contradictory configuration of the patriarchal assumptions of the medieval Rajput state, prescriptive brahminical texts, and the female devotional voice as it develops in earlier and contemporary compositions of male *bhaktas*. Each one of these is a site for the production of valuation schemata, of notions of sexuality and of different sorts of female agency. Unfortunately, from this historical distance it is easier to ascertain their ascriptive functions and ideological matrix than to determine their precise relation to social practices.

What emerges firstly is that though the prescriptions of the *smritis* and *puranas* do not survive as law, they are available as ideology which shapes the customary domain and self description of Rajput ruling groups, and in this sense are that part of their 'past' which constitute the historical moment in which Mira lives. Secondly, in the breaking and remaking of patriarchal relations, Mira's *bhakti* marks as well as belongs to a longer historical moment in which the prescriptions of the *smritis* and *puranas* are selectively internalised, and the customary nexus of religious practice is translated into metaphors and emotional structures. Even as her *bhakti* sets out to escape, ignore or challenge certain social, religious and patriarchal institutions, its moral legitimacy is partially obtained from a transformation of some of these (enforce-

able) prescriptions into an internal ethic. Thirdly, though Mira's compositions are themselves ambivalently situated, there are significant differences in her personal practice and in her ideological location when compared to earlier and contemporary male *bhaktas*. Finally, etched into Mira's enterprise, insofar as it is possible to reconstruct it, is not only the difficulty of being 'original' in an oral tradition, but also the recalcitrance and the precariousness of personal rebellion.

The different usages of the female devotional voice in comparison with male *bhaktas* brings up two general but crucial questions. The first is the problem of reading an oral corpus which cannot be reduced to a single author. The second is the relationships between figurative modes, patriarchal values and the engendering of religious belief. The solidity of patriarchal assumptions in metaphors and analogies, their readily paraphraseable 'content' raises questions about the role figurative modes play in reflecting or forging a social consensus in oral traditions. Patriarchal structures and religious belief are not inert but subject to constant remaking—it appears that they may even be interdependent and mutually generative.

I The Life

It is difficult to disentangle legend from history to reconstruct and interpret Mirabai's life. In biographies (the earliest are the *Bhaktmala* of Nabhadās (1667) and the *Bhakt-māṭika* of Priyadas (1732), based partly on her own compositions, her life, like the lives of all medieval saints, and more specifically of women saints, is punctuated with 'typical' conventions: the bitter persecutions and miraculous escapes, the displays of wit and logic when questioned and tested by a male authority figure, the association with holy places, the breaking of norms and taboos, the renunciation of family and domestic life, the rejection of worldly power and authority, and finally the miraculous death where she merges with god in a temple.² As a genre the saint's biography is complete: part of a series of idealised life-types it presents an exterior self open to the public gaze, and a finished or already made relation with the world. The personal and historical contingencies which informed Mira's choices either appear as generalised preconditions for sainthood or are invisible.

The legend-history has it that Mira is born into a Rathor family in 1498 in Koorki village in the Nagaur district of Marwar. Both her grandfather Duda Merta and her father Rao Rattan Singh are Vaishnavites and worship Krishna. Her mother dies when she is five and she is brought up by her grandfather. She is both literate and learned, skilled in 'male' arts (hunting, sports, battle) and in the 'female' arts (dance, music, sewing, etiquette). When about eighteen she is married to Bhoj Raj, son of the 'Hindupat'

Rana Sanga, and heir to the Sisodia kingdom of Mewar. At the time Rana Sanga is the most powerful of Rajput kings and has great political ambition. He has twenty-eight queens and seven sons, and his son's marriage to Mira is, like his own marriages, a political alliance. Legend has it that at the time of her marriage ceremony she circles the idol of Girdharji (Krishna), to whom she is devoted from childhood, instead of her husband, declares herself married to Him, and refuses to consummate her earthly marriage. She refuses to worship the family goddess, Durga. In some variations of the legend, Mira's husband resents her celibacy, suspects adultery, persecutes her, and takes another wife. In one version, he is reconciled to her behaviour when he comes to believe that she is mad. Her only supporter is Rana Sanga's mother—Jhali Rani—a pupil of Raidās, who undertakes to placate her son. Some versions claim, Raidās, a Chamaar by birth, as Mira's own guru—the dates do not match. Widowed five years later in 1523 Mira continues to compose poetry and sing *bhajans* under the protection of her father-in-law. In another version she becomes a Krishna *bhakta* only upon the death of her husband, and is persecuted after his death when she is a widow. In one account her father-in-law asks her to kill herself. She obediently plunges into a river but survives with divine aid. After her father-in-law's death by poisoning in 1528, her brother-in-law Raja Ratan Singh, and his successor Rana Bikramajit, persecute her for political (rivalry with her natal family), religious and probably personal reasons. In some versions her father-in-law also persecutes her. She miraculously survives the cups of poison and snakes they send her and flees for shelter to her uncle Viram Deo. Her father dies in 1530. Viram Deo, who is defeated in battle and expelled from Merta in 1535, finds it difficult to accept such activity, especially from a widow. She serves *sadhus*, meets all kinds of men and has a disturbing appeal for women and especially for men and women of lower social classes. So Mira takes to the road as a *jogin* or religious mendicant. She gives up social decorum (*lok laaj*) and family honour (*kul shrinkhla*). She sings and dances, loves Krishna like a *gopi*, visits Vrindavan, and refuses to return to the palace even upon the blandishments of a later Rana. It appears that after she leaves Chittor, the fort is conquered by Bahadur Shah of Gujerat in 1535, followed by the *jauhar* (mass immolation) of the women led by Rani Karmavati, a wife of Rana Sanga. The legend goes that her brother-in-law (in some versions her father-in-law) seeing these as consequences of his persecution of Mirabai sends brahmins to bring her back, perhaps as a mascot to guard against future mishaps. Mira is in Dwarka, the home of Krishna. (She has re-built his temple in Dwarka.) In her dilemma she sings and dances before his image in the temple while the brahmins fast at the door. Krishna unable to resist her love incorporates her into himself. All the

brahmins find is her *sari* enveloping the idol. Some versions (which seek to extend her life beyond 1547 in order to make her meet Akbar, Tansen, Birbal and Tulsidas, and so supply her with powerful patrons, pupils and gurus) suggest that this is a successful ruse to escape the brahmins. In these versions Akbar conquers and plunders Mewar as retribution for the ill-treatment of Mirabai; and Tulsidas, in answer to her letter seeking advice about her persecution by her husband's family, advises her to leave her marital home.³

How do we evaluate Mira as a saint and as a symbol of legendary devotion and personal rebellion, as a historical figure and woman who resisted the power of princely, feudal patriarchy, the social codes of family pride, honour, decorum, and became critic of certain forms of social oppression? What is the relation between the historical figure and the legendary saint? At one level the saint's life is a consensual and so socially legitimate pattern which inherently contradicts the normative requirements of wifehood. Mira's transgression of the norms for a good Rajput wife and widow may have necessitated seeking protection in the alternative norms of sainthood. Or, conversely, her life may have been retrospectively 'fitted' into the ideal-typical life of a saint thus erasing all the signs of personal suffering, isolation, vulnerability and daring in the life of the woman. At another level both the historical figure and the legendary saint belong to the realm of public transcription, both inhabit a hierarchising, prescriptive social domain where the 'norms' of the one can be invoked to 'punish' the other: e.g., the ill-treatment of a saint can change the course of political events and cause Akbar's conquest of Mewar. Finally, the narrative of the saint's life projects modes of behaviour which arise in response to expectations or proscriptions as simple and pure expressions of spiritual being, and interprets 'character' as deriving from such a substantive self rather than from the exigencies of changing, accrued experience. The Mira who may be gleaned from historical facts is one who belongs to a simple realm of 'political' events which occur in a sequential causality. It is difficult to rescue the 'real' Mirabai, or to reconstruct her life separately either as legend or as history. It is, however, possible to read it tentatively against both together—insofar as they interlock and contradict, and insofar as both suggest the pre-existing structures which she may have appropriated, altered, or resisted. In this sense, the negotiation of these pre-existing structures, ideological in character, comes to constitute Mirabai's 'experience' for us.

If a straightforward reading of Mira's life is unavailable, eliciting certainties from her songs is equally problematic. The written texts assembled from oral traditions are part of a collective *œuvre*. Certain parts must have been re-accentuated, certain potentials in the images actualised, others allowed to fade over time. Mirabai herself re-

accentuates what has preceded. In this sense the songs are inscribed in an *extended* rather than a discrete moment of production. They represent; intentionalities, beliefs, desires which stretch beyond the individual and may be designated as a definable mode of social perception inhabited by Mira and nameless others. Further, Mira sang *and* danced—the nuances, inflections and assertions of *performed* worship which set personal devotion squarely within the public gaze—can in retrospect only be surmised.

II

Family, Marriage and State

What was the location of a princess married into the premier ruling family of Rajasthan? The late fifteenth and early sixteenth century which mark the end of the Delhi sultanate were characterised by a continuous three-pronged conflict in Rajput states many of which were still at a formative stage. Territories were being wrested from tribes, from Muslim rulers and from other Rajput states. The political history of Mewar is one of ceaseless competitive warfare, a condition both of steady expansion and of insecurity, which reinforces the mutual dependence between ruler and clan, ruler and vassals—in effect builds and reinforces a feudal relation. On the one hand, the notion of *kul* acquires a certain urgency from the need for affirming lineage cohesion, genealogical status, and familial solidarity based on kinship—some of the co-ordinates of military success. However, the conquest of neighbouring territories provides the king and state with an economic and political advantage over kinsmen, and makes relations between them tense and unstable. So on the other hand, there appears to be an internal stratification of lineages wherein kinship and the rights of the subject *vis-a-vis* the sovereign are being remodelled in consonance with emerging 'contractual' relations, as yet embryonic, which would become sharply defined with Mughal rule.⁴

This is not only a period of expansion and the consolidation of vassal and tributary states, but also a period of cultural unification. The fifteenth century sees the emergence of the word 'rajput' in its contemporary sense,⁵ signifying not merely a caste but a ruling military aristocracy with its own ethos of martial valour, a claim to prestige and achieved status, and its own patriarchal practices grounded in the clan system. Mewar was surrounded by Muslim kingdoms on three sides, and Rana Sanga's assertive Hindu identity was related to his imperial ambition.⁶ The resurgent 'Hinduism' of 'kshatriya' ascendancy, which interlocks with an exaggerated lineage consciousness, rested on propitiating brahmins (who could legitimise higher *varna* status through selective use of the *smritis* and puranas) and on investing heavily in a self-legitimising genealogical enterprise with the co-operation of *bhats* and *charans* (court bards) who now

begin to fabricate the origin and trace the lineage of the ruling clans to remote antiquity. Not surprisingly, the management of women and marriage are key elements in the process of cultural unification, and in the imperial designs of the emergent feudal Rajput state.

