

**Gulzaar's Meera(1979)-Bhakti Sangeet in the Imagination of  
Composer Ravi Shankar**

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**Abstract**

The film Meera is based on the life of an iconic historical figure Meera Bai. This movie was directed by Gulzar, a poet and lyricist, who needs no introduction. He is regarded as one of the greatest Urdu and Hindi poets. It was released in 1979. The lyrics of the song are of Meera Bai. The first version of film Meera Bai (1945) was made in Tamil language. In this Hindi version of Meera the music is composed and directed by Ravi Shankar. The film was not a box-office hit but for its soul touching music it is still acclaimed by viewers. The poetic touch of Gulzar got appreciation widely. Ravi Shankar used Hindustani Classical raga based songs and composed almost nine to ten Bhajan in pure raga format. He also applied traditional Rajasthani folk tunes in three songs. Along with Indian Classical Instrument he used different Rajasthani folk instruments like Ravanhatta and Kamaichaa. The main playback singer Vani Jairam got Filmfare Award for Best Female Playback Singer for the song 'Mere To Giridhar Gopala'.

**Keywords:-** Ravi Shankar, Gulzar, Meera Bai, Vani Jairam, Bhajan, Giridhar Gopal, Lord Krishna

**Introduction**

Meera(1979), a Hindi film based on the life of a Hindu Sant Meera Bai, was directed by Gulzar. Meera is known to be a musical film as the entire life of Meera Bai revolves around devotional song in praise of

Giridhar Gopal. Her only desire was to live for Lord Krishna and die happily for the Lord. The music of the film Meera was composed by Ravi Shankar. In this film Ravi Shankar applied devotional song along with Instrumental Music as background score. All the Bhajans are in the lip of Hema Malini. The lyrics of the compositions are penned by Meera Bai, the 16<sup>th</sup> century Saint poetess. Vani Jayaram rendered all the songs of Meera. In one song Dinkar Kaikini (As Tansen) accompanied Vani Jayaram. He also performed in one Dhrupad Alaap ‘Hari Om’ in solo format. For the rendition “Mere To Giridhar Gopala” Jayaram got her first Filmfare Award for Best Female Playback Singer. She sang twelve songs for Meera which became immensely popular.<sup>i</sup>

The entire film is filled with appropriate background score by Ravi Shankar. The philosophy of Meera’s life is reflected in each and every song. The worship of Krishna cult in northern India is best articulated by Meera Bai through her devotion to Krishna. It was an important part of Bhakti Movement which was a significant religious movement of medieval India. Meera Bai belonged to a strong tradition of Bhakti Movement poets. She expressed her love, care, passion, trust and respect through her songs. The charm and popularity of Meera’s Bhajan are enormous. The lyrics are quite simple and easily understandable by people of India. This Hindu mystic was a poet and devotee of Lord Krishna.<sup>ii</sup>

We find a mention of Meera Bai in *Bhaktamal*(1585) which is a poem in Braj language that gives biographies of more than 200 *bhaktas*. It was written by Nabha Dass, a saint belonging to the tradition of Ramananda.<sup>iii</sup>

## **Meera Bai, an Icon of Bhakti Movement:-**

Meera is considered as a feminist saint and poet of Bhakti Movement who sacrificed her life for Lord Krishna. She moved forward against the conventional ideas of her times. She expressed in her poetry that she only knew Krishna. Her devotional poetry was only one of the most evident ways of subversion.<sup>iv</sup>

According to Aziz Ahmad ‘A very charming figure in the Krishna cult of the north India is that of the princess Meera Bai, who worshipped Krishna in the name of Giridhar - Gopala or Hari ....., her devotion was intensely subjective ....’<sup>v</sup>

Vernacular language got a boost through the preaching of several mystics of medieval India. Mirabai, like many others may be considered to be an inspiration to the Indian masses. She may also be seen as a best representative of Indian hymnology.<sup>vi</sup>

In the film Gulzar wonderfully presented the entire narrative of a saint like Meera. He showed how Meera chose a life of austerity and decided to forego a life of princely comforts. The message of the film is that Meera, as back as in the sixteenth century the Princess of a royal family, could ignore her status and conservatism. Eventually she became an icon of the people for her spiritual inclination towards Krishna and her popularity rose immensely . In the film the portrayal of Meera was an ideal example for women empowerment. According to rediff movies “His poetic narrative is concerned with the making of a saint”.<sup>vii</sup>

