



## Spiritual Communication in Medieval Era: A Textual Analysis Of Poetry and Literature by Mira Bai and Lal Ded

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### **Abstract:**

*Humans have an inherent tendency to communicate. They often try to create, understand and transmit meaning while building connections with other people. Among different forms of communication, one part which is less discussed among researchers is spiritual communication. Every person across different cultures and histories has experienced spiritual communication and attempted to understand them. Spiritual communication in arts and literature gained attention and importance due to the influence of Bhakti movements. Indian Bhakti Saints and Sufi saints, such as Guru Nanak Dev, Surdas, Miraba, Tulsidas, and Lal Ded, have made significant contributions through their poetry and literature towards spirituality.*

*However, there has been a research gap related to a deeper understanding of spiritual communication through poetry during different movements. This study*

*investigates the role of poetry and literature in spreading and extending spiritual communication in the medieval era during the bhakti movement. Hermeneutics theory will provide a framework for this study. The researcher will employ the qualitative method to understand how spirituality is communicated through various poetry. The textual analysis of the poetry of Mira Bai and Lal Ded is done to understand the relationship between intrapersonal communication and spirituality through literature and arts. The findings of this study will provide insights into the role of poetry in spreading and extending spiritual communication during the medieval era. This study will contribute to the literature regarding spiritual communication and poetry.*

**Keywords:** *Spiritual communication, Poetry, Bhakti Movement, Medieval Era*

## Introduction

Communication refers to the process through which every individual shares their thoughts emotions and feelings to others. It often involves using different symbols, words, and gestures. Since the existence of mankind, communication has evolved to become a fundamental need for every individual. It fulfils the need for social interaction and engagement with others living in their surroundings. Communication often involves the construction of messages, interpretation and transmission of the same. However, humans are inherently born with these qualities to form interpersonal connections.

This interplay of humans and communication extends across various cultural landscapes, geographical boundaries, and historical eras. It has been intertwined with the exploration of spiritual experiences and the pursuit of knowledge (Hochheimer et al., 2016).

The discipline of spiritual communication is very wide and diverse. The interrelation between spirituality and communication requires a deep understanding of the nature of spirituality, and its connection with communication. It encompasses various forms of communication such as intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group communication which exceed conventional boundaries. These types of communication help to develop connections and understanding among spiritual practitioners, both within themselves and in their interactions with others (Hochheimer et al., 2016).

Throughout history, the field of art and literature has provided an extensive ground for the exploration of spirituality with respect to communication, especially in the Mughal era. This exploration of spirituality and communication was greatly influenced by movements such as the Bhakti and Sufi movements.

The Bhakti Movement started in India during the medieval period. It was formed by bringing together the diverse Bhakti traditions in different subcontinents. This movement is believed to have spanned from the 13th to 17th century. Ramanuja, one of the Bhakti movement artists, played an important role in bringing the North and South Indian Bhakti movements together (Prof & Nimavat, 2020). The Bhakti movement is significant for its non-discriminatory nature that disregards the importance of birth, education, or gender (Mratkhezina et al., 2019). The objective of this movement was to make god or the divine accessible to everyone, irrespective of their caste, gender, or birth (K Jayadas, 2022).

This movement and the Sufi movement gave rise to a long list of Indian Bhakti Saints and Sufi mystics, including Kabir, Guru Nanak Dev, Surdas, Mirabai, Tulsidas, Lal ded, Bulleshah, and Raskhan. These saints enriched the spiritual literature with their writings, especially in the form of poetry. They used vernacular languages to compose bhajans, kirtans, songs, and poems that connected with the lives of ordinary people. They also created writings and songs for social enlightenment and awareness drawing inspiration from India's societal position (K Jayadas, 2022)

Poetry has a special ability to convey the feelings and emotions that are hard to explain to others. It offers a medium to understand the depths of the human experience. Poetry tries to explain the unseen dimension of human existence and attempts to search for meaning behind everything (Seamons, 2021).

The exploration of spiritual communication within literary creations carries major significance. The perspectives of literary artists on spirituality have exceptional diversity (Shavir, 2023). In this study, the researcher has explored the path of spirituality through poetry. The study has been conducted using qualitative methodology using textual analysis of some selected poetry by Lal Ded and Mira Bai to understand how spiritual messages were conveyed among people with the help of poetry.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review section examines different aspects of spirituality, their representation in literature, and their relation with communication and cultural movements. It will help to understand the role in shaping human understanding, communication, literature, and different aspects of spirituality.

