Religion and poetry are not only compatible, they are complementary. The structures of poetic experience and religious experience are identical, for the poetic impulse and the religious impulse run not only parallel but also quite close to each other, often interacting and intermingling with one another, running almost in the same direction. When, what I. A. Richards calls, “the resolution, interanimation, and balancing of impulses” between the two take place we have religious poetry at its best. George Santayana, in his essay, “The Homeric Hymns” establishes an identity between the two:

Judging other minds and other ages by our own, we are tempted to ask if there ever was any fundamental difference between religion and poetry. Both seem to consist in what the imagination adds to science, to history, to morals. Men looked attentively on the face of Nature... but before making statistics of her movements, they made dramatisations of her life. The imagination enveloped the material world, as yet imperfectly studied and produced the cosmos of mythology.

Both poetry and religion are the manifestations of the sublime imagination and intense emotion. The dull round of daily routine and mundane affairs at times causes divine discontent in the human heart and fills it with a longing and quest of the vast unknown. This launches him on the pilgrimage of eternity. If the devotee worships God, the Creator, the poet celebrates the beauty of this creation. That way religion and poetry coalesce. And hence some great poets like Vyāsa, Dante and Milton turn to religion, whereas the devotees like Tulsi, Kabir, Narasinh, and Meera turn to poetry. Man’s visions of God are not wanton dreams; nor are so the poetic visions either. Poetry is an act of faith and so very close to religion that there is no reason why religion should constrain poetry.
and religious poetry necessarily be minor as it is believed in the West. The only probable constraint could perhaps be theology so far as religious poetry is concerned. It is this theological concern which overloads the imaginative flight as in the case of some of the XVIII century English poets. Only great poets like Dante, Milton and Vyāsa can transcend this limitation and turn even theological necessity into a poetic virtue; and then you have great spiritual poems like Bhagvadgita, Divine Comedy, and Paradise Lost, in which we hear the divine language as it were. Particularly the medieval religious poetry in India is the fruit of the eternal quest of human heart in search of the divine and it finds an utterance in love and longing for God, free from all theological considerations. It is not the poetry of congregation, but purely personal poetry, solitary and intensely lyrical. If the poet in search of God experiences spiritual unrest, his visions of communion with God abound in boundless tranquillity and wisdom. Here is the unification and not the dissociation of sensibility. Religious poetry in India is largely nontheological and lyrical unlike largely that in the West. In Europe, as David Cecil complains, "religious emotion has not proved the most fertile soil, for poetry should be spontaneous expression of the spirit". It is this spontaneous expression of the spirit which is the chief trait of Indian religious poetry. We hear in it music welling up in harmony that celebrates bliss, beauty, and truth against the flux of being and dying, against the din of voices loud with mundane pleasures and tumult and chaos of the soul. Here is the religious experience enshrined in eternal music. The problem of reconciling religion and poetry does not arise at all since all experiences are fused into the supreme poetic experience. Great religious poetry does delight us as all great art does. But more than giving pleasure or aesthetic enjoyment affecting "simply a sort of special sense, it affects us as entire human beings; it affects our moral and religious existence", as T. S. Eliot puts it.

Genuine religious poetry rises for above the temporal plane. It echoes the sound of music of spheres that "sing
like angels such harmony of immortal souls that we cannot hear whilst this muddy vesture of decay grossly encloses it. It is the privilege of the visionary poets to bring a momentary stay against confusion and let us sojourn into the land of light. Particularly in India, the finest poetry has been religious poetry. We have a great tradition of religious poetry beginning with the Upanisadas and Vedas and the Epics to the moving lyrical hymns even in the modern times. It is poetry without frontiers, without the bounds of space and time. As long as man’s divine search of his Maker does not abate, the rhythm of religious poetry will keep on beating in tune with the hearts of saints throbbing with divine longing.