In the chapter 'The Medieval Mystics of North India' (The Cultural Heritage of India, Volume 4) there is a special mention of Mirabai and her spiritual guide Ravidas (Raidas) : “She was devoted to God from her infancy. Her nine or ten years of domestic life with her husband Bhojraj were years of quiet and unperturbed happiness; but her troubles began when she became a widow. Driven by unjust treatment of her brother-in-law she first sought in her father’s home, but finally gave up world altogether and adapted the life of an ascetic.”<sup>viii</sup>

In the narrative we find she meets one mystic poet and saint Raidas who was very affectionate. Sant Raidas gifted her an Ektara for singing Krishna’s Bhajans. There was a good relation between Sant Raidas and Meera. He was a father figure person for Meera and her spirituality surprised him. Raidas initiated Meera into the One and Infinite. But we don’t find the details of her personal life. Undoubtedly she was one of the greatest woman saints of India. Her numerous songs are sung all over the country.

Gulzar dealt with the film in a very artistic way. He focused primarily on music rather than mere storytelling of a would be Saint lady.

### **Analysis of the Music of Meera :-**

In the film Meera, the main focus was on her entire life and her contribution to Bhakti Movement through her devotional music. According to The Cultural Heritage of India (Volume 4), “.... the Rajput princess Mirabai renounced her worldly relationship and dedicated herself to Giridhara or Sri Krishna before whom she sang and danced. Her song known as Bhajans .... is a praise of the lord and also music of a particular type”.<sup>ix</sup> We find a stream of Bhakti in Meera Bai’s Bhajan. Almost in every song of this film, Ravi Shankar used Indian Classical ragas which express

emotions and Rasas. In all the compositions there are Prelude and Interlude music. Ravi Shankar used beautiful phrases of ragas like Poorvi, Yaman, Khamaj, Desh, Bhairavi, Lalit, Miya Ki Todi and some other ragas to portray the emotion according to the requirement of the scene. In some Bhajans, phrases and some shades of various ragas are being put together and the Interlude music is based on subtle layakari. Rhythmic application in some of the compositions made them very attractive. Music and Layakari are mingled magnificently.

### **Mere To Giridhar Gopal:-**

Mere To Giridhar Gopal is a signature tune of the film Meera. Ravi Shankar beautifully composed this Bhajans in different format in the film. The first one was sung when Meera was a young and an unmarried girl . Her elder sister, Krishna (enacted by Vidya Sinha), was spellbound to see Meera's deep love for Lord Krishna and her effortless style of singing. Here a happy-go-lucky Meera is running around the mansion and singing the song with absolute joy. The interlude piece is based on raga Khamaj. It is rendered by Vani Jayaram. The Instrumental accompaniment is beautifully orchestrated. A short Interlude music is followed by the main composition 'Mere to Giridhar Gopala'. After that a short Interlude starts with a double speed of Dadra Theka in a unique way. The entire song is wonderfully arranged with Indian traditional instruments like Sitar and Santoor. The variation of speed in the Theka gives it a perfect essence of happy mood all around. Here Ravi Shankar used certain phrases in the instrumental accompaniment in Interlude music based on raga Kalavati<sup>1</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> Kalavati is a pentatonic Hindustani raga, belongs to Khamaj Thaata. In this raga the second note (Re) and the fourth note (Ma) are strictly omitted. It is a melodious raga and often used in the film songs.

which is absolutely magnificent. The deviation from main refrain of Khamaj and yet merging back to the original tune moves on seamlessly without a single jerk. The iconic Bhajan ‘Mere to Giridhar Gopala’ of Meera ended with raga Khamaj. The song and switch over of ragas are designed totally effortlessly.<sup>x</sup>

### **Bala Main Bairagan Hoongi :-**

The composition Bala Main Bairagan Hoongi is beautifully filmed and sung as a background song where Meera is thinking about her childhood memory. Ravi Shankar composed a beautiful song by using Komal notes. Here he particularly applied both Gandhar and Nishad to bring out the sadness of the scene through a traditional tune in the wedding of Meera. The song is set to Keherwa Taal. Here different types of folk Percussion instruments have been used. It is applied behind the dancing procession where we find that Meera is sitting in the palanquin, visibly in a sad mood. Vani Jairam rendered it brilliantly with tunefulness in the background. The subtle rhythmic complexities in the Interlude music through instrumental accompaniment including the off-beat Percussion support are praiseworthy. There are thoughtfully composed pieces on Santoor, Flute which are added in the Interlude. Every phrase of the eight beat rhythmic cycle is filled with wonderful variations of Percussion Instruments (Naal, Dhol, Jhanj etc. [Cymbal]). It is assembled with beautiful touch of Rajasthani folk bowing instrument like Ravanhatta<sup>2</sup> and Kamaichaa<sup>3</sup>. The song is an enriching blend of both folk and traditional tune. Short but aesthetic touches of Santoor and Sitar made the song an

