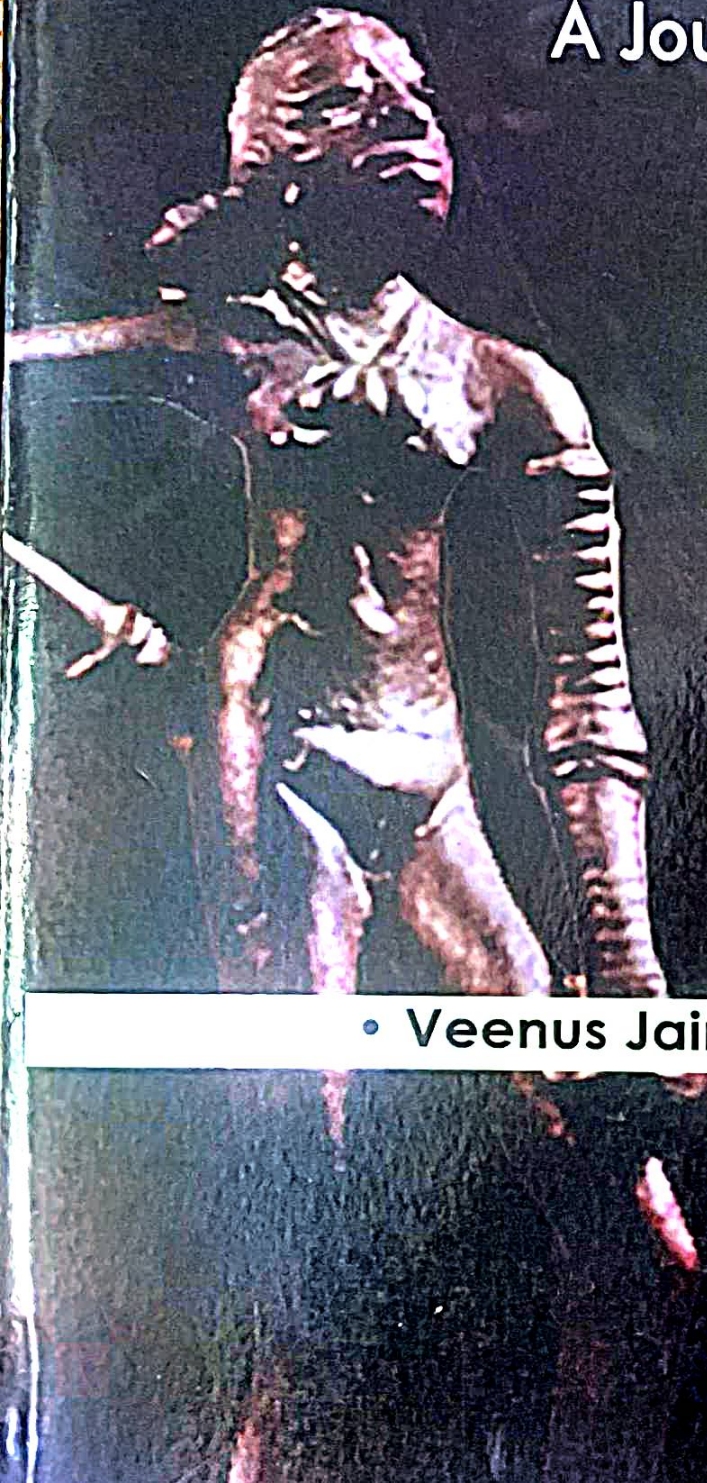


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# Women

A Journey Through The Ages



• Veenus Jain • Pushpraj Singh

# **Women: A Journey Through The Ages**

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**NEW DELHI PUBLISHERS**

New Delhi: Kolkata

**Women: A Journey Through The Ages** by Veenus Jain and Pushpraj Singh  
published by New Delhi Publishers, New Delhi.

© Editors

First Edition 2019

ISBN: 978-93-88879-03-3

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**New Delhi Publishers**

90, Sainik Vihar, Mohan Garden, New Delhi – 110 059

Tel: 011-23256188, 9971676330

E-mail: [ndpublishers@gmail.com](mailto:ndpublishers@gmail.com)

Website: [www.ndpublisher.in](http://www.ndpublisher.in)

**Branch Office**

216 Flat-GC, Green Park,  
Narendrapur, Kolkata – 700103

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# Rebellion of Royal Woman Meera Bai against the Social Norms of Medieval India

Peeyush Bhadviya

*M.L.S.U, Udaipur*

There are mainly two ways to live a life. First is to live according to traditional social norms, fulfilling the expectations of people. In this the person does not have his development and he merely becomes a mechanical part in society. He receives social respect but never feels intrinsic happiness. Second way is adopted by exceptions. They are rebellious persons who never expect social respect and are continuously involved in the development of their potentials and exploring the inner conscience. Meera Bai belongs to the second category.

David Kinsely puts forward the argument that some women of medieval India, who were crushed and confined to difficult domestic situations found an alternative possibility in their devotion. He gives example of Mahadevi Akka from Karnataka, Lallesvari from Kashmir, Meera Bai from Rajasthan, for whom devotion to God becomes an alternative to marriage. In this article I do support him but try to exhort the rebellious character of Meera Bai who had profound impact on the social and cultural milieu of medieval times.

An embodiment of love for Lord Krishna, devotee and poetess, Meera Bai was the daughter of Ratan Singh of Meratia clan, a sub-branch of Rathors, granddaughter of Rao Duda and great granddaughter of Rao Jodha Ji. Meera Bai was born in 1498 A.D. at Medta (Nagaur, Rajasthan) and was married to Bhojraj of Chittod probably in 1516 A.D., who was the eldest son of Rana Sanga. As an infant Meera Bai became deeply enamoured of an iconic doll of Lord Krishna owned by a visiting holy man. She was inconsolable until she possessed it and probably kept it all her life. Her mother was supportive of her religious tendencies but she died early.