The early medieval Rajput state is one particular patrilineal clan or sub-clan politically organised into a single unit within which is inscribed the place of women who are tied to the needs of clan identity and status, and which also sets out to govern the hierarchical system of vassalage and the reciprocal duties of master and servant. The notion of *kul* or clan acquires its emotive, affective power from these. As the smallest unit of a clan, the family provides a system of patriarchal protection for women, operates as an oppressive site for the daily reproduction of caste and gender inequality in which women themselves play a significant role. The family enters into a series of relations with the state. It becomes an adjunct of the state in that even as it maintains its own status (partly through its women) it also maintains the order of social hierarchy. The patriarchy of the family becomes in some sense co-extensive with the state. The state too can be effortlessly involved in marriage norms because the state assumes a continuity between itself and its subjects. And the family can in turn be a unit of the state's 'decentralised' patriarchal power—supplying women for marriage exactly as it supplies men for battle. Dishonour in either case amounts to saying that the family's political reliability is at stake, since the family is inserted directly into the political sphere within relations of dependence and solidarity. And yet the family is neither stable nor secure. Linked as it is with clan, state and struggles for power, it is a fragile, competitive, feuding unit even within the kin group, which repeatedly displays a potential for internal fission. In sum, the degree of integration and *desired* harmony between family and state not only sets off the ruling Rajput groups from other castes, but also determines the patriarchal public nature of the code of family honour, of the management of marriage, the regulation of sexuality, and the restriction of women's right to property.

The politicisation and depersonalisation of marriage is striking. Exogamous marriage is a structural mainstay of the clan as a political unit, builds cohesive clan and inter-clan relationships across territorial boundaries, constructs relations of vassalage and clientelist allegiance wherein marriage becomes an expression of loyalty and fealty, and institutionalises a system of gaining land, influence, power, honour, status, and alliances,⁷ within which the women though indispensable are construed as little more than counters of exchange. There is a high instance of polygamy, dowry, and female infanticide among Rajputs, especially in the upper strata. Women have no independent access to political power. The *zenana* or *an-*

tahpur of Rajputs seems to be riven by divisions among women along lines of age, seniority, political influence, status of natal family, material benefits, size of income, and mode of acquisition (i.e. wife, concubine or slave), and by the struggle for mobility through access to the ruler-husband which inevitably, except for favourites, is limited.⁸ Women have neither the right to divorce nor to property and the right of widows to maintenance is easy to infringe.⁹

The obligatory and politically instrumental character of marriage is rationalised and sacralised through the ideologies of service and of *suhaag* (the married state). In some sense the service demanded of women overlaps with the compulsory service demanded of other subaltern groups. Both are placed within a chain of ideal connections in which the reality of the social order itself, indeed its very intelligibility, is perceived as irrevocably tied with the principle of hierarchical layering in which husbands and kings occupy the summit. The character of Rajputs as an expansive and hegemonic military aristocracy led to and demanded the development of an instrumental and quasi-autonomous ethic of male heroism with its corollaries of male bonding and corporate identity. Manhood or maleness comes to be synonymous with *veerta* (courage, bravery) and *kulgaaurav* (the honour of the clan).¹⁰ The conflation of god-ruler-*thakur* (chief), the perception of military and other service as a form of worship expressed through unstinting devotion and self sacrifice which brings both material reward and salvation, embeds the warrior's service into the hierarchy of the feudal relation.¹¹ Within the Rajput polity, as in the *smritis*, women are conceived primarily as subjects.¹² The wife too takes on a relation of generalised subalternity to her lord-husband-master. She is subordinated via men to the state and domestic service of the husband becomes analogous to religious service. The desired roles of both servant and wife are predicated on devoted service and fidelity to a feudal state within a hierarchy which expresses, legitimises and idealises an unequal social relation.

Though the subordinate function of Rajput women seems to put even women of the ruling group into the humble category of the ruled, their consent to patriarchal domination (ideologically obtained) also becomes a consent to coercive social relations in wider sense. The sacralisation of marriage with its corollary system of rewards and punishments occurs most fully among upper castes, and becomes a mode of differentiating them from the lower castes in Rajasthan who have less formal marital arrangements.

The world beyond death, once described, acquires a social existence, organises social relations and plays a determining role in their reproduction. Representations of this 'invisible' world are shared by men and women, and it is partly through these that women consent to their domination. Patriar-

chal domination depends on the symbolic labour of women themselves in rituals to preserve marriage and ward off widowhood, around which much of their religious activity is centred. The ideology of *suhaag* legitimises the enforced dependence of women and redescribes it as the necessary submission to duty and veneration of the husband. The organisation of the *zenana* and the emotional structures of *suhaag* together describe the wife as monogamous in terms of her fidelity and devotion to a 'naturally' polygamous husband. Her service acquires the illusory character of an exchange or a reciprocal commitment in which the husband's well-being saves her from widowhood and finds her a place in heaven. At the same time the ideology of *suhaag* acquires its power, success, and continued justification for women from the experienced reality and perceived consequences of the loss of *suhaag* or widowhood. This reality naturalises *suhaag*—it does not appear to be an illusion. The ideology of *suhaag* thus becomes a way of controlling marriage and through it procreation, inheritance and property.

Widowhood is read in the brahminical tradition derived from the *smritis* as the predestined, *karmic* product of transgression in past lives, which justifies the customary treatment of the widow and helps to create a hierarchy of dependence within the family. Widowhood is a punishable crime, widowhood is atonement through personal austerity, piety, and domestic drudgery.¹³ Unlike lower caste women she is forbidden remarriage. The genealogy of the Rajput widow can be traced to the model of the Brahmin widow in the *Manusmriti*. The Brahmin widow in order to be good must never even *think* of another man, avoid sensual pleasures, and in order to obtain heaven like the Brahmin ascetic, she must practise *those* "incomparable rules of virtue which have been followed by such women as were devoted to *only one* husband" (MDS: 135). In order to acquire renown in this world and the same abode as her husband in the next world, the widow too like the wife must subject mind, speech and body to her husband. Infringement, likewise, is punishable by ostracism in both worlds (MDS: 135-37, 234). Marriage is indissoluble even upon widowhood. The good widow then must both practically and emotionally be as monogamous as the good wife; for both the wife and the widow, the husband is the intermediary between this world and the next, and monogamous devotion to him is the unilateral path to salvation. Marriage occurs in society but outside history.

Within the ideologies of service and *suhaag*, the realms of domestic service, service to the state, and service to god are already bonded. The *smritis* when desired offer timely and notable assistance. Kinship, the state, the souls of the servant, wife, and widow, belong to an indivisible realm, have a single future destiny.

III

Interpreting Mira's Life

Mira's rebellion, social critique and iconic image have to be located within this set of relationships which constitute the field within which her *bhakti* finds shape. To what extent does Mira break the norms of the feudal relation regarding marriage and widowhood, in her choice of asceticism and in the nature of her asceticism?

She breaks the code of marriage by remaining sexually unavailable to her husband, and by her obsessive religiosity from the moment she is wed. She claims to have already married Krishna in a dream (*Mai Mahane supne me paran gaye Gopal* BM: 70). In those versions of the legend in which she is persecuted by her husband, there is an indication of the magnitude of her decision.¹⁴ Her indifference to her husband and passion for Krishna is 'read' as adulterous by both husband and father-in-law, she is even suspected of a liaison with Akbar who has come in disguise to see her.¹⁵ In other versions of the legend where she becomes *bhakti* only after the death of her husband, Mira's credentials as good wife are being ensured prior to her transformation into a saint. However, in the former version, as a disobliging wife, a significant element in the life of a saint—celibacy and its attendant spiritual powers—is also being established. Here the good wife and the saint cannot be reconciled—she can only be one or the other. As an errant, disobliging wife, Mira acquires not only an active freedom from an expected role, but also the preconditions for access to wisdom, authority, self-sufficiency, spiritual growth, and most of all, marriage to Krishna.

*Heli mahasu Hari bin rahiyo na jai
Saasu lade ri sajni, nanad khijairi pivji
rahyori samai
Chauki bhi melau sajni, pahra bhi malau,
taalaa ghau na jadai
Purab janam ki preet hamaari sajni, so
kahan rahai ri lukai
Mira kahai prabhu girdhar ke bin, dujo
na aavai mahaari dai*

(BM: 85)

In this sense each patriarchal persecution—a product of her real transgressions—is at the same time a *test* which *proves* her sainthood within the pattern of a saint's life.

Mira ignores the claims of *suhaag*. Like Mahadeviyakka who sang, "Take these husbands who die/decay, and feed them/to your kitchen fires,"¹⁶ Mira designates *jag suhaag* or marriage with a mortal as *mithya* or useless and illusory:

*Tum hi jhuthe ham hi jhuthe jhutha hai
sab sansaara
Stri purush ke sambandh jhuthe, to
phuthya haiya tumhaara
Tum hi kaho ardhanga hamaari, hamku
lagaayo kaara
Koti brahmand me vyapya rahiyo hai so
nij var hamaara*¹⁷

Real *suhaag* with an immortal, "Him whom the snake of death will not devour" (DP: 119, 116):

*Jhootha suhaag jagat ka ri sajni, hoi hoi
mit jaasi
Main to ek avinaasi varoongi jaahe kaal
nahi khaasi* (BM: 79)
*Surat dinanath su lagi tu to samajh
suhaagan naar...
Aise var ko kya karu jo janme aur mar jai
Var variyo ek saavre ri mero chudlo amar
ho jai...
Abinaasi ki pol par ji Mira karai chai
pukaar* (P: 165-67)

Like other women saints, when widowed Mira denies the reality of having been married in the first place.¹⁸

*Kaai aur ko baru maavri, mahaon ke jag
janjaal
Mira ke prabhu girdhar naagar, kari
jagaa haal* (BM: 70)

The rejection of earthly marriage, alongside the honour of the family, of *kul*, and the bonds of kinship, is in effect a rejection not only of their educative and organising functions, but of the whole social order within which they are enmeshed. Further, the break with domesticity is a rejection of the primary domain where sexuality is customarily regulated. The *Manusmriti* explicitly offers ritual and domestic labour as a suitable means for restraining wives and controlling female sexuality (MDS: 232). Mira's claim is substantive when she says:

*Sati na hosya girdhar gaasya mahaara
man mohe ghannami
Jeth bahu ko naato na raanaji, hu sevak
the swaami
Girdhar kant Girdhar dhani mahaare,
maat pita boi bhai
Thai thaare main mahaare Ranaji, yun
kahe Mirabai* (B: 162).
Why should I burn myself on a pyre with the body of the *rana* and be sati?
Is not Girdhar my eternal consort?
I recognise no relationship of body, or by marriage to human beings
I know only Girdhar. He is my father, mother, husband, kin, none besides.
I have nothing to do with the ruler of the state
So says Mirabai. (B: 106).