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<sup>2</sup> A Ravanhatta is an ancient bowed, stringed instrument used in India and Sri Lanka. It is considered as an ancestor of the Violin. It is popular among the folk musicians in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

<sup>3</sup> Kamaicha is a popular ancient instrument of Rajasthan. It is described as the heart and soul of Rajasthani folk music. It plays a significant role in the vibrant folk music of Rajasthan.

exquisite one. The lyrics has a timeless beauty of highest level of Indian Philosophy.<sup>xi</sup>

### **Karuna Shuno Shyam Mori:-**

This composition is a beautiful creation of Ravi Shankar in a very simplistic manner and sung by Vani Jayaram wonderfully. The composition is based on raga Poorvi<sup>4</sup> which depicts pathos and sadness. According to Time-cycle theory of Indian Classical Music, it is considered as a Sandhi-Prakash raga, meaning an afternoon raga . In this song there is no deviation from the purity of the raga . It is composed in a classical format of Asthayi and Antara. The two small interlude in Sitar and Flute bears testimony to the depth of Ravi Shankar's command on raga Poorvi, an uncommon raga. Its correct usage in thematic presentation of the film is undoubtedly brilliant. The composition is a masterpiece and the audience will always appreciate this short rendition of Poorvi. It depicts the sadness and pathos where both Viraha and Karuna Rasa coming out abundantly in every phrase of the song.<sup>xii</sup>

### **Ranaji Main To Govind Ke Gun:-**

‘Ranaji Main To Govind Ke..’ is one of the finest tune in the film created by Ravi Shankar. It is a short piece with a lot of thinking. It is devoid of Percussion. It is rendered in Adlib format in raga Pilu<sup>5</sup>, with

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<sup>4</sup> Poorvi , an uncommon Hindustani Classical complex raga, belongs to Poorvi Thaat. It portrays a serious and quiet mood. Sometimes one may find mysticism in this raga. It is generally performed in the evening.

<sup>5</sup> Pilu, a Hindustani light classical raga, belongs to Kafi Thaat. Pilu portrays a mix of various emotions, hope, joy and heartbreak. This raga is often associated with romance.

wonderful addition of Shudh Gandhar and Komal Nishad, finally making it a masterpiece in raga Mishra Pilu. The interlude music, pauses, subtle changes in the entire song makes it beautiful. The song is very simple but highly expressive in nature. The maturity in expressing Mishra Pilu in a song format with full of subtlety enriched it musically. The beauty of the rendition is that it appears every time with a refrain. Vani Jairam was fully successful in rendering the song to show Meera's divinity. Both expression and strong willpower of Meera are reflected in her voice. The lyrics of the song was in praise and devotion of Lord Krishna. Here the emotion and tunefulness are beautifully presented. The message of the lyrics is that Krishna was more revered to Meera than anyone else. The selection of raga Mishra Pilu<sup>6</sup> perfectly suited the spirit of the song. <sup>xiii</sup>

### **Shyam Mane Chakar:-**

Shyam Mane Chakar is rendered by Vani Jairam in the traditional Bol-baant format. The song expresses a mood of happiness and joyous feeling through raga Bhairavi<sup>7</sup>. It is set to Keherwa Taal and beautifully accompanied by Flute, Sitar and Violin. The arrangements of musical Interlude in the same raga are appropriate. The execution of various intricate phrases of the raga is done in a simplistic manner. This piece is composed in traditional Asthayi, Antara format of Indian Classical Music with prominent sound of Sitar in the Interlude music. The Percussion accompaniment is done by Naal, Tabla, Dholak and bells. A beautiful passage of Sarangi (Ravanhatta, Kamaichaa) and Shehnai is played for a short period. The raga Bhairavi with all its nuances has been presented

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<sup>6</sup> Mishra Pilu, a popular evening raga, which is an assimilation of different ragas along with Pilu.