Over five centuries have rolled away, but Narasinh’s poems are as fresh as the dew-drops, as if written this morning. The fact is, he did not write poetry, he lived poetry. The heritage of hundreds of his poems is nothing but a register of the rhythm of a life divine, the echoes and reechoes of eternal music which generation after generation would not let willingly die, but preserve in their voice and cherish in their minds and hearts, drawing profound joy, peace, and faith. Even today, after so long, the day breaks in Gujarat not only with flush of the dawn—and the songs of birds—but also with the singing of Narasinh’s prabhatian or the morning hymns sung by men and women, old and young alike. These prabhatian of Narasinh are lyrical poetry at its finest with love and devotion spreading in our consciousness like the sunrise. It is poetry not confined to the printed page, like a bird in a cage, but an integral part of everyday emotional reality, the kind of poetry that at once blots out our arbitrary distinctions between life and literature, poetry and religion, dream and reality. They coalesce here, and we have a unique world of song in the tide of time. We are astonished to see the way the world is transformed here into Vrindavan with the all pervasive music of Krishna’s flute mingling with the murmur of gently flowing waves of the Jamuna and the graceful murmur of the gopis dancing in trance under the moonlit sky unfolded in his poetry, which is a classic illustration of Keats’s idea of Negative Capability—“when man is...
capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason". Narasinh should have also loved to say: "If poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all". For, that is the way the poetic fictions of Narasinh’s were made, flowering into songs what was seen in trance. His poetry reaches heights where even metaphors lapse into reality. It wells up in the depths of the soul where the fiery particles of inspiration leap into an ineffable poetic flame of love and devotion. The poet seems to be utterly lost in his glimpses of God. There is absolutely no tension between sensory appearance and meaning. Our attention is not even for a moment turned away from the perceptible world of sights and sounds to concentrate on the meaning alone, stripped of its sensory context. To the poet the creation is the sport of the Creator, and he would fain sing songs in praise of both. The cohesion is comprehensive and complete, and we see poetry and religion reconciled faultlessly. "The poet", says Wordsworth, "is a man speaking to men". In Narasinh we have a man speaking not only to men but also to God, and through that communion trying to vindicate man’s faith in God, which is, at bottom, the motivation of all religious poetry. It is the perpetual flux that makes the temporal world uncertain and ephemeral; and hence the quest for the eternal. But Narasinh does not turn his back on the temporal world for a moment. Nor is his universe an insubstantial pageant or a futile vacuum. His intensely romantic subjectivity loses all bounds in tune with the infinite, and grows into cosmic consciousness through which the scheme of things seems most auspicious. The diameter of his actual world is indeed very small. But for a probable sojourn to Pandharpur on a pilgrimage, evidenced by the Marathi usages scattered over a number of his poems and the influence of abhangs on his lyrics, he hardly ever left the shadows of Girnar. But the world of Narasinh’s poetry is not parochial. His sublime imagination gives it cosmic dimensions and epic scale. Exploring the various levels of his vision and experience one encounters spirituality rarely found in Gujarati poetry before or since. Eventually the way to Vrindavan is the way to
the heart, for Vrindavan must be sought within oneself. That is why Narasinh's emotional exuberance is not a tidal wave sweeping him off his feet. Far from it, it is an impeccable serf-riding into the vast divine, an instrument of release from mundane narrowness and trivialities into the land of our heart's desire. The temporal world otherwise gone to pieces, is re-created in his poetry, and charged with devotion, bhakti, it is turned into paradise. For, wherever there is Narasinh there is Krishna, there is Vrindavan. Without hurrying across the seas, in his poetry, we change not only the sky but also the mind. It is a supreme spiritual experience devoutely to be wished. His poems are marbles with which he has built a cosmic theatre, where the Divine is eternally at play. Poetry to Narasinh is not an art. It is a guiding light, the fire that burns bright within, illuminating all the innermost recesses and touching the chords of the deepest music in man; an incantation to the eternal and infinite Divinity. It is poetry that ranges between the human and the divine, the finite and the infinite, heaven and earth. It is poetry becoming great while worshipping the greatness of God and His creation. Nor is it, what T. S. Eliot calls, "a variety of minor poetry" written by a poet of "limited awareness". Both Dr. Johnson and Eliot are right only if we define religious poetry as the poetry subservient to a religious cause and conscious of its own function within the bounds of a particular narrow theology or religious cult and dogma and thus turned into an instrument for some non-secular purpose. But when religion in the life of a seer is not an aspect of life but the very essence of life, as inevitable as breathing, poetry becomes a sort of divine comedy celebrating while singing about the ways of God. The world's finest religious poetry was not written by minor poets like Waller but by major poets like Dante and Milton in the West and the poets of the Upanishads and Epics in the East. Narasinh's is the poetry in quest of eternal truth, eternal bliss, and eternal beauty. His poetry does sometimes tend to be didactic, but it is the didacticism of the highest kind, where the artist uses his art to serve the supreme art of living. His famous song
Vaishnav jan to tene kahiye, which was to Mahatma Gandhi a lighthouse in the sea of life, is a classic example. If, on one hand, it sums up Da Da Da of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad by inculcating charity, compassion, and restraint, it also reflects the essence of Christian morality and the way of straight life propounded in the Dhammapada. And all this moral excellence is the theme of a poem where poetry is not at all fractured or even overloaded by the weight of preaching. Mahatma Gandhi had translated this poem into a living reality, and the world was certainly the richer and the better for that. At its highest, does not all great art make man better and nobler?