Though Mirabai's mendicancy breaks the mandatory seclusion of the upper caste Rajput widow (*Ab kahe ki laaj sajni, pargat ho naachi*, P: 45), she does not challenge all the other accepted 'components' of a widow's life—piety, asceticism, austerity, celibacy.¹⁹ Since Krishna is a god, their *sej* (marital bed) can be an abstraction, and *bhakti* a path:

*Tero koi nahi rokanhaar, magan hui Mira
chali
Laaj saram kul ki marjaada, sir se door
kari
Maan apmaan dou ghar patke, niksi hu
gyan gali
Unchi atariya laal kivariya, nirgun sej
bicchi* (BM: 56).

Female renunciation finds no place in the

smritis (travel for religious reasons and pilgrimage are expressly forbidden to women²⁰ except in two paradoxical ways. First, the austerity of the last two renunciatory stages of a householder's life are no different in principle from a widow's life. However, these stages, unlike widowhood, are a product of male volition. The *grahasthaashram* of a woman simply ends on her husband's death. Then a 'voluntary' obedience to custom is exhorted. The upper caste widow should be an austere renouncer, she must emaciate her body, and live voluntarily on flowers, roots etc (MDS: 135). Second, because renunciation so utterly contradicts wifehood and domestic surveillance, it is only permissible under duress (and that too only in some *dharmashastras*), for an abandoned woman or a widow.²¹ In some sense then the absorption of the widow into the renunciatory mode is both acceptable and threatening (it requires for some biographers the sanction of a Tulsidas!). So the same 'components' which make Mira an object of familial persecution (P: 171-73) also ensure a wider social legitimacy for her enterprise. Like many other renunciators she breaks with 'outer', 'ephemeral' social systems of kinship and political power only to rejoin the community in another capacity—as critic and commentator. Moral authority in the high Hindu traditions is usually a product of control over sensuous gratification (MDS: 153); Mira's moral authority also partly depends on her austerity. If celibacy betokens an inner spiritual state, then the renouncer must melt the divide between the inner and the outer, between essence and behaviour.

The degree of 'real' choice available to Mira is unclear. Did she reject the court or was she hounded out? The songs sometimes present Mira's choice of Krishna as a product of her own will. In one song she resists the persuasion of her brother-in-law to give up wandering in the company of saints: it destroys the honour and repute of the family (*Kul ko daag lagai chahi bhabhi ninda ho rahi bhaari*), a woman from such a family deems it by dancing in public (*Bada ghar the janam liyo chahi naacho de de taari*), so she must return to the palace, to her fine ornaments and her husband. Mira refuses, the *sadhus* and *sants* are now her family:

Rana ne samajhavo javo mai to baat na maani

Mira ke prabhu Girdhar naagar santa haath bikaani (P: 175-77)

She reiterates her choice whatever the cost
Sadhu sangati kari har sukhu layu, jag su door rahu

Tan man dhan jaavo bhali mero sees lahu (BM: 64)

At other times her *bhakti* seems to be impelled by helplessness, by persecution even by the women; she has no other "true relative or friend./The whole world has turned against me". (DP: 136)²²

Did the refusal to consummate her marriage set up a whole logic which resulted in

leaving home? Did she turn to mendicancy only because she was rejected by her natal and marital family? Did she then have to 'fit' into a sanctioned model of sainthood simply as a vulnerable woman seeking a form of security? Were her *bhakti* and the reputation of celibacy maintained as defensive shields in the absence of patriarchal protection? Did the very fact of lacking the socio-political guarantee that a family provides necessitate belonging to god? Once outside the system of familial protections and obligations what other choices existed?

Mira's songs oscillate between a recognition of her 'inevitable' destiny and a celebration of her choice:

Maata chhori pita chhore, chhore sage soi Sadha sang baith baith lok laaj khoi...

Ab to baat phail gayi, jaanai sab koi Daasi Mira lal girdhar honi so hoi (B: 139)

Mai ri mein to liyo gobindo mo!

...liyori taraaju tol

...liyori aankhi khol (BM: 71)

In either case her vulnerability never ceases. Indeed orality may well be a domain where assertiveness accentuates personal risk. The acquiescence of the listener has to be sought and established: it cannot be guaranteed. Choices are explained and dramatised, public opinion is taken into account. Mira repeatedly describes herself as mad, is acutely and defiantly conscious of how she is perceived:

Piv karan bauri bhai, jyu kaathhi ghun khai (BM: 76)

Ranaji mujhe yeh badnaami lage meethi Koi nindo koi vindo mein to chalungi chaa: anuthi (P: 81)

Koi kahe Mira bahi baavri, koi kahe kul naasi (P: 91 B: 164)

Mira baat nahin jag chhani (P: 175)

Lok kutumbi baraji baraj hi, batiya kahat banai (BM: 58)

Durjin log maari ninda kare chhe (B: 172)

Lag kahai Mira bhair baavri, nyaat (relatives) kahai kulnaasi re (BM: 60)

Mira may have chosen to break the feudal relation, she may have been forced to break with it or she may even have felt herself broken by it. Yet if the feudal relation crumbles in her personal practice, in some ways her songs recover it both figuratively and as ideality and so recompose its ever-present 'necessity' as choice. This reposition is not merely an ideological manoeuvre—it genuinely effects a denaturalisation of 'necessity', and enables her rejection of the domestic. It does, however, make Mira's iconic image problematic. The image returns to challenge and rework the character of her personal rebellion. It is religious belief which empowers Mira; both her sense of selfhood and her violation of man-made custom emerge from her conviction of her subjection to god and her dedication to a 'higher' cause. The series of oppositions offered to hierarchy are both made possible and undone by the fact that as a female subject Mira takes recourse to the highest point—god—within the same patriarchal structure. She can only claim

moral power in the name of god. Her *bhakti* is at once a principle of consonance and of discord. Mira disengages herself from a social order she has understood, some of whose oppressions she has grasped, without disarticulating its order of reality. At this level her metaphors retain an inner correspondence with the social order. The relation of the female subject to the feudal polity, resisted in practice, is remade as metaphor. Could she have disarticulated this order in its entirety and remained intelligible or been allowed to exist?

What is the nature of her asceticism, of the claims she makes in the name of austerity and in the name of *maya*?

The inequitable ground of ascetic widowhood is generalised to extend to everyone regardless of gender and marital status, and this along with the definition of poverty begins to compose the essence of the true *bhakta* or devotee. The devotee is privileged precisely because he/she has no socially recognised privilege, and is already accustomed to subjection. Mira describes the this-worldly as illusory, *maya*:

Yo sansaar sakal jag jhutho (BM: 68)

All the wealth and ornaments of the world are ephemeral,

truth lies only in devotion to god (B: 114)

Jhootha manik motiya ri jhothi jag mag joti

Jhootha sab aabhushanaa ri saanchi piya ji re poti

Jhootha paat patambara re jhootha dikhni cheer

Saanchi piyaji ri goodri ja me nirmal rahe sareer (B: 167)

Woo poverty. It is the great matchmaker between you and god (B: 124)

All "external finery", "rubies and pearls" and "bondage to the world" are "false"; "worldly comfort" is an "illusion" and "the world is a deceit and a delusion, or simply a dream" (DP: 44, 27, 77, 106, 116, 194, 87, 128). Mira conflates actual poverty with poverty as a renunciatory state of mind (*Karna fakeeri phir kya dilgiri, sadaa magan me rahna ji*, B: 174). As princess turned ascetic, poverty for her is a willed state which by shearing away earthly desire is more receptive to the divine, indeed such poverty is a mode of access to the divine (*Hasti ne ghora maal khazaana kaai na ave saath*, P: 117). Her gesture creates a productive disturbance in a birthbound hierarchy, offers an element of control over circumstances, and eventually perhaps even a source of alternate, extra-institutional moral authority.²³ Further, in Mira's compositions, *maya* specifically designates a set of familial and patriarchal claims—of husband, mother, father, brother, kin and clan (BM: 71, 68)—which are described as illusory (B: 172), ephemeral (*Maat pita sut kutumb kabeela, toot gya jyu taaga* BM: 51), materialistic and self-interested (*sab matlab ke garji* BM: 56). Both her natal and marital family (*Jaan na pihar jaan na saasar* P: 139)—primarily constitute the falseness of the world.

And yet it is necessary to see Mira's language as amenable to maintaining *status quo*. If the absence of economic independence is transformed into the renunciation of material desire, then doesn't Mira's rebellion confirm the power of the family and feudal state which can only be abnegated but not changed? What does asceticism imply for a widow who can claim maintenance but has no inalienable right to property or direct access to political power? Is she not deciding to forego what she cannot easily have?—and that too under shelter of a fairly generalised metaphysic of renouncing *maya*. A metaphysic emerges from the constriction and tyrannies of a social formation, occupies relationships of ideality, alterity, and often structural similarity with it. Once it emerges a metaphysic appears to assume an ideality and to acquire an autonomy: this in fact facilitates an instrumentality of a different order since it is always intersected by other discourses and inserted into a range of social practices. Thus the metaphysical core of Mira's *bhakti* is labile and abstract enough to provide a medium for unarticulated human possibility (*moksha*), for speculation on the nature of being and the pressure of mortality, as well as a medium for the formation of an 'inner life' or 'sensitivity'. And yet *being* labile and abstract it is simultaneously open to re-interpretation, to caste, class or patriarchal interest and to political use.

The belief that death and *maya* challenge all is a staple of the metaphysic of the high Hindu tradition. Like many other saints, Mira's *bhakti* reinterprets *maya*.²⁴ From being a cosmic illusion emanating from creation or from god, it becomes more a set of conventional beliefs and attitudes, familial and patriarchal encumbrances, which prevent the meeting between the self and god. In general, *maya* is an impediment to *bhakti* in the shape of characteristic sins—*kaam* (desire), *krodh* (anger), *lobh* (greed), *abhimān* (pride), *mad* (intoxication) and *moh* (delusion)—which corrupt the *man* or heart (BM: 77, 81). *Maya* becomes a condensed sign for invoking a moral order based on moral worth rather than on social institutions and inherited privilege. Significantly, it is not a moral order which can be situated in individual volition alone. *Maya* as an obstruction cannot be removed by the sheer force of the devotee's will and personal insight;²⁵ it can only be withdrawn by Krishna, through the devotee's pleas for deliverance:

Hari hitu se het kar, sansaar aasa tyaag
Das Mira lal girdhar, sahai kar bairag
 (BM:77)

Mira only leaves home at Krishna's command (*Jogiya ne kahiyo re aades P: 83*).

