

MATI EK ANEK BHATI (MYRIAD SHAPES FROM ONE CLAY): KABIR AND HIS SEARCH FOR SOCIAL HARMONY

PROF. CHHANDA CHATTERJEE

ICSSR, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

Email: chhanda_visvabharati@yahoo.co.in

Abstract

Kabir symbolizes an attempt at an eclectic society in India. With the advent of Muslim conquerors, other castes attempted to challenge the Brahmanical caste system and bring in a more equitable social order. Muslims had a class system which though not religiously sanctioned was very much in practice. Kabir criticized the rigidity of the religious class of both Hindus and Muslims, especially their accent on rituals rather than the spirit. Since he had to address both Hindus and Muslims he adopted a vocabulary understood by both. The eclectic formulation of his poems led both Hindus and Muslims to claim Kabir and the orthodox of both religions to reject him. This was a distinct phase in Indian history, which was why the sayings of Kabir made their way to the scripture of another religious synthesis the Sikh religion. Such thoughts were attractive also to Rabindra Nath Tagore, who introduced the ideas of Kabir to a wider and now, in the British era a more modern audience.

Key words: *Kabir, anti-Brahmanism, Indigenous Modernity, Caste System, Sant*

1. Introduction

Kabir (1380-1460), the weaver (*julaha*) saint of Banaras has been studied by various groups of people for various purposes. Some viewed him as a Sufi mystic¹, to some he was an ambassador of communal harmony,² some saw in him a social reformer for his caustic comments on the Brahmanical tyranny of his times,³ some regarded him as a lover of his 'Ram (this was the term used by Kabir to invoke his God)⁴ others regarded him as a saint of the *Bhakti* genre⁵ while Rabindra Nath Tagore loved his mystical closeness with his divine lover in his verses.⁶ The

purpose of this paper is to try to situate Kabir in his historical times and to assess the socio-economic implications of his writings.

Linda Hess in her '*Three Kabir Collections : A Comparative Study*' has identified three different bodies of Kabir literature.⁷ The most ancient and the most suave was that found in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib of the Sikhs. Another was the *Panchvani*, collected by the poet Dadu Dayal in Rajasthan. It contained the verses of Kabir along with those of five other saints. Dadu Dayal's disciple Rajjab compiled yet another edition, which he called the *Sarvangi*. Rabindranath Tagore got hold of this through his friend Kshitimohan Sen, who had earlier worked in the Chamba Raj.⁸ And the third was that circulating in Uttar Pradesh, which is very different in tone and tenor from the other two. The kind of language used in this third set is called the *ulatbansi* or enigmatic or paradoxical. Such usages were in vogue among the Natha Yogis between the sixth to the tenth centuries.⁹ This wide divergence in approach persuaded many, led by H. H. Wilson to think that Kabir was not a single person; Rather it was a generic name given to a wide body of writing, which had many authors conforming to roughly the same ideas.¹⁰

These were certain new concepts stirring into the bosoms of simple men of ordinary vocations. Hermann Kulke's researches have shown how state formation along with agrarian expansion, the rise of new markets and the foundation of new kingdoms was giving rise to a demand for more and more artisans to aid the process of expansion. Rising overlords needed legitimacy and they needed the services of Brahmins to invent ancient genealogies for them. They also needed the collaboration of the more prominent people of their chieftaincies for the stability their rule. The Brahmin, therefore, established temples of the locally accepted deity to be able to extract the agrarian surplus from the producing class as a justification for their extraction. But the blessings of a temple plutocracy alone could not sustain the new rulers in power. Thus men outside the Brahmin and the warrior class rose in the social ladder. This was not something special to Benares alone. It was a general phenomenon.¹¹ That is why there was not merely a lone Kabir. There were innumerable such thinkers emerging from different corners of India and joining their voice to the general cacophony of dissident notes in the great intellectual revolution that was taking place quite unobtrusively. Guru Nanak (1469-1539) had noted this in the course of his itinerary all over the known world of those times. He had brought back these oral traditions to Punjab, memorizing and singing them as accurately as his memory permitted.¹² Guru Nanak's successor, Guru Angad had started putting these to writing. Finally in 1604 Guru Arjan Dev discarded some

which did not fit into the tenor of Sikhism and codified the rest with the help of the writing skill of Bhai Gurudas. Guru Arjan mentions these saints in a verse in his Sri Guru Granth Sahib –