Here is that song in tune with which beats unfailingly Gandhi’s rhythm of life:

He alone is a true Vaishnav
Who has empathy for others in grief,
But knows no vanity while aiding others in agony
He greets them all, speaks ill of none;
Restains his speech and passion and mind.
Verily blessed his mother be.
He’s equipoised, free from all desire,
And looks upon other women as if upon his mother.
He speaks no untruth, nor grabs others’ wealth.
He knows no infatuation, knows no delusion,
And is firmly equipoised in stern detachment
He’s attuned to Ramanam, embodies all shrines in self.
Narasinh says: Just a glimpse of such a saint
And we have salvation for generations all.

While translating the songs of Narasinh, one is painfully conscious of Shelley’s contention that “the plant must spring again from its own seeds, or it will bear no flowers”. A poem like Vaishnav Jan tends to be stumbling on prosaic utterances, when cajoled into a foreign language. Here we have only thought and no music, and what a great difference! Where music and poetry are inseparable, does poetry, too, fade away
with music? What is striking about the original is the ethics turned into music. Emotions and ethics present no incompatibility in his poetry. But sensibility is untranslatable, and it needs a special effort to render poetry into a foreign language. It is a process not merely of transition from one language into another; it is transcultural across cultures. A poem on a printed page is finite, cold, inert. The moment it comes into contact with the reader, it springs to life. It then refuses to be pinned to the page like a bird in a cage, but takes off to fly across the reader's mind, sprawling into immensity as it were; the finite poem thus trying to spread over boundless space and time. The problem is, at what point of its intersection with time and space should a translator attempt to catch it, once it leaves the printed page on which it lies until then almost inanimate? The problem is all the more formidable when one sets out to translate. The religious poetry like the songs of Narasinh or Meera, the songs springing from the depth of divine consciousness, is hard to translate.

It is a great paradox that Narsinh, one of the most musical of Gujarati poets, was born deaf and dumb, in a small village, Talajala, at the foot of mount Girnar. His mother was a pious widow, who went round with her child to saints and sages. The legend is, there came a saint from Girnar. He blessed the child: "Say Radhe Krishna, my child!" The child's lips quivered; he fumbled, and there was a sudden shout of joy: "Radhe Krishna! Radhe Krishna!" A rock of ages was split and a fountain awakened. The boy experienced release from the stiffing of many births as it were, while enjoying the romance of human speech.

Let my body be emaciated for God,
Lest love be lost for the body.
You're deep in sleep,
Choked to the core;
Why won't you wake up at the word of a saint?

And he woke up with a longing, the yearning to see not only the glory of God but God Himself. He was a veritable vagabond,
moving with the groups of sadhus, clapping and singing. Nothing could put him on the track, not even marriage, until there came a turning point. Taunted and humiliated by his brother's wife, Narasinh once walked away into the forest where he spent seven days and seven nights in penance in a Shiva temple. They say, Lord Shiva was propitiated. When in reply to His boon, Narasinh asked to show him that which was dearest to Him, Lord Shiva took him to see rāsleelā:

Startling suddenly up from sleep
I find the world ebbed away;
And all the pleasures of life
Seem now to be fantasies in sleep.
Mind and enlightenment are one:
Brahman sports with Brahman!