<sup>7</sup> Bhairavi, a Hindustani heptatonic raga of Bhairavi Thaati. It produces a devotional atmosphere especially suitable for the genres of Bhajan and Thumri. The oscillating Rishabh and Dhaivat used here strongly create an intense mood.



beautifully. The extra Shudh notes are added to make the Bhairavi a complete beauty. In the song the accompaniment of Naal, Dholak, Tabla and Pakhawaj along with bells and Manjira are heard. All the above mentioned Percussion instruments are very common in the traditional Bhajan presentation.<sup>xiv</sup>

### **Main Sanware Ke Rang Rachi:-**

Main Sanware Ke Rang Rachi is a beautiful composition where Meerabai is dancing in a joyful mood in the field. Here her inner self is uplifted. A feeling of communion with Lord Krishna is portrayed by Meera. Hema Malini wonderfully enacted in this song with her skill of dancing effortlessly. It is a beautifully composed rendition based on raga Desh<sup>8</sup>. The happy and fast paced composition is set to Keherwa with the usual Percussion instrument of Bhajan. Here Ravi Shankar mainly used Naal, Tabla and the Manjira. The entire usage of Percussion instrument brought out a perfect blending of dance and vocal performance. The song began with a brilliant Prelude in raga Desh with Violin, Flute, Sitar and the Percussion bringing out the joyful mood. This mood of jubilation is followed by a vocal rendered by Vani Jairam with the notes and phrases of raga Desh. The main Asthayi part is finished in the note Rekhav along with the beautiful combination of Ma Ga Re. The first interlude with prominent Sitar, Flute and Violin gives a lead to the Antara and coming as the main refrain. Ravi Shankar showed his acumen as a composer in weaving the various nuances of this joyous and playful raga. The rendition beautifully brings out the mood of jubilation of Meera where she is immersed in spiritual bliss.<sup>xv</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Desh, a Hindustani Classical raga, belongs to Khamaj Thaata. It has similarity with raga Khamaj. It is often performed in the rainy season. Desh is often used in composing light classical music and film songs.

## **Jago Bansi Wale:-**

Jaago Bansi Wale is a beautiful composition which is articulated in an early morning scene. It is composed in a strict Alapchari format using the important phrases of raga Lalit<sup>9</sup>, beautifully rendered by Vani Jairam with the accompaniment of a Tanpura. There is no Percussion in this short duration song of one minute and one second . It has a lot of Prelude and Interlude music. The prelude piece in Sitar is in the typical style of Ravi Shankar with his usual ornamentation with Krintan and Layakari. In this early morning scene Meera is found cleaning the courtyard of the temple.<sup>xvi</sup>

## **Pyare Darshan Dijo:-**

Pyare Darshan Dijo is a composition sung by Vani Jairam. It is based on raga Jaijayanti, performed in an Adlib format without any Percussion. The composition is rendered with minimal help of instrumental assistance. The song begins with a beautiful phrase of Jaijayanti<sup>10</sup> from the lower octave to the middle octave. The phrase ended with the application of Komal Gandhar and subsequently back to the Tonic (Sa). A Swaramandal<sup>11</sup> and Bass Flute are the only two instruments used in the four-line composition for accompaniment. The Percussion accompaniment consists of Paran<sup>12</sup> and Rela<sup>13</sup> which is played on Pakhawaj. It is being used behind

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<sup>9</sup> Lalit, a prominent morning raga in Hindustani Classical Music, belongs to Poorvi Thaat. It portrays a devotional and serene mood and often performed at dawn.

<sup>10</sup> Jaijayanti is a nocturnal Hindustani Classical raga which belongs to Khamaj Thaat. This is a complex raga. It is an assimilation of Bilawal and Sorath. This raga is not mentioned in any Indian Classical scriptures on music.

<sup>11</sup> Swaramandal or Surmandal is a plucked box zither originating from India. It is used as an instrument for vocal accompaniment. It is used as the accompaniment of the raga

<sup>12</sup> Paran is a composition with accent- filled and resonance-filled bols.