Even this re-interpreted *maya*, despite its critical edge is no less a metaphysic, which may look quite different from different parts of the social hierarchy. The critique of wealth and power is expressed (ideologically) in moral and metaphysical rather than in political terms, and as such it may func-

tion as no more than the conscience of ruling groups. Or it can turn the existing reality of the dominated into the desired reality of the renouncer.

As a renouncer Mira establishes a distance with daily integrative systems of inequality in order to open them to *reflection* or to represent them as petty. And yet in order to do so she affirms at figurative and metaphysical levels, some of the structured relations of collective power and some of the very principles of inequality which underlie these systems. Renunciation here has an inescapable sociality: through redescribing poverty and gender (as I shall discuss later) in ways which carry them well beyond their ascriptive functions into the figurative-metaphysical domain, it reworks existing inequities into higher levels governed by faith. When this metaphysic is also the ground of the challenge to feudal hierarchy and patriarchy then some questions remain. Does not Mira continue to share the dominant representations of the visible and invisible world? Do faith and metaphysic absorb and deflect critique or does critique rethron and relocate metaphysic?

There can scarcely be an adequate textual answer to these questions. Mira relinquishes her own caste and class status, gives up the benefits of princely power along with the perilous norms of upper caste widowhood, and consorts with lower caste men and women. She had a following among lower caste men and women both during and after her lifetime. Though her compositions do not enunciate it, her critique of wealth, when combined with her personal practice, may have had a different ideological location. After all, the wealth to be rejected in this context is accumulated by merchants, usurers, drawn from the ostentatious expenditure of the landowning groups, and from the scantily remunerated labour and perennial indebtedness of peasants and artisans. The different potentials for appropriation could be surmised from the elite and popular versions of Mira's legend and songs through time, but that is too vast a search to be undertaken here.

IV

Choosing Krishna

Mira's relationship to patriarchy is far from simple. And it is her songs, more than her life which complicate the refraction of wifehood and widowhood. Her songs, like those of many women saints, are largely concerned with love or *madhurya bhava*—perceived as the highest and most encompassing relation.²⁶ Mira's location as a Rajput woman is crucial here since 'love' is scarcely a private matter though it may appear to be so. The notion of personal (not individual) devotion to a reciprocating husband-lover gather special resonances and inflections in a medieval Rajput court. It becomes both response and challenge to the way marriage is institutionalised by a polygamous, expansive, military aristocracy,

the way it regulates relationships between men and women, and the way the 'private' is structured by and into the public domain.

Her choice of Krishna as the object of worship and devotion is both ironic and complex. Krishna is not simply a monarchic, patriarchal god like the *maryadapurushotam* Ram. He has two distinct aspects (though one may be more prominent in certain traditions), and there is an implicit structural relation between the two. To put it crudely, he is both pastoral cowherd-peasant and prince-proprietor.

The first aspect of Krishna is structured around his reciprocity and negligence of social propriety. As the 'sinful' cowherd lover towards whom all longing is directed, he invokes and receives unabashed pleasure, with intermittent reciprocity, in his illicit pastoral frolics with the *gopis* in Vrindavan. He not only himself breaks the norms of marriage—Radha is married in some Vaisnav traditions—but *Krishnabhakti* becomes the occasion for women to trespass norms, including those of conjugal fidelity. His relation with the *gopis* can be non-hierarchical, non-procreative, disinterested in maintaining social order, and unlike the conjugal relation, can exist in and for itself—not as the 'fruit' of action but as action itself. Not only is Krishna sympathetic to the 'feminine' he can at times be subject to it. Bengal Vaisnav *bhakti* blurs the distinction between god and devotee and heightens reciprocity: the *jiva* is a part of the Bhagawat, and so shares in the quality of belovedness. Worship is satisfying for both god and devotee. Krishna cannot taste his own beauty and sweetness unless it is objectified in another person toward whom he can direct his love.²⁷ Finally, he has powers superior and yet analogous to those of humans and is open to direct appeal.

The other aspect of Krishna is structured around his political power and pragmatism. He is the warrior-hero: the *vir* engaged in continuous warfare in order to conquer evil, the feudal ruler who urges Arjun to battle in the *Bhagwad Gita*, the prince and husband of the *Bhagwad Purana* who has sixteen thousand one hundred wives and eight queens, loves them all and neglects none. He is represented as the object of orthodox wifely fidelity—eight queens are immolated on his death.²⁸ The courtly Krishna lives in Dwarka, indeed Dwarka becomes a "synonym for his absence" for the lovetorn *gopis* and for Radha;²⁹ it represents the difficulty of reconciling the peasant with the prince. The pragmatic causality of the actions of Krishna the ruler is the obverse of his 'aimless' loveplay, his self-delighting *lila* in Vrindavan (DP: 33). The second aspect of Krishna is not very different from that of the Rajput military aristocracy, of which in turn Mira's *bhakti* is the 'other' face.

Mira's description and designation of Krishna varies. Sometimes he is a courtly Krishna: "Girdhar nagar", "Dwarka ke thakur", and "maharaj". She resents his shift

from Vrindavan to Dwārka (*Pat pat Vrindavan dhoondyo... aap to jaye Dwarka chhaye BM: 31*) and “follows” his itinerary in her travels. Mostly he is the cowherd lover, and she presents herself sometimes as a *gopi* or Radha. However both aspects of Krishna enter into her configuration of god, husband and lover. Though Rajasthan has a significant poetic tradition centred on the heroic courtly Krishna (e.g., Prithvi Rathaur’s *Veli Krisan Rukmini*), broadly speaking, the emotional contours of her *bhakti* are closer to Chaitanya’s Gaudiya Vaishnava school in Bengal—firmly established in Vrindavan by the 16th century under the Goswamis. The Goswamis use the analogy between human love and divine love comparing love for god with a woman’s yearning for her lover: the enjoyment of god’s nature occurs through a *bhakti* expressed as *rati* (pleasure). Rup Goswami draws on the secular definition of *sringara rasa*, elevates *bhakti* into a *rasa* and gives *madhura bhakti* supreme status.³⁰

Mira’s *bhajans* derive their emotional and cultural power from the metaphorical use of the common analogies between god and master, god and lover, between earthly husband as lord, master, and lover, between soul and wife, between divine service and wifely or domestic service, between the bondage of the soul to the god, the bondage of the wife to the husband and the servant to the master, and between the spiritual ‘desire’ of the soul and sensual desire. In her songs Krishna is the beloved (*piv, pritam, piya, sajana*), the husband-lover (*saiya*), the bridegroom (*yar, dulha*), the husband (*pati*), the master (*thakur*), the protector, the king (*maharaj*), and of course god (*prabhu*). Mira is the eternal virgin (*janam janam ki kunwaari*), the bride (*dulhan*), the wife-beloved separated from the husband-lover (*virhan*), the servant (*chakar*), the maid-servant or slave (*dasi*), the devotee (*pujarin*). Mira glories in single minded devotion (*mere aasaa chitwani tumri aur na dooj dor BM: 55*), immerses herself in servitude, suffering and in the vicissitudes of loving Krishna.

At one level these metaphors of desire approximate the language of social and patriarchal subjection; and in a far more emphatic way as compared to the compositions of earlier women *bhaktis* like Mahadeviyakka and Andal. The female body appears to be publicly structured by existing hierarchies.

If He sold me into slavery, I would acquiesce DP: 41)

Jaha baithavai tithi baithu, bechain to bik jaun (B: 155).

But Mira is sold into Hari’s hands, His slave for birth upon birth. (DP: 53). She has sold herself in slavery to Him Without accepting a fee (DP: 58).

O Girdhari Lal, keep me as thy servant Keep me as thy servant.

I will remain thy faithful servant, Will plant thy garden

And every morning will rise early To have thy sight.
In the leafy lanes of Vrindavan I will sing the deeds of Govind.
If I perform Thy service, I will have thy sight for reward.
Thy remembrance will be my wages, The spirit of devotion my fief.
For which I have longed during many a birth (DP: 97).

Syam! mane chakar rakho ji, Girdharilal! chakar rakho ji Chakar reh su baag laga su, nit uth darsan paasu Vrindavan ki kunj galin me, teri lila gaasu

Chakri me darsan paau, sumiran paau kharchi Bhav bhagati jagiri paau, teenu baata sarsi (B: 153).

Tum mere thakur main teri dasi (B: 149).

Nor can Mira’s songs be isolated from other semantic histories of bondage. The word *das* emerged from *Dasyu* or non-Aryan, and came by early feudal times to mean house servant or bondsman, *sudra* or low caste, as well as retainer or serf.³¹ In medieval Rajasthan the *das* or *dasi* was bought and sold (either by himself/herself or by others), and bonded in perpetuity for generations since his/her children were born as slaves. The *chakar* could be a servant in a household or the client of a feudal patron.

Analogies and metaphors of bondage are common, even generic, literary devices in *bhakti* compositions. However, they cannot be taken literally or ‘accused’ in the same way as prescriptive statement and there is much in Mira’s songs which works against them (as I shall discuss later). It might be helpful to look at the semantic history and local context of her figurative modes.

V

Different Modes of Bondage

Subordination becomes the figurative ground for transcendence in her *bhakti* resulting in a play with a range of meanings in the ideas of service, servitude, bondage and domination, and raises its own set of disturbances. Her metaphors acquire a special resonance in the context of medieval Rajasthan, the more so because they encapsulate a long Vaishnav history of vesting subalternity with symbolic power.

The pairing of women with *sudras*, which occurs in the *Satapathabrahmana*—on the basis of both being embodiments of untruth, sin and darkness³²—becomes more detailed and frequent in the *smritis* (MDS: 43, 93, 133) and puranas, texts which mark and probably negotiate the shift from a nomadic, pastoral to an agrarian economy. In the *Manusmriti*, the essential wicked or servile nature of women and *sudras* is preordained, their lowly birth is a result of sins in previous births (MDS: 230-33, 168). This in turn necessitates a low ritual status for both and the construction of rules for their exclusion.

Roughly the same set of activities are forbidden to them, ostensibly because these will cause their downfall (*patan*): reciting Vedic mantras, going on pilgrimages, performing austerities, renunciation, the fourth ashram of *sannyasa*, etc.³³ In this literature socially prescribed roles are conjoined not only with the essential nature of women and *sudras*, but also with the very order of creation. The desire to create and/or maintain the subjection of women and *sudras* is fundamentally a desire to secure control over the means of reproduction and production (i.e., labour)—and extends to negotiating the ways in which they are to be represented.