Narasinh was awakened to see another dream: Krishna dancing in Vrindāvan with the gopis. It was a world enveloped in moonlight and music. The gopis came crowding in, responding to the magic of Krishna's flute.

Krishna played on His flute in Vrindavan
And the gopis grew restless.

Shyam is face to face with the damsels
And dances in Vrindavan.
It is all beyond comprehension
of the sages and the wise:
Even Brahma would yearn for that state.

Narasinh was holding the torch and so much absorbed in watching the rāsleelā that even when his hand was burning he was lost in a trance. That is why he was known as Divetio—the torch-bearer.

Blessed be thou O lamp!

Tarry a bit, O moon
Do not in a hurry let in the dawn
My Lord, my Life's come home.
Don't you shift thy lamp, O moon,
Be steady for a day:
Don't you see my darling
Sporting with me?

Look, how He smiles!
Look, how He dances!

Narasinh's poetry, some of the poems in Rāsamala and particularly in Suratsangram, sound erotic, but it is sublime eroticism where the differences of sex melt away. It is a sport between Jeeva and Shīva, the mortal and the immortal. If the world is Vrindavan and life is rasa, no wonder even the erotic images become only the devices of a larger allegorical scheme. See how Yashoda wakes up Krishna saying:

Get up, my little Yadav,
Krishna, the cowherd!
Who else will to the pastures go?
Three hundred and sixty shepherds
have crowded here . . .

Why three hundred and sixty shepherds, as many as days in a year, if it were not for an allegorical purpose? Allegory and fantasy are the two major strands of almost all religious poetry, and Narasinh's poetry has both of them in abundance. It is largely pastoral poetry. It ceases to imitate the ordinary rural life, and becomes distinctly pastoral. It is not the kind of pastoral poetry that Dr. Jobson dismisses as "easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting: whatever images it can supply, are long ago exhausted; and its inherent probability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind". Narasinh's Vrindavan is an arcadia, an earthly paradise, hallowed by the Divine Cowherd, a micro-cosm of man's most cherished world, far from the realms of his everyday experience, presenting the ultimate reality. It is distant and yet close, symbolic and yet real. Narasinh's vision of the Rasa is variously interpreted — a figment of the poet's imagination visualised in a fine frenzy; an allegory; a mystic experience as a result of a highstrung religious yearning; a
sheer poetic fiction. No matter whatever it was, it was supreme reality to Narasinh, turning his life into an endless festival of devotion and songs in praise of God. "If you believe in God, no explanation is necessary. If you don't, no explanation is possible", says Franz Werfel. It changed his outlook fundamentally. It was a great turning point in Narasinh's life. He rose far above the trivialities of life, disregarding all praise and blame:

We are surely thus and thus,  
Call us what you will!  
If you call us polluted  
While we are devoted,  
We shall serve our Lord Krishna.  

Yes. I'm the worst of the lot,  
Worse than even the worst;  
Call us what you will,  
My love is deep indeed.

Here there is no defiance, no revolt. It is a spiritual state of indifference to the ways of the world which can come only as a result of some divine vision. And we have, what George Santayana says in *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, "poetry raised to its highest power... identical with religion grasped in its inmost truth... at their point of union both reveal their purity and beneficence, for then poetry loses its frivolity and ceases to deceive". We have poetry reaching out for the sublime, losing all its frivolity. It is poetry without frontiers, intuitively reflecting the highest truths:

Thou art infinite, my Lord,  
Manifested in diverse forms all  
over the universe!  
Thou art the master of the self,  
and the essence of light, abiding in the *Vedas*  
As the word arising out of vacuum.  
Thou art the wind, the water, and the earth  
And the sustainer of the earth,  
Spread out like a tree against the sky.
RELIGION AND POETRY

It's only for thy sport that thou art
Incarnated into Jiva from Shiva.
The Vedas hold and the Smritis endorse
That golden ear-rings and gold are one;
Forged into different shapes they're differently called,
It's only gold in the end.
Even scriptures make a lot of fuss and noise,
Missing the central truth:
Thou art the seed in the tree
and the tree in the seed;
The veil of that variation
Do I closely see;
Love alone will discover Thee!