<sup>13</sup> Rela is a theme-and-variation composition similar to the Kayda, but performed at higher speed.

the storyline of the film with wonderful cinematography. In this song Gulzar incorporated another two-line song 'Badal Dekh Dare' to underline the heavy rainfall. In fact this song is a combination of two songs. Here Pyare Darshan Dijo comes as Prelude and the composition Badal Dekh Dare is presented as Interlude portion to add the essence of monsoon.<sup>xvii</sup>

### **Badal Dekh Dari:-**

Badal Dekh Dari is a short composition of about two minutes. It is based on a raga of rainy season where the lyrics speaks about the fear of Meera seeing the enormous cloud and heavy downpour all around. Ravi Shankar aptly chose a pure classical raga of Malhar group which depicts the rainy season. As the sound of Pakhawaj very much resembles the sound of thunderstorm he used only Pakhawaj as the Percussion instrument. The song begins with a typical Indian classical format of Tanpura and Pakhawaj Rela for about fifteen seconds. It is followed by a beautiful passage of Miyan-Ki-Malhar<sup>14</sup> Aochar, Jod (non rhythmic part) and in the Kharaj and Laraj strings of Sitar. In the background other instruments are being played on the same notes to enrich the sound of the Sitar. The vocal begins in traditional Hindustani classical music format of Asthayi and Antara. The Asthayi is composed with the high notes of the middle octave. Here also one notices that the complete absence of any other percussion instrument apart from Pakhawaj. The traditional Paran is played on the Pakhawaj in the divisions of four in the typical four by four rhythmic pattern. The taal is called Tintaal or Aditaal. The Asthayi is repeated back again after the Antara only to end the composition with a musical passage. The sound of

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<sup>14</sup> Miyan ki Malhar, a raga of rainy season, belongs to Kafi Thaata. This is a complex raga which creates a serious tone. Generally it is performed in a slow tempo. It is played or sung any time during the rainy season or in the night. The raga has similarity with Bahar and Darbari Kanada. This raga is an assimilation of Brindavani Sarang, Kafi and Durga.

Sitar and the Pakhawaj Rela is fading out slowly. A well conceived Jod, ideal for the scene, is a beautiful presentation. It is executed with minimum application of Indian Acoustic Instruments. Ravi Shankar successfully brings out the total effect of rainy season. Indeed the essence and perfect mood of raga Miyan-Ki-Malhar is unfolded. He portrayed the raga vividly within a short span of time. Meera was one of such Hindi films where Classical rendition were performed with purity.<sup>xviii</sup>

### **Hari Om:-**

Dinkar Kaikini's short rendition of Miyan-Ki-Todi in Dhrupad Alaap format in the middle octave, using a few notes to demonstrate Nom, Tom (a typical part of Dhrupad style) just with Tanpura support may be considered very special in the film. Dinkar Kaikini performed it as a composition Hari Om. This composition, even not being a full song, with a particular segment of Nom, Tom Alap is very beautifully rendered with all seriousness. He brought out the best of raga Miyan-Ki-Todi within a span of just one minute. Credit goes to both Ravi Shankar and the vocalist for presenting a brief portion of Hindustani vocal format. It was a marvellous short piece.<sup>xix</sup>

### **Jo Tum Todo Piya:-**

Jo Tum Todo Piya is a very beautiful composition based on raga Yaman which starts with a beautiful accompaniment on Sitar. There are a lot of prelude and interlude music. This is a three and a half minute long rendition thoughtfully crafted by Ravi Shankar. In the prelude portion the accompaniment on Sitar is played in the typical playing style of Ravi

Shankar with his usual ornamentation of Kritan & Layakari. It is followed by a vocal performance based on raga Yaman<sup>15</sup> set to Tintaal. This leads to the first interlude with Sitar, Flute and the entire Percussion right at the beginning. The composition had a very pleasing Manjira effect added to the *Naal*, *Dholak* and *Tabla* producing a rhythmic pattern. The use of Manjira, Dholak and Naal in the temple is of great religious significance and the same effect is masterly being executed here. The second Asthayi begins with Taans in Flute going into pieces on Sitar where more than one Sitar superimposed in an intricate rhythmic pattern. The second Antara comes up with the higher notes. The completeness of raga Yaman is maintained all throughout the entire piece. Both in the vocal and interlude pieces, a full orchestration of Indian classical Acoustic instruments are doing full justice to the sound track of the entire rendition. This rendition is a basic classical raga-based work of Ravi Shankar.<sup>xx</sup>

### **Karna Fakiri Phir Kya Dilgiri:-**

The lyrics of ‘Karna Fakiri Phir Kya Dilgiri’ convey a message of mystic philosophy. This beautiful Bhajan (1min 38seconds) by Vani Jairam is based on a tune akin to the movement of both Durga<sup>16</sup> and Bhatiyaar<sup>17</sup>. A number of folk instruments have been used in the accompaniment. It is a short duration Bhajan with a moderately fast tempo. Ravi Shankar excels in the usage of the traditional tune and putting up a well thought out musical arrangements. All the accompanying instruments in this film are more or less the same. He created a beautiful mood of

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<sup>15</sup> Yaman , a heptatonic evening raga, belongs to Kalyan Thaati. It is considered as one of the fundamental raga of Hindustani Classical Music. Yaman is often used in Film songs.