*Bhalo Kabiru dasu dasan ko / utamu sayanu jano nai
Uch te uch Namadcu / samadaradi Ravidas thakur baniai*

(Great are Kabir Ji and the devoted barber Sain, greater is Namdev and Ravidas Ji of the same leanings have good rapport with the Lord. SGGGS, Sarag, Mahala 5, p.1207)

It is curious that all these protesting persons joined in the chorus at about the same time and Namdev (1269-1344), Sain (1390-1440), Ravidas (15th century) and Kabir, all those whom Guru Arjan had mentioned in his verse had been near contemporaries. All of them challenged the *smarta* system of *acar* or code of conduct that the protagonists of the established belief system of the country had evolved to arm itself against the invasion of the new ideas of Islam, which had reached the country in the train of its new Turko-Afghan rulers, who had started consolidating themselves in the Delhi Sultanate. Till then, as Hajariprasad Dvivedi interpreted it, the prevalent practice of the country was to accommodate all shades of social practice and belief systems under different names termed as castes provided that they conformed to the established order. Thus individualistic social practice had room within the larger order. But the ideology of Islam was totally opposed to this autonomy of individual beliefs. They imposed a uniform social code on all their adherents and repudiated all deviations from such uniformity.¹³ This was somewhat akin to the *nirguna* worship of the *Natha Yogis*, who rejected the philosophy based on the core texts of *Prasthanas*, *Troyee* or the *Upanishads*, *Brahma Sutra* and the *Bhagavad Gita* and the whole host of rituals prescribed by them like pilgrimages, vows, fast and oblations. But the *Natha Yogis* believed in severe austerities and physical feats, which were anathema to Islam. Contact with Islam administered a severe jolt to caste conventions as Islam was totally opposed to it. This encouraged the dissidents to raise their voice against such invasions of human dignity.¹⁴ Purushottam Agarwal has termed it *Deshaj Adhunikata* or indigenous modernity – a kind of spontaneous reaction from within society itself against the Brahmin ascription of superiority to themselves to the exclusion of all others.¹⁵

But the major assault on the *smarta* system guiding the lives of the people did not come from Islam. Richard Eaton's study of Bengal has shown that mass conversions were nowhere attempted except in the fringe areas, where the mainstream religion was weak and ill organized.

The main threat to the established religion of the country came from the Sufi *silsilahs*. The Sufis had established their *khanqahs* (hospices) among the poor.¹⁶ We learn from J. S. Grewal's 'Sufism in Medieval India' that Shaikh Farid, *Ganj-i-Shakar* (died 1265 A.D.) of Pak Pattan had taken an initiative in the manumission of slaves and accorded a place of honour to such people in his *jama't khanas*. Women too could receive care from the Sufis and had access to all their services. It was in these places that the interpenetration of Sufi and Natha Yogi ideas could take place.¹⁷

By the end of the thirteenth century, the influence of the Natha Yogis had reached the Deccan. Jnaneshwar, the Maratha poet and the author of the *Jnaneshwari*, a commentary on the *Bhagwat Gita*, claimed a link with Gorakhnath, the founder of the Natha Sect through his Gurus, Nivriddidev and Gahininath. The concept of a mystical union with God was a result of the fusion of Sufi ideas with those of the Natha Yogis. Sufis borrowed from the legend of Krishna to describe the sense of longing and desire to be united with God. Champakalakshmi tells us that ever since the seventh century belief in a personal God had also been taking shape among the Shaiva Nayanars of the Deccan, who subscribed to the Vedanta related *nirguna* (devoid of any attributes) worship and the Tamil Alwars, who believed in *saguna* (endowed with attributes) worship of the *avatars* or incarnations of God. They had been challenging the Brahmin monopoly of temple worship for a long time. Tirumalar, the Tamil saint preached that the human body was like a temple of God in which the soul could seek union with God through self-discipline and devotion.¹⁸ The Srivaishnava movement of Ramanuja carried such ideas to the north. Hedayetullah attributed the growth of such radical thinking in the South through the influence of Islam, which had entered the southern part of the sub-continent through the activities of the Arab invaders and traders along with Muslim missionaries.¹⁹ Such ideas could spread more freely, as Satish Chandra had pointed out, since the loosening ties of the Rajputs and the Brahmins since the advent of Turko-Afghan rule.²⁰