After her marriage her new family did not approve of her piety and devotion when she refused to worship their family deity and maintained that she was truly married only to Lord Krishna. After the death of her husband, she renounced worldly pleasures and offered herself to the devotion of Lord Krishna. She was tormented and yet she kept up an undaunted spirit and a balanced mind, by the strength of her devotion and the grace of her beloved Lord Krishna. Meera Bai's devotion to Lord Krishna overflowed into an ecstasy leading her to dance in the streets of Chittod. The new ruler of Mewar, Rana Vikramaditya Singh, strongly objected to her mixing with commoners and carelessness of feminine modesty. Rana tried to kill her by poisoning but failed. Her sister-in-law Udabai spread defamatory gossip about her character and pinched her of not committing Sati as per tradition. But she braved all court politics and harem intrigues.

The rebellious character of Meera Bai could not be suppressed by oppressions, and her vehement voice was:

1. *Ranaji The Jahar Diyo Me Jani,  
Jaise Kanchan Dohat Agin Me  
Niksat Barabani  
Lok Laj Kul Kan Jagat Ki  
Dai Bahai Jas Pani  
Apna Ghar Ka Parda Karle  
Me Abla Barani  
Tarkar Tirlagyo Mere Hiyre  
Garak Gayo Sankani  
Sab Santan Pe Tan Man Varo  
Charan Kamal Laptani  
Meera Ko Parbhu Rakhi Lai Hai  
Dai Apni Jani*
  
2. *Ranaji Manhe Yah Badnami Lage Meethi  
Koi Ninda Koi Bindo  
Me Chalugi Chal Aputhi  
Sankali Gali Satgur Miliya  
Kyo Na Firu Bataj Karta  
Durjan Logo Ne Dithi  
Meera Ke Prabhu Giridhar Nagar  
Durjan Jalja Angithi*

Meera Bai left Mewad and went to Medta and then moved to Vrindavan and finally reached Dwarka, where it is assumed that she was absorbed by Lord Krishna. Dhruv Das, a contemporary saint says on this courageous act of Meera Bai :

*Laj Chaadi Giridhar Bhaje  
Kari Na Kuchu Kul Kan.*

Meera Bai sang the bhajans with full devotion. Even she danced and played instruments like *Ektara, Jhanj, Kartal* etc.. Her poems voices social and political revolution. The poems were not constructed according to rules but flowed from the heart of devotional Meera Bai and became immensely popular in folk. Through her poems she raised voice in favour of womanhood and devotion to almighty.

The characteristics of her poetry are complete surrender. In her poems, Lord Krishna is a yogi and lover and she herself is a yogini ready to take her place by his side unto a spiritual marital bliss. For surrender high integrated will is needed. Surrender is the last act of will, the highest act of will. It looks paradoxical but that is how it is. Her *padas* were recited soon in Rajasthan, Malwa, Braj, and Gujarat.

Her compositions are *Teeka Rag Govind, Narsi Mehta Ni Hundi, Rukmini Mangal* and *Teeka on Geet Govind*. A composition *Narrsi Ji Ro Mayro* in Braj Bhasa is the creation of Ratna Khati under the direction of Meera Bai. Her songs infuse faith,

courage, devotion and love to God in the minds of the reader. They inspire the aspirants to take to the path of devotion.

She found answer of mental torture of women in devotion which was a revolutionary discovery. She was not tied to any philosophical school, religion, cult and society but always strove for humanity aspects. Meera Bai's freedom comes from taking her seat at the feet of oneness and refusing to budge from that place. Neither the convention of social expectation nor the words or the desperate action of family, friends or enemies could touch the self of Meera Bai. She never cared for public criticism and the injunctions of the shastras. She did no ritualistic worship. She did not practice 'Sadhna Bhakti'. Meera Bai's devotion was of 'Madhurya Bhav' i.e. she saw and treated Lord Krishna as her lover or husband.

Love makes you rebellious and revolutionary. Love gives you insight in to things, so nobody can deceive you, exploit you, oppress you. Only love can give you wings to be free. Only love can give you the courage to be free. That's what Meera Bai acquired in devotion to Lord Krishna.

Folk lore inform us of a particular incident when Meera Bai visited the renowned Rupa Goswami of Vrindavan, one of the chief Bhaktas of Shree Gaurang.

Rupa Goswami refused to see her on the ground that she is a woman and he does not meet woman. Hearing the message of Rupa, Meera Bai replied "Is he then a male? If so, he has access to Vrindaban. Males cannot enter here and if the Goddess of Vrindaban comes to know of his presence, she will turn him out. For does not the great Goswami know that there is but one male in existence, namely my beloved Krishna and that all besides are female?" Rupa now understood that Meera Bai was really a staunch devotee of Lord Krishna and so agreed to see her.

She simplified the worship and liberalised the traditional caste rules and society in which there shall be justice and equality for all and in which men of all creeds shall be able to develop to their moral and spiritual stature. She also upholds the teacher-pupil tradition as reflected in her verses ("guru miliya Raidasji"). She endured the piercing taunts and sarcastic criticisms of the world bravely. She had left an indelible impression on the world and her name will be handed down to posterity. Her message was that none by means of birth, wealth, age or sex can be debarred from his divine presence. Meera Bai broke the dominion of Kshatriya princes/males to attain salvation through Shraman Marg and showed the path of Bhakti. Her most important social contribution was the awakening of women.

It is extremely difficult to find a parallel to this wonderful personality Meera Bai, a saint, a philosopher, a poet, a sage and an icon of liberty.

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