Spirituality is an essential element for human nature which found its roots in divine force influencing social dynamics and human experience. The connection to the higher power, the Almighty, and the Creator can be attained through spirituality (Shavir, 2023). The connection between human consciousness and divine forces can be made by spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, and worship. This connection makes an individual understand the meaning of life and encourages them to adopt high values (Shavir, 2023). Spiritual experiences can be found in various forms in the area of literary studies, from emotional experiences to self or enlightenment (Seamons, 2021). In the discussion paper *Spiritual and Moral Development* (SCAA, 1995) spirituality is defined as a fundamental aspect of the human condition that goes beyond

physical sensations and day-to-day communication. According to the definition by SCAA (1995) spirituality is not only the connection between individuals with themselves or the divine but it goes beyond and talks about the connection of individuals with others. It emphasizes understanding one's purpose for existence and the importance of values.

Spirituality's teachings emphasize self-discovery as an exploration of one's identity within oneself. Within the area of creative expression, literature serves as a vehicle for conveying spiritual thoughts and experiences, enriching our understanding of spirituality as a complex and individual viewpoint of humanity (Muharudin et al., 2023). Hay (1998) introduces a unique perspective that views spirituality as high sensitivity, expressed through an appreciation for art or compassion for others. Spiritual communication unfolds through various dimensions, encompassing human connectivity, the interaction between the human and the divine, matter-spirit interaction, individual-communal connections, and the communication of meaning and purpose in life. It can also assume a religious dimension, involving divine communication or the transmission of futuristic insights to humans (Egunjobi, 2019). This form of communication that encompasses intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group communication goes beyond the traditional boundaries and is exceptionally rich, fostering connections among spiritual practitioners (Hochheimer et al., 2016).

Poetry, as a constantly evolving literary form, bridges diverse socio-cultural backgrounds by uniting writers with shared themes. This intersection of spiritual values, encompassing religious, aesthetic, moral, and truth-oriented dimensions, underscores its everlasting significance (Muharudin et al., 2023). (Butterfield, 1986) draws parallels between faith and poetry, asserting that they share a common reliance on human experiences and go beyond the materialistic world. According to Seamons (2021), poetry is a medium through which some of the human aspects can be explored and helps to understand significant emotions, and experience aspects which are hard to describe. Seamons (2021) also highlighted the work of poets like Rosenberg and Thomas from the Georgian movement in whose poetry spiritual experiences are reflected. Individuals can be involved with spiritual aspects of existence by reading, analysing, and interpreting literature and there is a close association between literature and moral and spiritual awareness (Pike, 2000).

Pike's (2000) study on "Spirituality, Morality, and Poetry" highlighted poetry's special ability to strongly affect teenagers by triggering both emotional and cognitive responses. Young individuals' spiritual and moral development can be significantly affected through poetry (Pike, 2000).

The review also studies the bhakti movement, which expanded during the Medieval period in India. The Bhakti movement which was a cultural and spiritual phenomenon expanded rapidly across the country, merging various bhakti traditions from different corners of the country (Prof & Nimavat, 2020). Mratkhuzina et al. (2019) as highlighted in the study "Sufism: Spiritual and Cultural Traditions in India", the Bhakti movement emerged as a prominent and remarkable force between the 13th and 17th centuries. One of the most distinct features of the bhakti movement was it refused discrimination based on gender, caste, birth education, or societal status which became accessible to all and also it was a path to experience spirituality and enlightenment (K Jayadas, 2022). Kempton (2020) says for meditative practices poetry can be a very useful tool as it offers an active and reflexive process, helps to fight with negative impacts of anxiety, and stress, and helps to understand difficult emotions. Poetry also gives a new perspective which makes it easy to find self and encounter aspects of spirituality (Kempton, 2020). Greeson et al. (2011) in his study found spirituality can be achieved through meditative practices and also these activities help to tackle health issues.

### **Methodology**

The research approach used in this study is qualitative to learn the connection between spirituality and poetry. The study will employ textual analysis of selected poems by Mira Bai and Lal Ded to establish and understand the relation between intrapersonal communication through poetry and literature during medieval era. Purposive sampling is done for this study.