Akhil Brahmandman embodies the quintessence of the poet's vision. This pantheism was not an aesthetic approach but the result of his spiritual experience. The music of Krishna's flute was certainly the music of the spheres, and only the seers like Narasinh, who could transcend this 'muddy vesture of decay' could hear it. See, how one of his finest lyrics opens most dramatically:

Lo, behold in the sky
And look who wanders saying: 'I'm He, I'm He?'
At the feet of the Dark One
I'd gladly die, for none can match Krishna.
My narrow reasoning lost in the endless festival of God
Fails to comprehend His splendour dark.
A dazzling flame sparkles out of
The millions of rising suns, and its
Golden fringe bedecks the sky;
And my Lord lost in love
Rocks in a golden cradle.

A fiery lamp is ablaze
Without wick or thread or oil;
It burns so bright
Without a flicker, without a wave.
RELIGION AND POETRY

He can be visualised
But not with eyes;
Must be recognized
But not in a form.

The movement and the meaning keep step with each other, and we have an ever widening sphere of a great spiritual experience. The poet not only sees the truth but also realises the truth. It is, like the rasaleela, a mystic experience. William James donounces, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, the moments of revelation as "hallucinatory or pseudo-hallucinatory luminous phenomena, photisms, to use the term of psychologists...floods of light and glory". To Narasinh his moments of revelation were not hallucinatory day dreams but the very vital part of an integral spiritual reality. His was a most intense and powerful imagination transmuting spiritual realities into poetry. And that is why his poetry, although presenting a world of striking contrasts, shows subtle cohesion between the temporal and the eternal, the finite and the infinite, the human and the divine, continually juxtaposed but always to the divine without any tension. He is not a Micawber, but he has faith as firm as the Himalayas, and God is at his back and call coming to him as a garland in Rai Mandalik's prison, as a sable could cooling off the boiling water, as a banker to see through all his expensive social commitments. If Narasinh was mad after Krishna, Krishna too was mad after him. The world humiliated him, hated him, scoffed at him; but he uttered not a word in protest. He knew the vanity of it all:

I'd do this, I'd do that
Is sheer ignorance all;
Like a dog beneath the cart
Posing to pull its weight.

The cycle of seasons turns on
And creepers bloom, leaves sprout,
Flowers blossom, fruits grow;
Fate is irrevocable;
The fool of a man worries in vain.
Not a leaf flutters without His will. And that is why even when his only son dies, he sees in the funeral a wedding a procession:

The bride's joy knows no bounds to see
The palanquin of the child-groom
Made of bamboos green
And lifted by four
Saying: Rama, Rama!
Crematorium is the name of the town,
Princess Fire is her name,
This daughter of Lady Red.

We see how Narasinh, like the metaphysical poets, can view even death in friendly terms. He has his own sense of honour too:

Who's sent this old age which was not wanted at all?
—I'd thought youth was eternal!
The thresholds have grown mountain high
And the outskirts are alien lands;
The water pot is inaccessible
As the Ganga: and my hair is now fair!

He contrasts youth and age, and thus in a lighthearted vein presents a profound theme of the flight of youth in the passage of time. Nor is Narasinh's poetry in any way old-fashioned or outmoded. Some of his poems have psychological undertones, and lend easily even to Freudian interpretations. "Nagdaman", dealing with Krishna's vanquishing of the King Cobra in the Jamuna, is one such lyric. It presents a fascinating drama of calf love not without some Oedipal strains.

The poem has a dramatic opening:

Leave the waters and th lotus flowers, O child!
Our Lord will rise,
He will rise and kill.

... ... ...
You've fair complexion, and look full of fascinating dreams!
How many issues did your mother have?
And you her unfavourite one?
But Krishna does not budge. She points to the costly necklace and chain bedecking her heaving bosom, and offers it as a bribe, only if he leaves. After a moment of silence Krishna replies:

What shall I do with your necklace, Nagin,  
What shall I do with your chain?  
Why should you be stealing in your home?  
Only for my sake?