The continuous fusion of ideas gave rise to a new ideology which goes under the rubric of the '*Sant*' philosophy. This was a new ideology drawing partly on Sufism and partly on Vaishnavism. The new converts to Islam could not immediately forget their earlier religious conventions and practices. The *Sant* way of blending Sufi philosophy, while using the names of Hindu *avatars* was therefore easily acceptable to wide areas of Maharashtra and northern India. Kabir was the most representative figure of this kind of philosophy which challenged the strict rules worked out

by *smarta pundits* for rigidly defining the mainstream way of life. He used his satirical way to ridicule the Pandit :

*Continual reading has become stones,
continual writing has become bricks
Kabir says : Not a drop of love is attached.
Reading and reading books, the world has become dead
No one has become learned
He who reads the single syllable 'love' is the one
Who becomes learned.
(Kabir Granthavali cited in Dvivedi)*

Love was the central theme of Kabir's *dohas* and they fascinated Rabindranath Tagore so much that he himself tried a translation of a hundred of his poems with the help of Evelyn Underhill in London. Kabir's longing for his master Hari or Ram in his *balama au hamarai greha re* symbolized the Sufi longing for union with the Ultimate:

*My body and my mind are grieved for the want of thee
O my beloved! Come to my house
When people say I am thy bride I am ashamed; for I have not
touched thy heart with my heart.
Then what is this love of mine? I have no taste for food, I have
No sleep; my heart is ever restless within doors and without.
As water is to the thirsty, so is the lover to the bride.
Who is there that will carry my news to my Beloved?
Kabir is restless; he is dying for sight of him.²¹*

Vijay Mishra found that Tagore had deliberately tried to tone down the raw carnal imagery present in the original Kabir and there was a deliberate attempt to mould Kabir's *balama* into nearly a Christian God by using the address 'Thee' and 'Him.' Thus there was an attempt to romanticize Kabir's 'rough rhetoric' into the suave language of the Romantic poets like P. B. Shelley, J. Keats or W. Wordsworth.²² Another reason why Tagore's Kabir was much more polished than the familiar Kabir of the north might be that Tagore relied on the Fatehpur or Rajasthani version of Kabir, which was found in the *Panchvani* collection made by Rajjab, a disciple of the Muslim saint Dadu Dayal, which was made available to Tagore through its translation by Kshitimohan Sen and Ajit Chakravarty.

Beneath Kabir's harsh language, however, was concealed a concern for the growing alienation of the followers of different religions

from one another. That is why Kabir tried to convince his fellowmen that all were the creation of the same nature ‘*kudrat ke sabh bande*’ :

*Brother, be not in error:
Out of the Creator the creation comes:
Everywhere in the creation the Creator is:
The Lord's Spirit is all-pervading!
The Lord the Maker, hath moulded one mass of clay
Into vessels of diverse shapes
Free from taint are all the vessels of clay
Since free from taint is the Divine Potter.²³*

Kabir's attack on the caste system often verged on the obscene; he was nevertheless determined to convince the Brahmin about the error of his conviction that the Brahmin belonged to a superior breed:

*Garabh bas mohi nahi kulu jati
Braham bindu te sabh utpati
Jou tun brahmanu brahmani jaia
Tau an bat kahe nahi ayia
Tum kata Brahman hum kata sud
Hum kata lohu tum kata dudh.*

*(You say you are a Brahmin
Born of a Brahmin woman
Should you not have come into the world
By another way?
What makes you a Brahmin
And I merely a Sudra
If blood runs in my veins
Does milk flow in yours?)*

(Translation by John Stratton Hawly and Mark Jurgensmeyer)
From Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p.324)

Puroshottam Agarwal took such vociferations against caste as an evidence of non-Brahmin self-assertion. He preferred to view the emergence of the *sants* as an intellectual revolt of the depressed classes of society against the denial of human equality and dignity by the monopoly of all spiritual knowledge by the Brahmins.²⁴ The rejection of idolatry and the caste system by Kabir and other *sants* appeared to Hedayetullah as the most definite evidence of the influence of Islam on their way of thinking.²⁵ Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, ‘the Columbia-educated dalit,’ belonging to the Mahar caste, which had erstwhile been

regarded as untouchable, mentioned Kabir as his forerunner in his crusade against caste and untouchability.²⁶

