

Re-Reading Pachaviral (Green Thumb): A Critical Study of the Life and Works of Dayabai

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I am currently working on an edited volume of critical essays based on the life and work of Dayabai, an environmental activist based in India. The book is an attempt to critically read Dayabai's biography *Pachaviral*, scribed and compiled by Issac Wilson, and published by DC Books in 2009.

Dayabai, also known as Mercy Mathew, is an activist working among the Indigenous communities in Madhya Pradesh in Central India. She is over 80 years old and has been working with the Gonds for over five decades. She originally belonged to a Catholic family based in Kottayam, Kerala, and was ordained to be a nun. On realizing her calling to work for the common people, she left the convent for good to work in the rural grassroots. My interest in this project began when I received an ASLE Translation Grant to translate *Pachaviral* from Malayalam into English. As I started working on the translation, my interest expanded to questions of representation and mediation. Through the translation and critical analysis of *Pachaviral* from the perspectives such as autobiography studies, translation studies, and ecocritical studies, I seek to document the life and work of Dayabai in and beyond *Pachaviral*. My project includes a translation of *Pachaviral* along with a collection of critical essays on Dayabai's life and work.

The book is relevant at this time because it is about the life and sacrifices of a woman who has worked for the betterment of the Indigenous Gond community of Madhya Pradesh and helped them fight for their rights. She has also adopted values of eco-friendly living, and sustainable food and agricultural practices from the community, which she has adopted in her everyday life at Barul. Moreover, in the past few years, she has also been a staunch advocate of the rights of children affected by the Endosulfan pesticide spray in cashew plantations in northern Kerala. These aspects of her life and work as a co-fighter for environmental justice along with the affected communities have never been documented or critically discussed.