Krishna must vindicate his valour by conquering the Nag. And when He spares him at the end, one does not miss to see in it a lover’s gift. Apart from the central sex image of the snake we have the images and undertones which are Freudian in their form and meaning. It shows how Narasinh’s poetry cannot date.

Narasinh’s is religious poetry at its best in a great oral tradition. It has its origins in man’s divine discontent with the dull round of daily routine amidst mundane and temporal surroundings, when an untrammelled emotional and sublime imaginative experience lead to the most creative moments of life, making it an endless cruise along the unchartered contours of human consciousness in quest of the supreme truth and beauty and joy. That is why the locale of his poetry, Vrindavan, pulsates with faith and love in tune with the Infinite. His life has become a divine comedy and an endless festival of songs sung in praise of God and His works. And we have, what T. S. Eliot called in his essay on Dante, “the experience of a poem... the experience both of a moment and a lifetime... a moment which can never be forgotten, but which is never repeated integrally and yet which would become destitute of significance if it did not survive in the larger whole of experience; which survives inside a deeper and calmer feeling”.

Turning to Meera from Narasinh is like turning to a torrent of love from a sea of faith and wisdom, from reflection and realisation to yearning and quest, from a poet to a poetess lost in the sea of Krishna’s love.
Narasinh and Meera are two of the fondest names in the history of poetry and religion in Gujarat, almost always uttered in the same breath. Krishna is their golden link, and so is poetry. To turn from Narasinh to Meera is to turn from an ocean of religious experience to a mighty river of love and longing, swifty flowing in quest of Krishna. If in Narasinh's poetry we have profound spiritual reflection and tranquillity, in Meera's poetry we have infinite passion and pain of the finite heart that yearns. Hers is essentially love poetry at its finest, intense with lyrical charm. In a sense all religious poetry is love poetry, for religion is love. Meera is by far "the best beloved in all the world of song and all the tide of time". Unlike Narasinh, who was a common man, Meera was the queen of Mewar. In Narasinh's life we see reconciliation rather than renunciation, an integral way of life. But to Meera love was not a thing apart, it was her whole existence. Krishna was the Lord of her childhood dream that possessed her all her life, and she went on searching for it. Her life became an endless cruise, a pilgrimage of eternity in quest of Krishna.

I'm spellbound by your face
O Mohan Dear!
I'm spellbound.
I saw your face and
The world grew bitter,
My mind suddenly changed,
O Mohan Dear!
Worldly pleasures
Are mirages all;
Let's shun those trifles,
O Mohan Dear!
Meera surrenders, she sings:
You're sole hope, my lord,
And I'm very lucky,
O Mohan Dear!

The thorny hedge of the vanity fair could not contain her. The loss of parents in childhood and widowhood in the prime of
her youth did not frustrate her quest. The legend says that she was persecuted, insulted, abused. She was given even a cup of poison since by mingling with saints she had brought disgrace to the royal family. But in the dark poison she saw the face of her Shyam smiling, and she easily drank it up. The cup of poison was turned into the cup of love. But it did poison her temporal world. The palaces choked her like the prison walls, and she sang and danced her way to Vrindavan, the land of her heart's desire.

For me Giridhar Gopal alone,
None else ever abides;
I saw the wide world,
But none is mine.
I abandoned friends and lovers,
And relations all;
In the company of saints I
Lost the ways of the world.
Saints please me
But the world makes me weep;
With my tear drops I water
The creeper of my love.

She transcended all sham and shallow shame. What did she care for the world falling between her and Krishna?

It's the talk of the town
Everywhere broadcast:
Rana offered her hemlock
But Meera drank it up;
And she was in utter ecstasy.
Now all of them have come to know:
Meera's deep in love
And Krishna's her darling Lord.
What was destined
Has happened after all.
Who cares?