The stories in Anantdas's *Kabir Parcai* that Kabir had his initiation from the Brahmin Guru Ramanand along with Pipa, the Rajput Raja of Gagrone, Dhanna, the Jat and Ravidas, the leather worker are also questioned by many. Hajariprasad Dvivedi accepted this explanation to be able to view Kabir as part of the general stream of intellectual upsurge which insisted on a direct relation between the Ultimate and his seekers without the intervention of Brahmins and Maulvis.²⁷ But such anecdotes were summarily rejected by Dalit historian Dharmavir, who condemned the attempt of Dvivedi to present Kabir as a disciple of the Brahmin Guru Ramanand and having acquired his piety through his intervention.²⁸ But Hedayetullah accepted that Ramananda was the one to initiate Kabir to the path of piety, but he would add that Ramanand himself had been indebted to Muslim learned men and Sufis of Benares for his conviction in the equality of all human beings, irrespective of their caste or religion.²⁹ He transmitted his newly acquired knowledge to his disciples giving rise to a new spiritual culture of equality and mutual tolerance.

Agarwal also had doubts about the story of Kabir's having been born of a Brahmin widow, who had floated her child in a pond to avoid shame and this child being picked up and brought up in a *julaha* family. He thought this was a Brahmin concoction to appropriate Kabir for the Brahmins and deny that anybody of low birth could be capable of the kind of wisdom and enlightenment evinced by Kabir.³⁰

Kabir's use of the local dialect for imparting spiritual knowledge was also a step towards breaking the monopoly of Brahmins as the sole custodian of all kinds of knowledge and a reflection of 'an anti-authoritarian urge,' of the age.³¹ Imparting spiritual knowledge through the language of the common people had first been tried in the Buddhist Sahajiya *Charyapadas* composed in *apavramsa* or the spoken dialect. Kabir treaded in their footsteps immortalizing his stand in the well-known couplet :

*Sanskrit is stagnant like well water, O Kabir,
The language that we speak is like a flowing river
You can take a dip whenever you want to
It will make you cool and refreshed.*³²

Kabir's teachings were imparted orally and were based on his intuitive comprehension and personal observation of the happenings around. He did not feel shy to declare that he had never touched paper or

pen (*masi kagaz chhuyo nahi, kalam gahayo nahi hatha*)³³ He ridiculed both Brahmin *pundits* as well as Muslim religious men for promoting strife through the application of their superficial bookish knowledge ignoring the realities of everyday life:

*Main kehta hun akhiya dekhi / tu kahta kagaz ki lekhi.*³⁴

He never hesitated to criticize both Brahmins and Mullas for their bigoted social practice and stressed the purity of heart as the way to salvation from *maya* .:

*Kabir mulan munare kiya chdahi
Sain na bahra hoi
Ja karani tun bang dehi
Dil hi bhitare joi.*³⁵

For Kabir the external rituals and rites counted much less than sincerity and devotion. He thought that as long as a person was unable to achieve control over his mind it was of no use to go on pilgrimage to holy places like Ka'ba.

*Sheikh saburi bahra kia
Haj Ka 'be jahi
Kabir ja ki dil sabti nahi
Ta kau kahan khudai.*³⁶

He had an equal contempt for Brahmins, who could conduct rituals for those who were content with performing empty rites. But for the true seeker of the ultimate wisdom the Brahmin was totally useless as he himself was unable to find his way in the maze of Vedic injunctions:

*Kabir bamanu guru hai jagat ka
Bhaktan ka Guru nahi
Arjhi urjhi kaya pachi
Mua charau bedaha majhi.*³⁷

It is quite obvious from his repudiation of both Hindu as well as Islamic religious formalities that he had scant regard for institutional religious practice. Merely showing off rosary beads of wood would lead a person nowhere till he can feel the Supreme (Ram) in his heart:

*Kabir jagni kath kiya
dikhlabahi loi
hirday Ramu na chetahi
Iha jagni ki a hoi.*³⁸

In his tirade against religious formalities neither Hindu nor Muslim was spared by Kabir. Whoever had fake pretensions came under his attack:

*Humra jhagra raha na kou
Pandit mulan chhare dou.*³⁹

Kabir repeatedly asserted the originality of his thinking, repudiating the bigotries of both Hindu Pandits as well as Muslim religious men:

*Pandit Mulan jo likhi diya
Chhari chale hum kachhu na liya.*⁴⁰

Kabir did not discriminate between Hindus and Muslims when he pointed out the errors in their belief system. If mosques alone were the abode of Allah, Kabir wondered, to whom did the rest of the earth belong. The Hindu habit of looking for God only in their idols was also a similar kind of error.