Subalternity seems to acquire a special value in some strands of Vaishnavism. The *Vishnu Purana*, the *Bhagwad Gita*, and the *Bhagwat Purana* describe a Vaishnavism which marks the inclusion of women and *sudras* as listeners to the stories and teachings of the epics and Puranas.³⁴ Here, simultaneous with descriptions of the subjection of women and *sudras* and of their essential ‘fallen’ nature, there occurs, inversely, a metaphorical enrichment and idealisation of subalternity. The *Bhagwat Purana* (c 500-1000 AD) represents women as ‘the distracting creations of *maya*, to be shunned by wise men and sages as impediments to devotion. The characteristic qualities of the lowest castes are “absence of cleanliness, falsehood, thieving, heterodoxy, want of faith, quarrelsomeness without a proper cause, strong lust, violent anger and inordinate covetousness” (BhP: 5: 1948-49, 1993, 2013). And yet the ideal *bhakti* in the *Bhagwat Purana* is the poor or low caste man *because* he does not devote his time and energy to the acquisition, protection and consumption of wealth, because he owns neither possessions nor property to tie him to the world, because he is by nature empathetic, free from arrogance, and conceit, humble, guileless, pure, both born to and accustomed to service.³⁵ Women and *sudras* become the ‘natural’ constituency of Krishna, clubbed together by the *Bhagwat*’s thorough chastisement of the wealth, ignorance, degeneracy, self-interest, and pride of the uppercastes. Since the model *bhakti* is a renouncer, poverty and low caste can be read as a ‘natural’ freedom from *maya* (BhP: 5: 1901, 1921-23, 2031, 2062-63). Subalternity itself is endowed with inverse power by a personage no less than Krishna. Krishna says that he is under the control of his devotees who have “enthralled him by their devotion even as good wives do by their devotion to virtuous husbands”.³⁶ Such power is in turn seen to be an effect of *kaliyug*.

The cyclic time scale of the four *yugas* enters into a curious relation with subalternity. The *Brahmanda Purana* (c 300-1000 AD) describes the first utopian *krta yug* as a nomadic world marked by the absence of inequality or any form of stratification, and by the perfect presence of knowledge and *dharma*. People are devoid of desire and pro-

geny are born without copulation through mental conception. It appears to be utopian precisely because of the absence of caste, property, sexuality and consequently any form of patriarchy! The second *tretayug* sees the establishment of settled cultivation and agriculture, kingship, law and order, caste distinction and copulation. In the third *dwaparyug*, the four stages of life, the classification of castes, and the clear-cut principles of *dharma* are all being adulterated, thus laying the basis for *kaliyug*. The absence of religious homogeneity and the contradictory interpretations of ancient texts are singled out as the cause of corruption. Though *kaliyug* is projected as a future dystopia, it is the description of a present made dissatisfactory for some by the religious and social dissent of others.³⁷

In the *Vishnupurana* (c 100-500 AD), the *Bhagwat Purana* and the *Brahmanda*, *Purana kaliyug* is marked by mortality, natural calamities, the inevitability of evil and the reversal or degeneration of the political, the social, the legal and the caste order: the rule of wealth, the misuse of religious texts, the rise of heretics and of enemies of the system of *varnashram-dharma*, the adoption of heretical (i.e., non-brahmanical) doctrine by *sudras*, a respect for heresy, and the rule of the low-born. *Kaliyug* is most notable for the breakdown of patriarchal norms: the failure of marriages to conform to ritual, marriages for the sake of mutual liking or mutual consent rather than family pedigree or social status, the disregard of laws regulating the conduct of husband and wife, the collapse of the extended family, the desertion by wives of those husbands who have lost their property, the general valorisation of sexual pleasure, and the immorality of women. The innate faults of women are enhanced: they are selfish, fickle, dishonest, wanton, shameless, dissolute, short, greedy, given to harsh speech, theft, fraud and daredevilry, disobedient to husbands and parents, fond of pleasure. In general unchaste, they also begin to sell their bodies. The faithful wives do not survive. By the end of the *yug* women outnumber men.³⁸ This dystopia virtually makes *kaliyug* a projected embodiment of *strisvabhav* or the essential fallen nature of women.

Conversely, in this Vaishnav literature *kaliyug* is described as the best time to be born a human since Krishna makes himself much more accessible to those human souls who practise devotion to him, and salvation is attainable with great speed simply through singing his name and deeds.³⁹ Indeed, the redeeming properties of *kaliyug* consist in the singular blessedness of the lowest and most subaltern—women and *sudras*—who can now achieve religious merit with ease. In contrast to the enormous ritual labour required of twice born men, women and *sudras* can attain god simply through performing their duties and through service of their husbands and twice born men respectively.⁴⁰

The rule of patriarchy is at its most insecure and women are completely fallen in *kaliyug*, worse than they have ever been. And yet, paradoxically, by simply subjecting themselves to patriarchy they can achieve salvation easier than ever before. Impediment can become advantage through obedience—a “woman has only to honour her husband in act, thought, and speech”.⁴¹ Social and patriarchal subjection constitute the path to salvation—which amounts to staying in one’s ordained place. Here a triadic relationship between god, the upper-caste male and the woman or *sudra* is established in which the uppercaste male is an intermediary. The dominance of upper-caste men is presented ideologically—they can be perceived almost as doing a kindness to/for women and *sudras* by providing them with easy avenues of (service) salvation.

Whether or not *kaliyug* is accurately describing the present, it expresses fear and anxiety about preserving desired social hierarchies. The parallel idealisation of subalternity and the new and ‘easy’ modes of salvation opened to the subaltern are an inversion of the fear of the empowerment of women and *sudras*—which in a contradictory way also makes a new space for them in salvation schema. Ironically, these schema make it possible for women and lower castes not only to share these representations, but to use the *kaliyug* time scale for self-empowerment. It is in this contradictory space for subalternity—in which caste and patriarchal orders are being obsessively remade in the face of ‘resisting’ *sudras* and women, and which simultaneously offers them some degree of control over their salvation—that Mira’s metaphors are constituted.

If the triad of servant/wife-master/husband-god accrues one set of meanings from texts which belong to an earlier social formation evolving an order of caste and gender at a time when a state and classes are emerging (meanings which Mirabai’s songs duplicate and displace), it acquires another specific set of meanings in the medieval Rajput state. The symbolic location of subalternity here hinges on the relation of the female subject to the state. The many husbands who mediate the dispersion of the political power of the state through intermediary zamindaries or chieftaincies, and who mediate the women’s relation with king and god, correspond with what in another context has been called the “overall parcellisation of sovereignty based on the coincidence of political and economic relations of subordination/appropriation”.⁴² The hierarchy obtaining within marriage not only represents other social hierarchies in miniature, but also belongs to a continuum of power relations in which power is serially distributed; patriarchal practices can function ideologically not merely in their own name but in the name of something else.

The series of mirroring analogical relationships which extend from lowliest servant

to god entwine the feudal state and its subjects into an indispensable spiritual economy. The common analogy between the attributes and rights of a king and of god⁴³ is complemented in political thought by the representation of monarchy on the patriarchal domestic model wherein “the subjects are wife to a king; they are like crop to be brought up for grain”.⁴⁴ The family is metaphorically interchangeable with the state, the husband with the king. The state incorporates the (willing) subject, suggesting the desired ideal relation of the (female) individual to family and state. Here the incorporation of the subject into the body of the social plenum represented by the king becomes the deep structural form of all being. Mira does not alter such a positioning of the subject; a certain ontology remains intact. The fact that her *bhakti* remains grounded in such ideality may in part be a reflection of her own class location. Though the analogy has a certain transparency at the level of ruling class desire, and naturalises the continuum of woman-devotee-husband-king-god, its relation to social practice is bound to be diverse and complex. It may not coincide with the aspirations of the ruled even when women and other subjects themselves share these representations and assent to characteristics ascribed to them. Thus the divine or ‘higher’ power to which Mira affirms her subjecthood, may be analogous to the king but it can also in turn incorporate both king and state. Invisible power may even be a handy recourse in the face of the hostile, visible power of the *rana*—whether he is the husband or the king. The *rana* is addressed with defiance:

Ranaji mein to sanvre re rang raati
(BM: 79)

Ab nahin maanu Rana thaari,
mein bar payo Girdhari (B: 184/P: 125).

He is placed in open combat with Krishna, the poison he sends is turned into nectar with Krishna’s benediction (BM: 75, p 157); his disfavour is as nothing compared to Krishna’s disfavour (*Raja ruthai nagri raakai hari roothya kaha jaana* BM: 75). It is finally the Rana who is dispensable: *Tum jaavo rana ghar apne meri teri nahin sari* (BM: 56).

VI

The Female Subject

The ideological and semantic accretions of these analogues and metaphors of bondage have given them a ‘determinate’, readily paraphrasable meaning. Though deeply implicated in them Mira’s compositions do not merely replicate these meanings. The passionate intensity of the songs actively works against and sometimes displaces them because the female is centrally a *desiring* subject. The *smriti* literature acknowledges sexual desire but presents it as something which must be regulated for both men and women within the primarily procreative conjugal relation. The practices of Rajput polygamy regulate the sexual desire of women but allow men an insatiable appetite

and access to a potentially unlimited number of women. Mira's desire for Krishna is by definition unregulated, unconnected to procreation. Though her songs bear the traces of an Advaitic *nirguna bhakti* in the assertion of the identity of the individual soul with god, she yearns more often to realise such identity through union:

Thou and I are one, like the sun and its heat (DP: 80),
Jot me jot mila jaa (BM: 55)
 Let my light dissolve in your light (DP: 53, 80)

Her Krishna is both present and absent.⁴⁵ Taken up with the physical beauty of Krishna she yearns for a sight or vision (*darshan*) of Krishna, a spiritual consummation which is described erotically as a sensuous union and sometimes attained (*Bisari gayi dukh, nirakhi piya ku sufal manorath kaami* BM: 55, and DP: 93-95). Her love is an unquenchable thirst (*taras, pyasi*) which holds her captive (*mohi*), crazes her (*prem divani*), drives her astray, absorbs her completely like a madness (*bhakti bhav me mast doli*), makes her oblivious to all else (*aakul vyakul phiru rain din*). She dresses in bridal clothes, makes a bed of flowers and awaits Krishna or is seated in her bridegroom's house "arrayed in finery and quite without shame" Or else she is a woman separated from her lover sitting all night in her palace of pleasure threading tears-pearls into a necklace (*virhan baihi rang mahal me, motian ki lar pove*), her bridal bed is empty (*sooni sej*) or exists in another world (*gagan mandal par sej piya ki*). She anticipates a midnight tryst on the bank of the river of love (*aadhi raat prabhu darsan dinhe, prem nadi ke teera*). She has spent a whole night waiting for her beloved (*piya ke panth niharat sigri rain vihani ho*). Her chest heaves at the sound of his name (*sabad sunat meri chatiya kampe*), without him her body is lean and anguished (*ang cheen vyakul bhaye*), she longs for physical union (*ang se ang lagavo*) and her whole life passes in such longing (DP: 96, 92, 36, 45, 46, 69, 61, 97, 114; B: 83, 144, 60, 141, 94, 153).