For a queen it was an act of extraordinary courage and faith. For, in a world where women veiled their faces and lived like birds in cages, this pilgrim of eternity explored even in the
wilderness a path leading to her Great Lover. Nothing could impede her. The fire of yearning had dried up the sea of the world. She had only one longing, the longing for the feet of her Master.

I am seized with longing for Guru's feet;
Nought else pleases me save his feet;
False vanity fair is an empty dream.
The sea of life has all run dry.
Who cares now to swim across?
Meera prays to Giridhar Nagar:
My gaze is turned inside,
I am seized with longing.

The moments of crisis could not confuse her. They stimulated her creativity, and her sufferings were at once turned into songs. She had hitched her heart to Krishna, and none could put them asunder, not even Krishna himself. It was not an affair to remember. It was the love that grew over ages in previous births.

Even if you snap your love
I shan't ever, my Lord.
Snapping my bond with you, O Krishna,
Wherewith shall I be bound?
You're spread out like a tree,
There a nestling I flutter;
You ripple like a lake,
And I flow like a fish;
You're grown mountain-high,
And I linger like a shadow;
Like the full-moon you shine, my Lord,
I'm a crying chakora!
You're pearls, my Lord
And I run like a thread;
You're all gold,
And I'm adorned.

Meera sings: My Master's in Brij
You're my Lord, O Krishna
I'm forever your maid.
Meera was lovesick. Who could cure her excepting the Divine Physician? To love and to be wise was not given even to her. She made no secret of her agony.

I am lovesick, my Lord
Who would diagnose my malady?
The wounded alone the wounded know.
On the gallows is my bed spread out
How could I ever sleep?
My lover lies on the starry skies
How shall I reach out?
Like a fish out of water.
I'm lying, gasping ashore;
Meera's Master's in Vrindavan
And He has stolen away my soul.
I'm lovesick, my Lord!

There comes in Meera's life moments when even she seems shaken, she wavers. But it does not mean decline of her ardour or cooling off of her love. It reveals only the touching human moments:

Hari, I am mad with love,
None shall ever understand my agony.
If ever I knew that
Love leads to suffering,
I should have surely
From house-tops shouted:
Don't ever fall in love,
None ever.

There is an unmistakable note of sadness in Meera's poetry. But it is the poetry of divine unrest and melancholy. Though expressed in human terms, it inheres profound spiritual endeavour to seek an identity between the human and the divine. She lifts her heart in prayer for God's grace.

Be kind to me
O Shyam, listen!
I abandoned all joy
For you alone, O Shyam!
Why torment me?
With parting pangs
Is my heart aflame;
Come on, quench it
Be kind to me,
O Shyam!
I am only yours,
Absolutely yours,
O Shyam, listen!

Meera looks for Krishna everywhere, even in bed:
Without my Lord,
I cannot sleep,
Fire of separation scorches me.
Without the lamp of love
My temple’s dark.
I wake up
And find an empty bed!
The night frightens me
When will my Lord come?
When will He come? When?

It is the tender human moments such as these that lend to Meera’s poetry a personal note so intimate and enduring that her experience easily turns into our dream. We surrender ourselves to her poetic experience as readily as she surrenders herself to Krishna. Meera was wounded with the ‘golden stab’ of love. Time, the great healer, did not heal the wound; it was made deeper. For her there was no ‘looking before and after, no dilemma. She had made her choice. In the face of innumerable gods and goddesses in the Hindu pantheon from which even the great philosophers like Shankar could not be altogether free, Meera’s singularity of devotion to Krishna is remarkable.

No, don’t,
Speak nought else;
Say Radha-Krishna alone.
Spilling sweet sugarcane juice,
Drink up not bitter neem;
Say Radha Krishna alone.
Turning blind-eye on the sun and the moon,
Let glowworms not dazzle you;
Say Radha Krishna alone.
Meera's Master is Giridhar Nagar,
And herself is equipoised;
Say Radha-Krishna alone.