### **Objectives**

- To analyse spiritual communication in poetry during the Bhakti movement
- To understand the relationship between Spiritual Communication and Intra-Personal communication

### **Theoretical Framework**

The hermeneutic theory is an approach to understanding action and texts through interpretation. Hermeneutic is a Greek word that means to utter, to explain, and to translate. It was first used to discuss how divine messages are conveyed in human language (VIDHYA, 2021). Hermeneutics deals with the interpretation of the biblical texts and other sacred texts. Muganga (2010) stated that hermeneutic theory provides a methodology for the interpretation of the text in qualitative

research. It offers an approach to understanding complex language and the meaning of words or texts. This theoretical framework derives the meaning of messages within verbal or non-verbal communication with the help of systematic language (Muganga, 2010). Since this study aims to examine ancient texts and poetry, Hermeneutics theory will guide us to understand the role of poetry in the spread of spiritual communication.

### **Analysis and discussion**

The verses of the poem by the poet Lal Ded aimed to communicate peace and unity in society. A society where there was a conflict between communities, hate, and intolerance in the hearts of people especially when foreign intruders like the Mughals were disturbing the cultural thread in the country. Lal Ded's poetry was based on the importance of meditation, peace, harmony, and tolerance. Submission before god and finding inner happiness was the central point of the poetry of Lal Ded.

### **Poetry by Lal Ded:**

<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Poetry</b>	<b>Analysis and Discussion</b>
1.	Laldyada (2011) "Restless mind, don't infect the heart with fear. That virus is not for you. The Infinite knows what you hunger for. Ask Him to carry you across."	The poet Lal Ded in the opening lines of the poem talks about the restless mind and heart without fear. This shows how internal conflicts and fear disturb spiritual communication, which is mostly intrapersonal communication.

2.	<p>Laldyada (2011) “Some, who have closed their eyes, are wide awake. Some, who look out at the world, are fast asleep. Some who bathe in sacred pools remain dirty. Some are at home in the world but keep their hands clean.”</p>	<p>These lines indicate the about meditation and how a person can achieve solace through meditation or with intrapersonal communication some people sometimes practice religious norms but do not clean themselves with internal dirt in their hearts and minds which do not give them peace. The awakening comes through pure thoughts and soul.</p>
3.	<p>Laldyada (2011) “Good or bad, I’m happy to welcome both. I don’t hear with my ears, I don’t see with my eyes. A voice speaks inside my heart, my jewel-lamp burns bright even in a rampaging wind.”</p>	<p>The couplet talks about the duality and acceptance in the world of an awakened person whose intrapersonal communication is strong and the voice of heart and jewel lamp burning in rampaging wind means that the person whose voice from inner self is true will speak the truth even in negative times.</p>
4.	<p>Laldyada (2011) “Lord! I’ve never known who I really am, or You. I threw my love away on this lousy carcass and never figured it out: You’re me, I’m You. All I ever did was doubt: Who am I? Who are You?”</p>	<p>These stanzas of the poem reflect the relationship between god and the human. The Lal Ded here is trying to seek identity and the true nature of the self and the divine. The search for identity within the self and the self-search involves doubt and questioning within the self. The search of the divine and the self.</p>

5.	<p>Laldyada (2011)</p> <p>“Wrapped up in Yourself, You hid from me. All day I looked for You and when I found You hiding inside me, I ran wild, playing now me, now You. Don’t flail about like a man wearing a blindfold. Believe me, He’s in here. Come in and see for yourself. You’ll stop hunting for Him all over.”</p>	<p>The search for identity starts in the last stanza and ends here with answers in these stanzas. The question of searching oneself and the divine is found within the person himself, which reflects that the positivity in oneself is god. These lines reflect the journey of self-discovery and realization.</p>
6.	<p>Laldyada (2011) “A thousand times at least I asked my Guru to give Nothingness a name. Then I gave up. What name can you give to the source from which all names have sprung? Who trusts his Master’s word and controls the mind- horsew ith the reins of wisdom, he shall not die, he shall not be killed.”</p>	<p>The lines reflect interpersonal communication between a teacher and his pupil. The stanzas spread the message of shedding ignorance, doubt, and attachment to find divine essence within. The realization of self and the divine comes from the teachings of the Guru. This also shows the ‘Guru Shishya Parampara.’</p>