Significantly this desire is expressed and accompanied by performance through which she constitutes herself as a defiant self-describing subject of Krishna (BM: 80), in some ways more a boldly attractive courtesan than a dutiful wife, more immoral than 'moral'.

*Mein girdhar aage naacchoongi
 Naach naach piv rasik rijhaau,
 premi jan ko jaanchoongi
 Prem preet ke baandh ghunghru
 surat ki kacchwi kaacchoongi
 Lok laaj kul ki marjaada,
 ya mein ek na raakhoongi
 Piy ke palanga jaa paudungi,
 Mira hari rang raachoongi* (BM: 73).

This performance itself is a quasi-metaphorical sign of abandon (*Tan karu taal, man karu dhapli* BM: 8; *Pag ghunghru baandh Mira naachi re* BM: 72), and of an

irretrievable public exposure of her self and body to the point which makes readmission into the respectability of the family impossible—she is dancing in front of 'other' men/*sadhus*.

*Nit uth Hariji ke mandir jaasya,
 naacchya de de chhuiki* (BM: 72)
*Ram tane rangraachi Rana
 mein to sanvalia rang raachi re
 Taal, pakhawaj, mirdang baaja
 saadha aage naachi re
 Koi kahe Mira bhai baanwri
 koi madmaati re* (pp: 167-69)

Performance is both jeopardy and ecstasy.

How does the personal devotion and sensuous desire as embodied in the 'subaltern' female voice correspond to and diverge from the feudal relation, as it is expressed in the prescriptive, perceptual and customary norms of a class? Though Mira appears in some ways to choose and advocate an ascetic way of life, her *bhajans* are filled with sensuous yearning. Indeed the renunciation of worldly desires seem to give the celibate Rajput princess access to the language of sexual desire. Mira's personal practice and songs disturb the model of the good wife and the good widow but they also articulate the good wife and the good widow, or more accurately the 'wifely' voice, within another set of relationships. In a sense it is the female voice—with its material basis in patriarchal subjugation—which provides the emotional force of self abasement and willed servitude. The sensuous symbolism and performative mode transgress the austere conventions of upper caste widowhood, but what occurs at the same time is that her songs re-evolve a new relation of bondage which is now replete with desire. Through the infusion of such desire the feudal relation becomes at once the political relation, the domestic relation, the erotic relation, and the spiritual relation, knotted into the same vocabulary, intrincating various modes of desire and dominance. With fairly contradictory results.

Indeed for Mira in her own life, the "offer" of herself as "sacrifice" (DP: 84) or of willed servitude to Krishna is the (ironic) ground of agency, i.e., an altered personal practice. A language which makes the patriarchal substratum of customary subjection simultaneously the matrix of agency and transcendence may achieve quite remarkable shifts of emphasis, dislocations and create new, contradictory spaces, even as it remains amenable to maintaining *status quo*.

What is this new space? First, it is a space which is artificially wrenched from the material domain: in it the relations between wife-husband, servant-master, devotee-god are read as affective and non-economic. The poor, whether women or *sudras*, are rich in affective worship;⁴⁶ their affective power is only strengthened by the fact that the path of *bhakti* is a choice. Because submission is voluntary, and not merely a duty, social behaviours of enforced dependence are displaced and become the qualities of the

believer. Second, Mira's *bhakti* refixes a feudal hierarchy even as it carves out a space for her personal deviation from the social order. The space created by and for exceptional women is restricted space and can be made to ratify the rule for ordinary women.

What is the precise nature of the gratification available? In this space gender divisions are generalised and dissolved even as they are recreated. Firstly, the specificity of servitude is dissolved into servitude as *the* human condition, where even a ruler is no more than a ruled, a servant before god. Such servanthood provides unspeakable relief, security and intimacy with a god who is addressed as *tu*. Secondly, the god created in the same analogical continuum as husband-king, is a god figured as involved in production and reproduction, as controlling both the female body and the social body described as female. The undeniable material reality of this female-social body in turn confers a special reality on this god objectified as human. The metaphor *substantiates* god, glories in its own creative power, creates female desire as partially self-sublimating.

*Mor mugat pitaabar sohe,
 gal baijanti mala
 Vrindavan me dhenu charaaye,
 mohan murli wala
 Hare hare nit baag lagaau,
 bich bich raakhu kyaari
 Sanvariya ke darsan paau,
 pahar kusummi saari* (BM: 153/DP: 97)
*Baso mere nainan me nandlal
 Mohini murat, sanvri surat,
 naina bane bisaal
 Adhar sudha ras murli raajat, ur baijanti
 maal* (B: 142)

Suni ho mein hari aavan ki avaj (B: 148)

Thirdly, the generosity of willed servitude, in return for accepting both his arbitrariness and the unequal relation, endows the lord with a complementary munificence, indeed creates a notion of lordliness which must respond to the immeasurable and excessive passion of the *das/i* with an illimitable excess of reward (salvation).

Jo pahiravai soi pahiru, jo de soi khaau...

Mira ke prabhu girdhar nagar baar baar bali jaau (B: 155)

Precisely as only the unquestioning obedience of the wife can complete the patriarchal power of the husband, so only unstinting devotion can establish and complete the munificence of god. In effect, such servitude whether social or patriarchal demands and assumes *reciprocity*, claims its rights even as it acknowledges duty.

*Tumre kaaran sab sukh chorraya,
 ab mohi kyu tarsaavau hau...
 Ab chhorat nahi bane prabhujii,
 hans kar turat bulaavau hau* (B: 150)

It is obedient not to the mere letter of feudalism but to its 'spirit', a spirit of such potential magnificence that all social practice must cave in by comparison, all earthly

servitude including the domestic be rendered paltry, all human love faced with a sense of inadequacy, a lack of plenitude, and 'recognised' as mere bondage without promise of release. The material conditions of ordinary existence are at once devalued and transfigured (but not necessarily changed). It is in this sense that Mirabai, by replenishing the reciprocity structured into an 'ideal' feudal relation, replenishes that relation, turns it into an unimagined excess. The transcendence effected is not a rising above the feudal relation or an 'escape' from it, rather a transcendence *within* the relation itself which is both marked and enlarged, which is both measured and made elastic and which is enmeshed in the actual texture of living. The 'self-transcending' feudal relation so constructed aspires to humanise the actual feudal relation and makes it *inhabitable*.

This new space created remains a contradictory site because though it may set out to dissolve gender distinctions it remains pre-eminently a gendered terrain. Visible modes of human desire and patriarchal dominance coincide or overlap with but also contradict 'higher' modes of spiritual desire and divine dominance. One contradiction occurs because spiritual desire is open to individual shaping or remaking depending on the devotee's will, and also open to *excessive* investment without fear of human betrayal or the frauds of *maya*. There is a second contradiction between a 'wifely' voice of devotion and between actual wifely service. Here the feminisation of devotion could potentially be used as a new spiritual sanction for patriarchy, in which the language of a woman would assist in the incorporation of domestic bondage into a celestial code. At this level Mira's *bhajans* rebelliously distance and 'transcend' oppressive institutions as mundane, illusory *maya* even as they refine and replicate unegalitarian feudal relations inside the language of rebellion. Third, when a gender ideology governing familial and political structures is inserted into sensuous and mystical experience, then these structures are sacralised and converted into transcendent modes of fulfilment; however, in a contradictory way, these very structures are simultaneously marked as the inevitable ground of transcendence, so effecting a dispersal of desire across a whole range of social relationships. Finally, the religious vocabulary itself effects a further dispersal of desire which refuses patriarchal consolidation even as its language consents to it. The spiritual can hold the domestic to ransom.

In these contradictory spaces, Mira's *bhakti* is able to establish an irregular relation between a woman's duty and a woman's desire—they may be either aligned or disjunct, they may or may not be compatible. Sexuality and desire are both embedded and expressed within an ensemble of gender and class relations and in particular notions of self and time. But sexuality here is not a

function of, nor the modality of an individual identity and the processes of its formation. The space which the body occupies is the simultaneous space of this world (the body as a site for social knowledge and its reproduction) and a world other than this. The female body is the site of passion, suffering, the punitive operations of patriarchal power, but it is also the site of mortality and diffuse unnameable desire. Desire too is structured both in and across the world; it is both with and without purpose, rapture with and without a secular teleology. The heterogeneous modes and operations of patriarchy are at once embodied and cast aside in the plenitude and diffuseness of such desire. The body, always inseparable from its social meanings, can scarcely be separated from the 'soul' in Mira's *bhakti*.

The spiritual economy of Mira's *bhakti* may in many ways be homologous with the domestic and political economy of the Rajput state but it is structured as 'uncontainable', as excessive.

To what else may such excess be attributed? Mira's *bhakti* belongs to a prolonged historical moment and marks an exhilarating shift in the relation between law, subjection and sexual desire. In the Rigvedic and Brahmana myths desire is represented as either a 'natural' part of creation or as disruptive. By the time of the *smritis*, law making is itself part of an obsessive construction of theoretical models for control, social order and salvation. It is now seen as necessary to contain female sexual desire within evolving orders of caste and patriarchy through prescribed methods of daily surveillance, and through rewards and punishments in this world and the next. It is seen as sinful for women to have their own desires and these are explicitly opposed to their *dharma* (MDS: 231, 234). At the same time woman is cast as the eternal temptress—the object and very form of sexual desire who can ensnare the wisest and most ascetic of men (MDS: 42). Methods of containment and of extracting obedience and virtue from wives are coded as *stridharma* while the essentially disruptive nature of female desire, a part of their essential wickedness, is coded as *strisvabhav*.⁴⁷ Both exist unreconciled in the *smritis* and the epics. The subjection of women, and the control of sexual desire is to be effected *externally* through a combination of Vedic and customary laws. The *Manusmriti* does, however, concede that some degree of internalisation or self-control is necessary to keep a wife good: she must be guarded not only by the family/husband but also by her own "good inclinations" (MDS: 232).

The female devotional voice of Mira's *bhakti* makes subjection the ground of a female desire which now encompasses and extends beyond the sexual—it can now take desire and subjection, femaleness and moral duty in its stride. These are no longer parallel and unreconciled. Desire and morality are remade together in a new series of relationships. The structures of social subjection

coded as *stridharma*, and of female desire coded as *strisvabhav*, are selectively combined, internalised and recast as a femaleness—even as the actual physical/corporeal subjection of women within the family is relegated. This new ennobling femaleness is in striking contrast to the 'negative' femaleness essentialised as insatiable, immoral *strisvabhav*: *strisvabhav* may be incorporated as a generalised female sexual desire and its 'excessiveness' garnered as intensity, but it is relegated as a characterisation of women or womanhood.