Once Radha begins to figure in Meera's poetry, it tends to be all the more feminine. There is not a trace of female jealousy though. For Meera's Krishna is boundless like the blue sky. She is at times so greatly lost in Radha Krishna that often she tends to lose her own identity. We see her reincarnated as Radha in many a poem. Meera and Radha are then almost interchangeable. On her way to Vrindavan, Meera saw peacocks dancing on the hills under the sky overcast with clouds. At once she remembered Radha and identified her with the earth, reminding us of the prayer "samudra vasane Devi, parvastana mandale" -O mother earth with the clothes of the sea and mountain breasts:

Little peacocks sing
On your hillocks, O Radha,
Little peacocks sing!

And after a vivid description of the magic of monsoon alive with the songs of birds, she lapses from second person 'your' to the first person 'mine'.

Drizzling rains gently murmur
Drenching my sari-fringe
O Radha, on your hillock
Little peacocks sing.

The peacock is a huge bird. Has any one seen 'little peacocks' as tiny as those embroidered on the blouse of a Rajasthani damsel? And how about Radha's hillocks? Like Narasinh's "Nagdaman" this poem, too, could easily stand Freudian interpretation which only shows not merely depth and gauge but also the timeless element in Meera's poetry. We have here a sustained Freudian analogue culminating in the drenching of Meera's-sari, without any sacrilege whatsoever. In Meera's
poetry we see the temporal sublimated not merely to the 
spiritual but also to the aesthetic heights, ranging over several 
levels of meaning; and that is the way of all great poetry. 

The surfaces of Meera’s poetry have as deceptive simplicity 
as her thematic concerns have only seeming monotony. Meera’s 
total poetry unfolds a great lyrical drama of love presented in 
innumerable love scenes. Thus round the central theme of love we 
have a whole gamut of human emotions. One wonders in what 
moods did Meera gaze at her Krishna, with what richness of 
emotion and imagination she created her love songs! Her 
quest took Meera down to Dwarika on the edge of the sea via 
Vrindavan, where her King Krishna had ruled during his last 
days. And so does her poetry range from youth to middle age 
and on to the evening of life. 

The temple’s worn out, 
Though the swan be young, 
The temple totters. 
This body quivers; 
My teeth all gone 
And gums are left shrivelled. 
The swan and I 
Were bound by love; 
It flew away, 
And the cage lies empty. 
Meera offers a cup of love 
O my Giridhar, drink it. 
Let’s drink, my Lord!

This is not a song of old age and weariness. Beneath the 
wrecks of a temple without its dweller there is a vision of 
the dichotomy of the body and the soul, of ego and cosmos. 
The flight of time, the flux of things and decay, and the search 
for the absolute reality and immortality in the face of sheer 
transitoriness and futility characterise Meera’s own evening of 
life. The legend says that Meera had eventually merged into 
the idol of Dwarikadhish. Even if it be a myth, it is a vital 
metaphor showing how, as in her poetry so in her life Meera 
and Krishna were eventually united, they were one.
Meera's is the life of love, and so is her poetry. But in spite of the thematic centrality of love for Krishna, her poetry knows no monotony. Her love lends her poetry infinite variety that age cannot wither, nor custom stale. Love for Krishna in Meera's heart surges into tidal waves so strong that her poetry admits of no metrical restraint and spontaneously overflows into music. Whether Meera was Radha reincarnated and intent on reunion with Krishna or not, the fact remains that one does not come across a greater vindication and variation on the theme of brahma sambandha as in Meera's religion and poetry. As long as the Jamuna flows and birds in Vrindavan sing, as long as flowers blossom and the stars in the heavens shine, as long as man's longing for the sound of Krishna's flute or even a glimpse of His beautiful face endures, Meera's songs will keep on echoing in the minds and hearts of generations after generations.

The fact that poetry such as Narasinh's and Meera's at once transcends all theological burden and dogma shows how in the ultimate analysis both poetry and religion admit of no manmade frontiers. Keats saw truth in beauty and beauty in truth, and thus implied vital correlation between poetry and religion. They both stem from the eternal quest of human heart in search of truth, bliss, and beauty far beyond the ever changing and ever new horizons of the infinite cosmic setting and human consciousness. Poetry is prayer, prayer poetry. Love and beauty structure them both. The vast unknown manifesting itself from beneath the surfaces of sights and sounds condition both religion and poetry, and direct both towards eternity. In religion and poetry, man is continually reborn.