<sup>16</sup> Durga, a pentatonic nocturnal raga, belongs to Bilawal Thaati. It portrays a srngar rasa.

<sup>17</sup> Bhatiyaar , an early morning raga, belongs to Marwa Thaati. It has some similarities with Mand. Raag Bhatiyaar is often used in composing Hindi film songs.

happiness using a whole lot of Percussion instruments and Ektara. This song stands out to be a special one because of the wonderful effects of Acoustic Instruments. The rendition is not a raga based composition. But the use of devotional tunes enriched it. Ravi Shankar showed his mastery of compositional skill by deviating slightly from the pure raga based composition. But he put the notes in such a way that the song turns out to be an appealing presentation.<sup>xxi</sup>

### **Mere to Giridhar Gopal:-**

Mere to Giridhar Gopal is one of the most popular songs of Mirabai. This unique composition by Ravi Shankar has been presented beautifully with orchestration and accompaniment. It is based on the popular raga Khamaj<sup>18</sup> and set to Dadra. The orchestration with a large number of Indian Acoustic Instruments and their division of music is phenomenal. The accompaniment begins with an orchestration of Sitar, Sarod, Santoor, Bow and Flute. Ravi Shankar used the best of the phrases of raga Khamaj in a fast and joyous manner along with the strong accompaniment of Tabla, Naal and Bell. The song begins after a short Prelude and masterfully with a short burst of a few chords of Instrumental phrases. In the first interlude Ravi Shankar brings out a different application in the Percussion section by introducing a Khol (a folk instrument of Bengal) exclusively. The Sitar leads the Interlude with all other instruments in this portion. The first Antara part begins where Ravi Shankar used all the beautiful and essential phrases of raga Khamaj to delve into the second interlude which is played on Flute and Violin. The striking feature of the orchestration is the division

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<sup>18</sup> Khamaj, a Hindustani Classical raga, belongs to Khamaj Thaata. It is often used in Ghazals, Thumri and Bhajans. The raga is used in composing light classical form of Hindustani music. It has similarity with raga Desh.

of hands and tonal effects. An exquisite musical piece on Sitar merges into a piece of Flute which is completed by a Santoor in the interlude orchestration music. The last stanza is a duet where Dinkar Kaikini(as Tansen )rendered the male portion ‘Mere To Giridhar Gopal’. The song is not a continuous duet performance. The male voice of Dinkar Kaikini is only introduced at the very end of the scene. This signature devotional song in the voice of Vani Jairam is mesmerizing. The entire composition along with its accompaniment and the introduction of the male voice at the end of the scene is wonderful.<sup>xxii</sup>

### **Ae ri Main To Prem Deewani:-**

Ae ri Main to Prem Diwani is a beautiful song based on Miyan-Ki-Todi<sup>19</sup>, where the application of Pancham (Pa) is found only once. The rest of the tune is entirely based on Gujri Todi<sup>20</sup>. The mood of the song is filled with sadness. Ravi Shankar used the mood, movement and purity of raga Miyan-Ki-Todi throughout the song. This is a short rendition of just four lines of lyrics. It begins with a perfectly tuned Vibraphone<sup>21</sup> effects of the notes of Miyan-Ki-Todi and a staccato movement from a string instrument goes at the background with seven beats (Rupak Taal) rhythmic cycle. r The Vibraphone effect dies down and a beautiful Santoor piece emerges in the higher octave of the raga which is followed by a tune on Sarangi in the similar fashion. It merges with a piece of Sitar which is followed by Flute and Vibraphone in the middle octave almost like an Asthayi (main refrain)

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<sup>19</sup> Miya Ki Todi , often referred as Todi, belongs to Todi Thaati of Hindustani Classical Music according to Bhatkhande. It is a morning raga and has similarity with Gurjari Todi. It portrays a mournful mood with heavy pathos. It is believed to have been created by Tansen, the 16<sup>th</sup> century musician.