*Allah eku masiti basatu hai
Abaru mulakhu kisu kera
indu murati nam nibasi
Duha mati tatu na hera.*⁴¹

The conflicts and quarrels of both Hindus and Muslims on minor details regarding their way of offering homage to the Lord either through prayer or worship of idols and their differences in the manner of the disposal of their dead dismayed Kabir as he found these to be merely diverting the gaze of both from the Almighty:

*But puji puji Hindu mue
Turak mue siru nai
Oi le jare, oi le gare
Teri gati duhu na pai.*⁴²

Kabir regarded all these affairs of the material world as different manifestations of *maya* or illusion. '*Maya aisi mohani bhai / jete jiaw tete dahkai*⁴³ he warned his followers. *Maya* blurs men's vision from viewing things in their proper perspective and leads to false pride:

*Juta jagu dahkay Ghana din dui
Bartan ki as*

*Ram udaku jiha mana piya
Tihi bahuri na hoiya piyaas.*⁴⁴

One cannot achieve victory over *maya* by wearing matted hair or smearing ashes over one's body. It can be achieved only by strict control over one's mind:

*Jata bhasm lepan kiya
Kaha guha mahi basu
Manu jite jagu jitiyan ja
Te bikhiya te hoi udasu.*⁴⁵

The material world is false, but it attracts men with its lure of enjoyment for only a brief while and men get entangled in a futile chase. But once a person is able to taste the nectar of the name of Ram, he can rise above all such temptations and can win over the thirst for mortal pleasure:

*Jutha jagu dahkay ghana din dui
Bartan ki aas
Ram udaku jiha jan piya
Tihi bahuri na bhai piyaas.*⁴⁶

Kabir was pained by the harsh realities of this world and thought that the only way out of its sufferings was to surrender to the almighty.

*Maila malta iha sansar
Iku Hari nirasanu
Ja ka ant na pay.*⁴⁷

He rebuked people for having forgotten to think of the Almighty (*mon re sario ek kaja / bhajio na Raghupati Raja*⁴⁸) and declared that all his confusion was dispelled and fear was gone since the time that he devoted his heart to Ram (*Humara bharamu gaiya bhau bhaga / jan Ram nam chitu laga*⁴⁹)

Shahabuddin Iraqi strove hard to represent Kabir as a Sufi and a disciple of the Sufi saint Shaikh Taqi of Manikpur, who was also a *Julaha* like Kabir. He cited the evidence of Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dehalvi's *Akhbar-ul-Akhiyar* (compiled in the last phase of the sixteenth century, that of *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, said to be compiled in the reign of Emperor Akbar and that of Maulvi Ghulam Sarwar's *Khazinat-ul-Asfiah* (published from Lahore in 1868 and subsequently from Lucknow by Munshi Nawal Kishore from Kanpur in 1902) in support of his belief. The Sufi chronicle *Tadhkirah-i-Awaliya-i-Hind* also mentions Kabir as a

Sufi.⁵⁰ But Hedayetullah finds it more convincing that Kabir had picked up some of his ideas from the Sufis in course of his Guru Ramanand's religious debates with the Benares Sufis.⁵¹ Nabha's *Bhaktamala* (1600) informed that Kabir neither recognized the six Hindu schools of philosophy nor did he accept *varna* (caste) or *ashrama* (the division of human lives into certain prescribed stages). The rigidity prescribed by the Muslim clerics was also an anathema to him and he was said to have refused circumcision, a very important sacrament of Muslim life. Rather he believed in a direct approach to the Almighty.⁵² But though a *muwahid* (monotheist), Kabir was equally disrespectful to the bigotries of Muslim religious persons. Ultimately, he succeeded in irritating the religious leaders of both communities, who carried their complaints to Sultan Sikander Lodi, who asked him to leave Benares and take up his abode in Magahar.