In some sense Mira's *bhakti* is transforming some of the structures of social control prescribed in Hindu orthodoxy into intimate, internalised structures of feeling. The domain of ethics, and of *paap-punya* (part of the karmic ledger of *maya*) shifts from obedience and transgression of law, and becomes fundamentally a matter of how a person stands with god—an 'internal' matter. Similarly, the ultimate displacement of the husband by god shifts the domain of female purity.⁴⁸ However, this displacement simultaneously assists in the refinement and internalisation of these very structures of control. Service, discarded as a set of rules and strictures becomes a complex *bhava*, an emotional configuration. A *bhava* which comes to be defined in part through her refusal to serve either her husband or his memory can become a free floating emotion which can be rejoined to the institution of marriage as devotion to the husband. This *bhava* can be used conservatively to assist either in 'spiritualising' marriage or in reconciling 'love' with marital duty.

However, though the female devotional voice may be open to such simplification and ideological use, it is far from simple in itself. Its very historical existence is complex. The orthodox triadic relation between wife, husband and god, is broken. The wife no longer gets her salvation through her 'godlike' husband as in the *Manusmriti* (MDS: 135). *Bhakti* offers direct salvation, the intermediary position now belongs not to the human husband or the Brahmin priest but to the female devotional voice. This voice, obsessed with the relationships between men and women, continues to negotiate the triadic relationship—it simultaneously transgresses and reformulates patriarchal ideologies.

Marriage, and more generally, licit and illicit relations between men and women come in handy as metaphorical and analogical modes to develop, express and apprehend the relationship between *bhakt* and god. In the process the social relationships and moralities on which these are based are also opened up to reflection, to either critique or reaffirmation. The relationship of the female devotional voice to patriarchal institutions such as marriage is at once a relationship to an actual institution and to an ideologically fraught conceptual abstraction made up of intimacy, subservience and transcendence.

Exactly as the primary concern now is the

ture of the relationship between god and *bhakt*, so too one of the chief addressee's is the heart or *man* of the *bhakt*, i.e., his/her affective powers. It is this *man* which is to contest external social, juridical, religious institutions and their norms. The *man* is an active worshipper at god's feet: once it is freed from social constraint and opened to god, the path is cleared. There is inexpressible joy for Mira when her heart, purified by Krishna, becomes his home.

Ghatke sab pat khol diye hai,

lok laaj sab daar ke (BM: 63)

Man re, parasi hari ke charan (BM: 68)

Mero man laago harisu, ab na rahungi atki (BM: 72)

Hari jan dhobiya re, mail mana di dhoy (B: 166).

Mere piya mere hriday basat hai yeh sukh kahyo na jaati (BM: 79).

Raarli hoi ke kin're jaau,

tum hau hirdaaro saaj (BM: 86)

Bin piya jot mandir andhiyaari (F: 205)

Mero man baasigo girdhar lal (P: 129).

With Krishna ornamenting her heart—the *man* virtually becomes a *mandir* or temple which can 'centre' all activity and desire.

The new substantive definition and centrality of the *man* is of some significance. In Mira's compositions as well as those of many male bhaktas—Nanak, Kabir—the heart is both home and temple, the place where husband-god resides.⁴⁹ This enlarged space of the *man* appears to be part of a historical shift where even as god is internalised it becomes possible to internalise specific patriarchal relations—both can be transformed into seemingly 'unmediated' essences and experiences which appear to bypass social institutions.

(To be concluded)

Notes

- 1 Krishna Sharma, *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement: A New Perspective* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1987), and Susmita Pande *Birth of Bhakti in Indian Religion and Art* (Delhi: Books and Books, 1982) demonstrate that *bhakti* as a form of personal devotion is not restricted to what have been specified as movements and its elements are not only varied but to be found in various places at different times. Romilla Thapar sees the Tamil devotional cults of the 7th and 8th century as partly a resistance to the power of the brahmins under royal patronage and to Aryanisation—*A History of India* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), Vol 1, pp 186-88—and the rise of heterodox, social protest movements as connected to expanding trade and social mobility—*Ancient Indian Social History* (1978, rpt Delhi: Orient Longman, 1987, p 148)—For D D Kosambi *bhakti* as a constellation of personal devotion, faith and loyalty is both a symptom and prop of the feudal economy which arises at the end of the 6th century—*D D Kosambi on History and Society: Problems of Historical Interpretation* ed A J Syed (Bombay: University

of Bombay, 1985, p 181). Irfan Habib locates the emergence of monotheistic cults in caste mobility, and in the expansion of artisan groups to service the ruling classes in the 13th and 14th century, as well as to the reformation of cattle tending pastoral Jats into a peasant group due to the expansion of settled agriculture between the 11th and 15th century ("The Historical Background of Popular Monotheistic Movements of the 15th-17th centuries", mimeograph, 1965). Harbans Mukhia isolates the conservatism of Dadu Dayal in his use of the analogy between the divinity of the sovereign and the divinity of god ("The ideology of the Bhakti movement: the case of Dadu Dayal" in *History and Society: Essays in Honour of professor Nihhuranjan Ray*, ed Debiprasad Chattopadhyay Calcutta: K P Bagchi, 1976). Rani Vilas Sharma designates *bhakti* as a progressive anti-feudal manifestation of class conflict (*Sahitya: Sthayi Mulya aur Mulyankan*, Delhi, 1968), while Rameswar Prasad Bahuguna shows *bhakti* to have had different trends and ideological pulls and to have been gradually assimilated ("Conflict and Assimilation in the Bhakti Movement in Medieval India", M Phil thesis, Centre for Historical Studies, School for Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1986). These differing descriptions and assessments of the material basis and revolutionary potentials of *bhakti* have effectively broken it as a universal, mystical monolith, and cleared a space for specific studies of *bhaktas* and movements.

- 2 See A K Ramanujam, 'On Women Saints' in *The Divine Consort: Radha and the Goddesses of India* ed John Stratton Hawley and Donna Marie Wulff (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union, Religious Studies Series, 1982), pp 321-23.
- 3 Ram Vallabh Somani, *History of Mewar* (Bhilwara: Mateswari Publications, 1976); Har Bilas Sarda, *Maharana Sanga, the Hindupat: The Last Great Leader of the Rajput Race* (nd, rpt, Delhi: Kumar, 1970); Rekha Misra, *Women in Mughal India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967), pp 22-23; G N Sharma, *Social Life in Medieval Rajasthan* (Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, 1968), pp 230-35, 278; Suman Sharma, *Madhyakaleen Bhakti Andolan ka Samajik Vivechan* (Varanasi: Vishwa-vidyalaya Prakashan, 1974), p 165; Max Arthur Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*, 6 Vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909), Vol 6, pp 344, 350, 352, 355; A J Alston, *The Devotional Poems of Mirabai* (Delhi: Motilal Benarsidas, 1980), pp 7-8—this is henceforth cited in the text as DP; Premvani: *Mirabai ke ek sau barah padon ka sankalan* ed Sardar Jafri (Bombay: Hindustan Book Trust, 1965), pp 21-25—this is henceforth cited in the text as P; G S Acharya, *Bhakti Mira* (Chittorgarh: Vijay Prakashan, 1983), pp 16-18—this is henceforth cited in the text as BM.
- 4 For a suggestive discussion of the formation of Rajput lineages see Richard G Fox, *Kin, Clan, Raja and Rule* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1971).
- 5 M S Ahluwalia, *Muslim Expansion in*

BALLARPUR INDUSTRIES LIMITED NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of the public that Ballarpur Industries Limited proposes to make an application to the Central Government in the Department of Company Affairs, New Delhi under sub-section (2) of Section 22 of the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969, for approval to the establishment of a new undertaking/unit/division. Brief particulars of the proposal are as under: 1. Name & address of the applicant: BALLARPUR INDUSTRIES LIMITED (BILT), Regd. Office: P.O. Ballarpur, Distt. Chandrapur, Maharashtra State. Head Office: Thapar House, 124-Janpath, New Delhi-1. 2. Capital structure of the applicant organisation: Authorised Capital: Rs. 25,00,00,000, Issued Capital: Rs. 22,44,33,850, Subscribed & Paid-up Capital: Rs. 22,44,13,381. 3. Management structure of the applicant organisation indicating the names of the directors, including managing whole-time director(s) and manager, if any: The Company is managed by the Managing Director subject to the superintendence control and direction of the Board of Directors of the Company consisting of the following: 1. Mr. L M Thapar—Chairman & Managing Director, 2. Mr. V M Thapar—Deputy Managing Director, 3. Mr. O P Malhotra, 4. Mr. K A Chaukar, Nominee of ICICI, 5. Mr. R Narayanan, Nominee of LIC, 6. Vice Admiral K K Nayyar (Retd), 7. Seth H P Poddar, 8. Mr. S M Ramakrishna Rao, 9. Mr. M M Thapar, 10. Mr. Narottam Sahgal. 4. Indicate whether the proposal relates to the establishment of a new undertaking or a new unit/division: The project will be implemented as a division of BILT. 5. Location of the new undertaking/unit/division: State of Andhra Pradesh. 6. Capital structure of the proposed undertaking: Not applicable. 7. In case the proposal relates to the production, storage, supply, distribution, marketing or control of any goods/articles, indicate: i) Name of goods/articles: 01—Acetanilide, 02—Sulphanilic Acid, 03—Metanilic Acid, 04—Meta Amino Phenol, 05—Alkyl Benzene Amines (Dimethyl, diethyl, diphenyl), 06—Chloro benzenes (Captive consumption), 07—Nitrochloro benzenes (ortho/para/meta), 08—Nitrotoluenes ortho/para/meta, 09—Conc. Nitric Acid (Captive consumption), 10—Sulphuric Acid (Captive Consumption), ii) Proposed Licensed Capacity: 01—Acetanilide—2000 TPA, 02—Sulphanilic Acid—2000 TPA, 03—Metanilic Acid—3000 TPA, 04—Meta Amino Phenol—1000 TPA, 05—Alkyl Benzene Amines—4500 TPA, 06—Chloro benzenes—10000 TPA (Captive consumption), 07—Nitrochloro benzenes (ortho, para, meta)—10000 TPA, 08—Nitrotoluenes (ortho, para, meta)—4000 TPA, 09—Conc. Nitric Acid—16000 TPA (Captive consumption), 10—Sulphuric Acid 33000 TPA. iii) Estimated Annual Turnover: Rs. 106.32 cr approx. (100% capacity utilization). 8. In case the proposal relates to the provision of any service, state the volume of activity in terms of usual measures such as value, income turnover etc.: Not applicable. 9. Cost of the project: Rs. 88.29 cr approx. 10. Scheme of finance, indicating the amounts to be raised from each source: The project is proposed to be financed by Co's internal resources and to be supplemented by borrowings from banks, financial institutions, foreign exchange loans, debentures, etc. Any person interested in the matter may make a representation in quadruplicate to the Secretary, Department of Company Affairs, Govt. of India, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi within 14 days from the date of publication of this notice, intimating his views on the proposal and including the nature of his interest therein.

for BALLARPUR INDUSTRIES LIMITED

Sd/-

(VIRENDER GANDA)
SECRETARY

Date: 28th June, 1990.