<sup>20</sup> Gujri Todi , a morning raga, belongs to Todi Thaati. The raga is named after Gujarat and it owes origin to the Gujjars or Gurjars.

<sup>21</sup> Vibraphone is a Percussion instrument in the metallophone family. It consists of tuned metal bars and is typically played by using mallets to strike the bars.

of Miyan-Ki-Todi. This entire Prelude of the raga is for about one minute and the listeners will be impressed by the beautiful arrangements of Indian classical Acoustic instruments. The Antara of the composition is used in the opposite manner. Here the Alaap begins with the notes of higher octave which is followed by Santoor, Flute and a Sitar. The above mentioned orchestration completes the entire Prelude portion which is quite long.

The song begins with a main refrain (Asthayi pattern) and the Percussion part is presented in a bold manner with Tabla, Naal and Dholak in seven beats rhythmic cycle. The same notes of the song is now repeated in an orchestration lead (played) by the Sitar for quite a few times. A Flute is applied in the Antara along with a beautiful piece on Santoor. The assimilation of Flute and Santoor goes to the Interlude section and the song begins again. Here the last two lines of the song comes out beautifully where Ravi Shankar very masterly used the Pancham of Miyan-ki-Todi in the composition. This is the second section of the rendition which leads to the going back to the first line of the song.

The Asthayi part is performed in the playing style of Instrumental music which is called as Gatkari. A wonderful climax at the end finishes the song with double – vocal effects being superimposed where both the second line and first line are appearing together on each other. Overall a brilliantly rendered piece portrayed a sorrowful moment and longing of Meera for Lord Krishna. The song wonderfully portrayed the lifelong struggle of Meera. Through the lyrics of the song the mental agony of Meera is shown. Vani Jairam performed the rendition tunefully and bringing out all the elements required for a devotional song in a very matured manner.



The Orchestration of this song is designed in a well thought out manner and executed artistically. The pathos and pain of the raga is beautifully portrayed through the movements and use of the fifth note Pancham. It was an exquisite creation of Ravi Shankar. He brought out the best of seven beats cycle of Rupak all throughout. The ragadari is not very essential for a performance of devotional song. But he maintained the spirit of the raga throughout the rendition. He wonderfully created an ambience of Bhajan and the Bhakti cult of India. <sup>xxiii</sup>

### **Contribution of Vani Jairam :-**

Vani Jairam is a well-known playback singer of India who started her career in 1970s. She worked as a vocalist for almost fifty years and she is often referred as the 'Meera of Modern India'. She has worked with all the renowned composers of Indian film industry and recorded thousands of songs for different films. She rendered compositions in 19 languages of India. Initially she was trained in Carnatic music. Her first performance in All India Radio was at the age of eight. <sup>xxiv</sup> She has always been revered as a dignified and versatile musician. <sup>xxv</sup>

Vani Jairam performed with veteran Classical vocalists like Kumar Gandharv and Dinkar Kaikini. She had the special ability to sing rendition at any octave. She was always quite comfortable even in the high pitch. She worked with eminent music composers like R D Burman, Salil Chowdhury, Madan Mohan, Lakshmikant Pyarelal, Kalyanji -Anandji, Jaidev, Naushad, O P Nayyar, Vasant Desai, Bappi Lahiri and Bhaskar Chandravarkar. Vani Jairam made her debut as playback singer in Guddi (1971)". <sup>xxvi</sup>

According to Deccan Herald.com “Vani Jairam bagged the coveted National Award thrice and was honoured with several film awards by various state governments and recognition like Filmfare Awards”.<sup>xxvii</sup>

According to Mirchi.in “.... singing was not her first career choice as she completed her studies and worked with the State Bank of India in 60s.” After her marriage she relocated in Mumbai where she was trained in Hindustani Classical Music. She also learnt Thumri, Ghazal and Bhajan. Eventually she met music composer Vasant Desai, who helped her a lot in her musical career.<sup>xxviii</sup> She performed in duet with luminaries like Kishore Kumar, Mukesh, Nitin Mukesh, Mohammad Rafi, K J Yesudas and Manna Dey and many other eminent vocalists.<sup>xxix</sup>