Kabir's use of terms like *Ram* and *Hari* to describe the Almighty has given rise to a confusion about his true religious identity. A similar use of the names of Hindu Gods by the Sikh Gurus, who strictly believed in the existence of a single Supreme (*ik onka*) has made experts in Sikh scripture to investigate the point further and the explanation offered by the German scholar missionary, Ernest Trumpp, who had tried his hand in the translation of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, in the context of this debate still carries conviction. 'A religious *lingua franca* seems to have prevailed then in northern India,' he found, 'and poets drew upon the reservoir of vocabulary or phraseology to describe spiritual experiences.' Kabir and the other *sants* had raised Hindi to a standard for religious writings. Use of Hindi (or 'Hindui') had been common among most inhabitants of northern India and therefore both the Sikh Gurus and their *Bhagats* from this Hindi belt used such words to popularize their writings among men from all communities.⁵³

Kabir seems to have believed in the Sufi doctrine of *wahdat-ul-wujud* which believed in the living soul's seeking of a union with its Creator.⁵⁴ He used the commonly prevalent word 'Ram' with which most people in northern India were familiar to denote the Ultimate. All streams of thinking, as Kabir viewed it, had united in this single word 'Ram' and one should apply one's own conscience when uttering that name:

Kabir Ramyay Ram kaho
Kahibe mahi bibek
 Eku anek hi mili gaiya
 Ek samana ek.⁵⁵

Kabir tried to convince people that there is only one Supreme Lord for the entire universe whom each of the different schools of philosophy worshipped according to their own convictions and give their own names. But in reality, all these different names are being used to define the same Creator.

*Jogi Gorakhu Gorakhu karayay
Hindu Ram nam uchray
Musalmanka eku khudai
Kabirka suami rahi a samai.*⁵⁶

Rabindranath Tagore regarded the *sant* phenomenon as a manifestation of the attempt from within Indian society to bring about a reconciliation of its various discordant elements like caste differentiation in Hindu society and religious divergences that had appeared since the advent of Islam in India. Tagore thought that Kabir had shown the right path to the cure of the canker gnawing at India's body politic:

Whether he is called Ram, Rahim, Karim, Keshav
Allah or Ram, for me He is the true
Turks in the mosque, Hindus in the temple
In both places exist the divine power of Ram.

(Kabir Granthavali, pad 58, cited in Dvivedi)⁵⁷

Tagore knew that India had seen the blending of various nationalities. Invaders had been coming since time immemorial in the lure of India's wealth. But none of them were ever heard to have returned from here. The Sakas, Huns, Pathans and Mughuls all made this country their home and became part and parcel of one single society. Tagore wrote to Andrews in a letter of 18th March, 1921 which is included in his *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore* that Hindu-Muslim discords might also have been resolved in a similar fashion. But this could not happen probably because of the intervention of colonialism.⁵⁸ Purushottam Agarwal has almost echoed this view.⁵⁹

The continued popularity of Kabir in vast stretches of Northern India inspires the hope that voices of sanity still survive in men's hearts and that feelings of empathy for each other would ultimately get the better of an unhealthy desire to dominate and an obnoxious propensity to rake up rather than bury forgotten feuds. The feelings of fraternity between communities and castes that Kabir had aimed at building up through his caustic hymns have acquired a renewed significance since the rumblings of new kind of dissensions in contemporary times. Kabir and the other

Sants of his genre had been trying to spread the message of love, where hatred and exclusionism had been reigning supreme. The *sants* of Kabir and his ilk had anticipated the ideas of enlightenment and humanism that the West later paraded as its gift to the East. Colonialism rather had the adverse impact of stunting the feelings of fraternity and mutual understanding that *sant* verses had been trying to cultivate. Colonialism and the materialistic outlook that followed in its wake vitiated the spontaneity of the spirit of humanism that was in its budding stage in the vast sub-continent of myriad nationalities. India today needs to gather together the lost thread of mutual empathy and good will and try once again to tread the path charted out by Kabir.

Notes and References

¹ Shahabuddin Iraqi, *Bhakti Movement in Medieval India : Social and Political Perspectives* (Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, New Delhi, Manohar, 2009) p.144; Raziuddin Aquil, *Sufism : Culture and Politics, Afghans and Islam in Medieval North India* (Oxford University Press : New Delhi, 2007, pp.223-225; Muhammad Hedayetullah, *Kabir : The Apostle of Hindu-Muslim Unity* (New Delhi, Motilal Banarasidass , First Published 1977, Revised and Corrected Edition, 2009) p.146

² Muhammad Hedayetullah, *Kabir*, Preface

³ Braj Ranjan Mani, *Debrahmanising History, Dominance and Resistance in Indian Society* (Manohar : New Delhi: First Published 2005, Rept.2008) pp. 138-139

⁴ Charlotte Vaudeville, *A Weaver Named Kabir : Selected Verses with a Detailed Biographical and Historical Introduction* (Oxford University Press: Delhi: 1993) p. 278-279 Some of the translated verses point to this interpretation. For instance : ‘Now I won’t let you go/ O Ram, my Beloved/ So long as you please may you be mine!’(translated from *Kabir Granthabali*).