- Rajasthan: The Relations of the Delhi Sultanate with Rajasthan 1206-1526* (Delhi: Yugantat Prakashan, 1978), p 31.
- 6 The Sisodia kingdom of Mewar which emerged in mid 14th century was at the peak of its power under Rana Sanga and ascendant over most Rajput states. Sanga invited Babur to Delhi in order to take over the throne at Agra from Ibrahim Lodi, and ended fighting Babur and being defeated. The boundaries of Mewar fluctuated constantly between 1527 and the 1550s. See A C Bannerjee, *Rajput Studies* (Calcutta: A Mukherjee, 1944), pp 56-97, and Ahluwalia, *Muslim Expansion*, pp 167-68, 190.
 - 7 See Shashi Arora, *Rajasthan me naari jeevan ki stithi: 1600-1800* (Bikaner: Tarun Prakashan, 1981), pp 38-39, 63, 56; Norman Ziegler, 'Some Notes on Rajput Loyalties during the Mughal Period' in J F Richards ed *Kingship and Authority in Medieval South Asia* (University of Chicago Press), pp 229-30; Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, *Essays on Rajputana: Reflections on History, Culture and Administration* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 1984), p 46. Significantly the gift of *dharti* (land) or *dulhan* (bride) alone, not money, could be given among Rajputs as compensation for bloodshed; see K R Quanungo, *Studies in Rajput History* (New Delhi: Chand, 1969), p 69.
 - 8 Arora, *Rajasthan me naari*, pp 21, 22, 57, 62, 64, 78-80, 97.
 - 9 Ibid, pp 71-72.
 - 10 Saubhagya Singh Shekawat, *Rajasthan Nibandh Sangreh* (Jodhpur: Hindi Sahitya Mandir, 1974), p 242.
 - 11 Shekawat, *ibid*, p 234; Ziegler, 'Some Notes', in *Kingship and Authority* ed Richards, p 234.
 - 12 *Manava Dharma Sastra or the Institute of Manu*, trans G C Haughton, ed Rev P Percival, preface by William Jones (1825, 4th ed 1863, rpt Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1982), p 134. Henceforth cited in the text as MDS.
 - 13 Sharma, *Social Life*, p 118.
 - 14 The punishments for such refusal are comparable to those for adultery in the Smritis. See *Manava Dharma*, pp 224, 240-41.
 - 15 Macauliffe, *Sikh Gurus*, Vol 6, pp 348, 351; Acharya, *Bhakt Mira*, pp 16-18.
 - 16 *Speaking of Siva*, trans and with an introduction by A K Ramanujam (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p 134.
 - 17 Bankey Bihari, *Bhakt Mira* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1961), pp 122, 172. Subsequent references to this in the text are cited as B, and where English translations are available they are indicated with an oblique.
 - 18 Ramanujam, 'On Women' in *Divine Consort*, ed Hawley, p 320.
 - 19 Her biographers go to some length to establish her virtue in foiling sexual advances; see Macauliffe, *Sikh Religion*, Vol 6, p 349. In *Rajasthan* illustrations of the *Bhaktmala*, Mira is depicted in the yellow *dhoti* of the renouncer worn in male fashion; see Sharma, *Social Life*, p 153.
 - 20 *Manava Dharma*, p 232, and I Julia Leslie, *The Perfect Wife* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp 132-33, 137.
 - 21 Patrick Olivelle, 'Renouncer and Renunciation in the Dharmashastras', in *Studies in Dharmashastra*, ed Richard Lariere (Calcutta: Firma, 1984), pp 114-15; Leslie, *Perfect Wife*, p 139.
 - 22 See also Alston, *Devotional Poems*, pp 49, 51, 83, 88.
 - 23 Thapar, *Ancient India*, pp 49, 56.
 - 24 Hiren Gohain, 'The Labyrinth of Bhakti: On Some Questions of Medieval Indian History', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol 22, no 46 (November 14, 1987), p 1971.
 - 25 Joseph T O 'Connell, 'Gaudiya Vaisnava Symbolism of Deliverance' in *Tradition and Modernity in Bhakti Movements* ed Jayant Lele (Leiden: E J Brill, 1981), pp 131-32.
 - 26 See Ramanujam, 'On Women', in *Divine Consort*, ed Hawley; and S M Pandey and Norman Zide, 'Surdas and his Krishan-bhakt', in *Krishna: Myths, Rites and Attitudes*, ed Milton Singer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p 190.
 - 27 Edward C Dimock Jr, 'Doctrine and Practice among the Vaisnavs of Bengal' in *Krishna: Myths ed Singer*, pp 47-48.
 - 28 *Bhagwat Purana*, trans Ganesh Vasudeo Tagare, 5 vols (1976, rpt, Delhi: Motilal Benarsidas, 1979), Vol 5, p 2121. This is henceforth cited in the text as BhP.
 - 29 David R Kinsley, *The Sword and the Flute: Kali and Krishna* (1975, Delhi: Vikas, 1976) p 76.
 - 30 See description in Krishna Sharma, *Bhakti*, pp 260, 273, 289, 292, 307.
 - 31 *D D Kosambi*, ed Syed, pp 77, 82-84.
 - 32 *Satapathabrahmana*, XIV 1 1 31, quoted in Leslie, *Perfect Wife*, p 251.
 - 33 *Manava Dharma*, p 135, 133, 232, 233, 24; Leslie, *The Perfect Wife*, pp 76, 83, 139, 275.
 - 34 Thakur Harendra Dayal, *The Vishnu Purana: Social, Economic and Religious Aspects* (Delhi: Sundeeep Prakashan, 1983), pp 201-03; R S Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1983), p 135. In the *Bhagwad Gita* Krishna offers release to 'those who take refuge in Me, be they even of the sinful breeds such as women, *vaishyas* and *sudras*' (quoted in *D D Kosambi* ed Syed, p 169). The *Bhagawat Purana* offers to address women and *sudras* who have hitherto been kept in ignorance of the greatness of Hari and claims Vaishnav bhakti as the best course 'even' for them (Vol 5, pp 1921, 2086).
 - 35 *Bhagwat Purana*, vol 3, p 966, vol 4, pp 1310, 1639, vol 5, pp 2012, 2062; Thomas Hopkins, 'The Social Teaching of the Bhagwat Purana' in *Krishna: Myths*, ed Singer, pp 14-17.
 - 36 *Bhagwat Purana*, part 3, p 1147. The power of the *pativrata* is exemplified in Draupadi's answer to how she has managed to gain control over her husbands: "My husbands have come under my control as a result of my attentiveness, my eternal readiness to serve, and my devoted service to my elders' (*Mahabharata*, III 222.37, quoted in Leslie, *Perfect Wife*, pp 280-81).
 - 37 *Brahmanda Purana*, 2 vols, trans Ganesh Vasudeo Tagare (Delhi: Motilal Benarsidas, 1983), vol 2, pp 69-71, 293-96, 1302.
 - 38 *Vishnu Purana*, trans H H Wilson (1840 rpt Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1961), intro R C Hazra, pp 487-93; *Brahmanda Purana*, vol 2, pp 304-07, 542; *Bhagwat Purana*, vol 5, pp 2130, 2140.
 - 39 *Vishnu Purana*, p 492; *Brahmanda Purana*, vol 2, pp 308, 667-68; *Bhagwat Purana* vol 5, pp 1925, 2142.
 - 40 *Vishnu Purana*, pp 487-93. See also P V Kane, *History of Dharmashastras*, 5 vols, (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, 1977), vol 5, part ii, pp 928-30. In the *Vishnu Purana* the model for the good wife, as derived from the stories of Satadhenu and Saivya, amounts to the continuous association of wife with husband in birth after birth (pp 273-75).
 - 41 *Vishnu Purana*, pp 487-93.
 - 42 John Mellington, 'Town and Country in the Transition to Capitalism' in *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, ed Rodney Hilton (London: Verso, 1978), p 178.
 - 43 For example in Dadu Dayal. See Mukhia, 'The Ideology' in *History and Society*, ed Chattopadhyay, and Savitri Chandra Shobha, *Social Life and Concepts in Medieval Hindi Bhakti Poetry* (Delhi: Chandrayan Publications, 1983), pp 38-39.
 - 44 *Rajniiti*, 317a, a Sikh text composed originally by the Rajput brothers Bhoj Rai and Lakhan in 1684, quoted by Surjit Hans, 'Politics before and after the Annexation of Punjab', *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, nos 14-15 (July- December 1987), pp 123, 126. For the increasing emphasis on the divine origin of kingship see Thapar, *History of India*, p 249.
 - 45 See Alston, *Devotional Poems*, pp 30-31, 42.
 - 46 In the *Bhagwat Purana* devotion is described as uninhibited and intensely emotional: faltering words, melting heart, lament at separation, and joy at the mercy of the Lord (vol 5, p 1993).
 - 47 For a typical description of *strisvabhav* see *Manava Dharma*, pp 232-33; and for a suggestive discussion of *dharma* vs *strisvabhav* see Leslie, *Perfect Wife*, pp 262-66.
 - 48 For example it bypasses the disapproval of 'mental' adultery or unbecoming thoughts—which are seen as a precursor of infidelity on the part of a wife and even require expiation in the *Manusmriti* (MDS: 129, 233).
 - 49 In Kabir when the *pritam*/god comes home after a long absence then the temple lights up (*mandir maahi bhaya ujiyaara*) in *Kabir Granthavali*, ed Mataprasad Gupta Allahabad: Sahitya Bhavan, 1985, p 141 (cited henceforth in the text as KG, G) and *Man mandir rahan nit chashai* in Hazariprasad Dwivedi, *Kabir*, (New Delhi: Rajkamal, 1980), p 331 (cited henceforth in the text as K, HD) or as in Nanak *Hamre ghari aaya jagjeevanu bhataaru* quoted in Ramcharan Sharma, *Hindi Sant Sahitya me Madhuryabaha* Pillani: Chinta Prakashan, 1986, p 221.

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