### **Contribution of Ravi Shankar in Meera:-**

Ravi Shankar’s achievement in Meera(1979) was phenomenal. The film Meera was an outstanding work of Ravi Shankar for its music. After Meera (1979) he composed music for some other films also. In his career he composed music for many Hindi ,Bengali and English films. But in his later life he stopped composing music for films specially from 1986 onwards. His previous works will always remain memorable in the annals of Indian Cinema. His films Apu Trilogy, Kabuliwala, Anuradha and Meera stand right at the top. In Meera, Ravi Shankar demonstrated his compositional skill in each and every song. He used folk tune in some of the Bhajans. The devotional side of the music is wonderfully presented. As the film focused on the life of Meera and her philosophy, it is quite natural that it revolves around the music of Meera which she practised throughout her entire life for Lord Krishna. She dedicated all her life in singing Bhakti

Sangeet. A whole cult of Bhakti Sangeet started with Meera Bai. As a matter of fact the true existence of Meera is through her music. Ravi Shankar wonderfully justified the theme of Meera as a composer. Meera as a subject of film is always special for some directors and music directors. Two films on Meera were made at different times. The first film (1945) was in Tamil language and the second one made in 1979 was in Hindi . The Tamil version of Meera was so popular that later it was dubbed in Hindi. Both the films were very successful as they attracted large number of viewers for its mesmerizing devotional songs. Ravi Shankar is regarded as one of the most experienced composers of Indian Cinema. He created the music of Meera with his enormous experience. He worked with a group of eminent musicians in Meera (1979). Vani Jairam rendered almost all the Bhajans in solo format. In one rendition Dinkar Kaikini accompanied Vani Jairam. Ravi Shankar used Dinkar Kaikini's voice in the lip of Tansen( played by Bharat Bhushan) in the film. Both the vocalists performed with their best efforts in the film. The sound track of Meera made it an iconic one in the realm of Indian Philosophy based film. Ravi Shankar articulated enriching Layakari in the accompaniment portion. He used folk based tune in some songs like -Bala Main Bairagan Hoongi, Karna Fakiri, Ranaji Main To Govind Ke Gun Gaoon. He wonderfully applied folk instruments in the accompaniment of the Bhajans. He composed the Bhajans in grammatically pure ragas of Hindustani Classical Music.

### **Some Reviews of the Film Meera (1979)**

According to Times of India (5<sup>th</sup> February, 2023), one striking achievement of Vani Jayaram was that she sang for all top Hindi film composers. The article mentioned “Given a lifetime opportunity to perform 12 songs penned by Meera Bai, the 16<sup>th</sup> century poetess and composed by virtuoso Ravi Shankar, the singer unfurled what she was capable of.”<sup>xxx</sup>

We find in Mondayindia.com that Gulzar faced some initial hurdle to find music composer for his film Meera. Lata Mangeshkar's refusal as singer followed by the refusal of duo of Laxmikant-Pyarelal came as a setback. Fortunately Gulzar was successful to find Ravi Shankar, on the recommendation of Desh Mukherjee (Art Director), as music composer of the film. For time constraints Ravi Shankar recorded all songs in just twenty-four days (22<sup>nd</sup> November to 15<sup>th</sup> December' 1976). So Gulzar was under pressure to make sure that the songs were ready within a short span of time.<sup>xxxix</sup>

In a study, scholar Jigyasa Hasija of Comparative Literature, Delhi University, vividly wrote in the article "Contemporary Cinema and Meerabai: A Study of Gulzar's Meera (1979)" (in Pune Research Times in the Vol 2, Issue 3) how the director presented a portrayal of Saint Meera along with contemporary issues. According to Hasija the story tells us a great deal about modern interpretation.<sup>xxxix</sup>

According to Vijay Lokapally in Hindu "It was sublime love portrayed on screen....by Hema Malini as Meera, the 16<sup>th</sup> century devotee of Lord Krishna. In this brilliantly created tribute Gulzar brings alive the legend of Meera".<sup>xxxix</sup>

In thequint.com Bhawana Somaaya wrote that Hema Malini stated in an interview "I agreed to do 'Meera' for the Love of Krishna. The film, released on May 18<sup>th</sup>, was a disaster at the box-office. Gulzar consoled Hema that it will be a film, she will always remain proud of, and this has proved to be true".<sup>xxxix</sup> It is true that the film was not appreciated as a commercial movie.

In the rediff movies we find an article named Revisiting Classics: Meera: Gulzar's Divine Romance, where the critic mentioned "What I love

most about Meera is how Gulzar doesn't intellectualise the premise but makes it as accessible as possible.”<sup>xxxv</sup>

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