⁵ Hajariiprasad Dvivedi, *Kabir* (Delhi, 1971)

⁶ This had prompted Tagore to attempt a translation of one hundred poems of Kabir. These had been gathered by Pandit Kshitimohan Sen and translated by a Santiniketan Professor, Ajit Chakravarti. Tagore rendered it in his own beautiful language doing away with the harsh metaphors and Evelyn Underhill added almost a Christian touch to it so that many found them unrecognizable later. But these translations drew the attention of the west to these superb writings which could outrival all modern enlightened thinking of the west regarding human relations and the worth of humanity J. S. Hawley (ed.), *Three Bhakti Voices : Mirabai, Surdas and Kabir in their Times and Ours* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2005), p.68

⁷ Linda Hess, ‘Three Kabir Collections : A Comparative Study’ in Karine Schomer and W.H. McLeod, *The Sants : Studies in A Devotional Tradition in India* New Delhi, (Motilal Banarasidass, 1987) pp. 111-41

⁸ Chhanda Chatterjee, *Tagore and the Sikh Gurus : A Search for an Indigenous Modernity* (Manohar : New Delhi: 1914) p. 123

⁹ John Stratton Hawley, 'The Received Kabir : Beginnings to Bly' in J.S.Hawley (ed.) *Three Bhakti Voices : Mirabai, Surdas and Kabir* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005) p.269 and 300-304 ; Linda Hess, 'Kabir's Rough Rhetoric' in Karine Schomer and W.H.McLeod, *The Sants*, op. cit. p. 143-65

¹⁰ Op. cit. M. Hedayetullah, *Kabir*, p.149

¹¹ Hermann Kulke, 'The Early and Imperial Kingdom: A Processual Model of Integrative State Formation in Early Medieval India' in Upinder Singh, *Rethinking Early Medieval India : A Reader* (Oxford University Press: New Delhi: 2011) pp. 91-118

¹² There is a raging controversy as to how Kabir's 541 verses made their way into the Kartarpur Bir prepared by Guru Arjan Dev in 1604. Some like Sahib Singh and Teja Singh believed that Guru Nanak collected them in course of his udasis in Benares. But the absence of these verses in the Guru Harsahai Pothi, the earliest that is extant one, prove it beyond doubt that Guru Nanak was not the one who had included them in the Sikh liturgy. Rather the itineraries of Guru Amar Das, the third Master, to the same Hindu pilgrimage centres point to the inclusion by him in the Goindval Pothi, which formed the starting point for Guru Arjan's Kartarpur Bir. Swarup Das Bhalla's weird account of the saint poets, even dead souls in their ethereal forms, having approached Guru Arjan for the inclusion of their verses seem to point to the Sikh penchant for glorifying their Gurus. See Gurinder Singh Mann's *The Making of Sikh Scripture* (Oxford University Press: New York: 2001) pp.102-111

¹³ Hajariiprasad Dvivedi, 'Kabir's Place in Indian Religious Practice' in David N. Lorenzen, *Religious Movements in South Asia* (Oxford University Press: New Delhi: 2004) pp.269-287

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Purushottam Agarwal, *Akath Kahani Prem ki : Kabir Ki Kavita aur Unka Samay* (Rajkamal Prakashan : New Delhi: 2009)pp. 69-150

¹⁶ Richard M. Eaton, 'Approaches to the Study of Conversion to Islam in India' in *op.cit.* Lorenzen, *Religious Movements*, pp. 105-127

¹⁷ J.S. Grewal, *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India : Project of Science, Philosophy and Culture* (Oxford University Press: Delhi: 2006)

¹⁸ R.Champakalakshmi, 'From Devotion and Dissent to Dominance: The Bhakti of the Tamil Alvars and Nayanars' in *op. cit.* Lorenzen, *Religious Movements*, pp.47-80