7.	<p>Laldyada (2011) “Those who glow with the light of the Self are freed from life even while they live. But fools add knots by the hundred to the tangled net of the world. When the dirt was wiped away from my mind’s mirror, people knew me for a lover of God. When I saw Him there, so close to me, He was All, I was nothing. I trapped my breath in the bellows of my throat:a lamp blazed up inside, showed me who I really was. I crossed the darkness holding fast to that lamp, scattering its light-seeds around me as I went.”</p>	<p>The stanzas reflect the freedom from the illusions in life of death and life. The fake knots of worldly pleasure in which a human is trapped and the relationship of the divine and person. The internal insights which come from meditation and communication with the god within and the gaining of wisdom when connecting with the world.</p>
8.	<p>Laldyada (2011) “Alone, I crossed the Field of Emptiness, dropping my reason and my senses. I stumbled on my own secret there</p>	<p>The poet through these lines wants to reflect the spiritual practice of meditation and devotion which makes the poet realize that god is the supreme power and there is nothing quest for the self ends when the meditation and engulfing oneself in the sound of Om can lead to the path of self actualisation and realization.</p>

<p>and flowered, a lotus rising from a marsh. My mind boomed with the sound of Om, my body was a burning coal. Six roads brought me to a seventh, that's how Lalla reached the Field of Light. You rule the earth, breathe life into the five elements. All creation throbs with the Unstruck Sound. Immeasurable, who can take Your measure?"</p>	
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The above analysed poetry reflects the relationship between god and humans. The poetry communicated the messages of spirituality, peace, and conflict resolution within a person. The power of intrapersonal communication and meditation is disseminated through the poems of Lal Ded. She was a yogini and her poetry reflected the quest for the divine and the self. The attainment of self actualization and realization of self is communicated in the poetry of Lal Ded.

### Poetry of Mira Bai

The Bhajans by Mirabai were pure melodies of love compassion, devotion, and affection towards lord Krishna. The communication between the god and the human, which can reflect the way for the human, was expressed in these poems and Bhajans of Mirabai.

S.No.	Poetry	Analysis and Discussion
1.	Mīrābāī and Alston (1980) "Do not go off and abandon me, My Lord, Weak woman as I am Giridhara is my strength He is my Master.	In the poetry, Mirabai seeks shelter from the god and her only help Lord Krishna. The lines show pure affection for the lord Krishna by Mirabai. The submission and dependence of Mirabai on

	I am quite without merit While Giridhara possesses every virtue”	Krishna shows her eternal devotion to the lord Krishna.
2.	Mīrābāī and Alston (1980) “I place my ruined life In the shadow of Your protection, Where else could I go, O King of Braj?” Mira recognizes no other Master, Now spare her from further ignominy.”	The stanza reflects Mirabai’s dependence on lord Krishna. The compassionate love and bhakti towards her god where she has offered her whole identity to lord Krishna.
3.	Mīrābāī and Alston (1980) “I have taken off all gems and pearls And donned the yogi’s beads. Neither food nor house please me, The Beloved has driven me mad.”	The lines reflect the renunciation of the world and materialistic things by Mirabai and her complete submission in the service of the lord Krishna.

These couplets by Mirabai show that renunciation from worldly affairs and materialism could lead a person to meet the divine and achieve peace from within the self. The power of submission of self towards god could lead to the achievement of self-actualization. This does not mean leaving work in the world but leaving materialistic things and exaggerated emotions like anger, grief, and pain. To submit oneself to the service of humanity and god.

## Conclusion

The Poetry during the Bhakti Movement signifies the need for spirituality in life and communicates the importance of peace, in the world and within the human soul and body. The importance of intrapersonal communication especially through meditation and devotion is strongly advocated which was much required in the medieval era as there were wars all over the world especially in the Indian Subcontinent. During this era, the Bhakti Movement saints through their poetry lead the world towards the path of spirituality and self realisation which is still relevant in today's world as

the world is again in turmoil and facing wars and conflicts across the globe. The poetry of Lal Ded and Mirabai communicated tolerance, humanitarian values, and the submergence of one into god and its importance. The analysis in the paper finds that the spiritual communication in the medieval era advocated peace through spirituality and bhakti. The rice text of the bhakti movement is still relevant to the world which is torn today in wars and conflicts.

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