¹⁹ Muhammad Hedayetullah, *Kabir*, *op. cit* pp. 81-112

²⁰ Satish Chandra, *State Pluralism and the Indian Historical Tradition* (Oxford India Paperbacks (Oxford University Press: New Delhi: 2008)

²¹ Rabindranath Tagore, *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, first Published in New York in Sisir K. Das (ed.) *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol.1 (New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi : 1994)

²² Vijay C. Mishra, 'Two Truths Are Told : Tagore's Kabir in Schomer, Karine and McLeod, W.H., *The Sants : Studies in A Devotional Tradition in India* (Motilal Banarasidass, New Delhi, 1987) pp.167-179

²³ Trilochan Singh, Jodh Singh, Kapur Singh, Bawa Harkishen Singh and Kushwant Singh, *The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs* (Orient Longman: UNESCO Collection of Representative Works, Indian Series: Hyderabad:2000) p. 215

²⁴ Purushottam Agarwal, *Akath Kahani Prem ki*, *op. cit* pp. 235-310

²⁵ Hedayetullah, *Kabir*, *op. cit.* p.269

²⁶ John .Stratton .Hawley (ed.), *Three Bhakti Voices : Mirabai, Surdas and Kabir in their times and ours* (Oxford University Press: Delhi: 2005) p.276

²⁷ Op. cit. Dvivedi, 'Kabir's Place in Indian Religious Practice'

²⁸ Dharmavir, *Kabir Ke Alocak* (New Delhi: Vani Prakashan :1997) chapter 5, pp. 73-96

²⁹ Hedayetullah, *Kabir*, *op.cit.* pp. 129-130

³⁰ Purushottam Agarwal, *op. cit Akath Kahani Prem ki*

³¹ Op. cit. John Stratton Hawley, 'Bhakti, Democracy and the Study of Religion' in J. S. Hawley (ed.), *Three Bhakti Voices : Mirabai, Surdas and Kabir in their Times and Ours* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press: 2005) pp. 318-336

³² Originally it read '*Sanskrt kupjal hai Kabira/ bhasha bahta neer/ jabhi chaho tabhi dubao/ shant hoey sharir*' Translation mine. Although quoted very often, it could not be traced in any authentic Kabir Vani.

³³ Sukhdev Singh, *A Kabir Bijak* (Allahabad: Nilam Prakashan, 1972) Sakhi 771, p.163

³⁴ Ibid. I speak what I see / you speak from lifeless papers.

³⁵ Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Slok 184, p.1374 ; Translation: Kabir, why, O Mullah, climbst thou up to the minaret? / Thinkest thou that the Lord is hard of hearing?/ Seek in thy heart for Him for whose sake/ thou so loudly callest to prayer (*Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*)

³⁶ SGGGS, p.1374

³⁷ SGGGS p. 1374

³⁸ SGGGS P. 1364-65

³⁹ SGGGS, p.1159

⁴⁰ SGGGS p.1159

⁴¹ SGGGS p. 1349

⁴² SGGGS, p.1161

⁴³ SGGGS,p.1161

⁴⁴ SGGGS, p.1103

⁴⁵ SGGGS, p. 1103

⁴⁶ SGGGS, p. 1103

⁴⁷ SGGGS, p. 1160-61

⁴⁸ SGGGS p. 1161

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Shahabuddin Iraqi, *Bhakti Movement in Medieval India* , op. cit. p. 144

⁵¹ Hedayetullah *Kabir op.cit* pp. 146-147

⁵² Ibid. pp. 147, 168-69

⁵³ Gurinder Singh Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture* (Oxford University Press: New Delhi: 2001), pp. 103-108

⁵⁴ See Raziuddin Aquil, *Sufism* for an explication of this doctrine.

⁵⁵ SGGGS, p. 1374, sloka no.191

⁵⁶ SGGGS, p. 1160-61

⁵⁷ Hajariprasad Dvivedi, 'Kabir's Place in Indian Religious Practice' op. cit.

⁵⁸ Tagore to Andrews, New York, 18 March, 1921 in 'Letters to A Friend' in Sisir K. Das (ed.) *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol. III (Sahitya Akademi : New Delhi: 1996)

⁵⁹ Purushottam Agarwal, *Akath Kahani Prem ki*, op. cit. pp. p.16