NOTICE
The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print, especially if the original pages were typed with a poor-quality ribbon or if the university sent us a poor photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C 30. Please read the authorization forms which accompany this thesis.

THIS DISSERTATION HAS BEEN MICROFILMED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED.

AVIS
La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse, soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de mauvaise qualité.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, R.S.C. 1970, c. C 30. Veuillez prendre connaissance des formules d'autorisation qui accompagnent cette thèse.

LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE NOUS L'AVONS RECUE.
(B) Note on References

References have been numbered in seriatum for each chapter. The details of the reference have been given in footnotes of each page. An asterisk mark has been put along with reference number in the main body of the thesis to indicate where original Hindi text in Devnagari script has also been quoted. This text is available in the end of each chapter and can be identified there by the original reference number.

The information on references includes, beginning from the left side of the foot note, the reference number, the name of the author and in rare cases the name of the publisher, title of the book, page number of the book and pada or sakhi or poem number wherever available and necessary, in that order. Author and title names have been abbreviated in the manner given in the list of abbreviation.
IMAGES OF BRAHMAN IN THE POETRY OF KABIR

by

SHASHI PRABHA PRASAD
M.A., D.Phil.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty
of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment
of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of Religion
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

April 1, 1983
The undersigned recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research acceptance of the thesis

IMAGES OF BRAHMAN IN THE POETRY OF KABIR

Submitted by

SHASHI PRABHA PRASAD
M.A. D.Phil.
University of Allahabad

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

[Signatures]

THESIS SUPERVISOR

CHAIRMAN, DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION

Carleton University
ABSTRACT

Kabir addresses his Brahman or God by many names without distinction of the sect and faith. In fact, Kabir's Brahman transcends while He includes all the metaphysical categories, all credal definitions of saguna and nirguna, personal and impersonal, transcendent and immanent, static and dynamic, dvaita and advait; yet each contributes something to the description of that Infinite Who revealed Himself, to the faithful devotees of all creeds according to their measure. This apparently complex and synthetic vision of God is conveyed to the reader by the help of various images used by Kabir in his poetry. His images of Brahman have been drawn from nature and from his social surroundings. The picture that emerges through the images is that, although Kabir's God is without form and invisible, He is not an abstraction but an actuality. He is revealed to anyone who seeks Him through devotion.
IMAGES OF BRAHMAN IN THE POETRY
OF
KABIR

SHASHI PRABHA PRASAD
ब्रह्म जिसका आन्दोलन है,
शुद्ध निज श्रद्धा विचार
केवल कहे समम्बार्या,
आत्म साधन सार है

- कबीर -

This is not just a song, this is my concept of Brahman. I have only tried to explain it as a means for salvation.

KABIR
FOREWORD

As a student of Hindi language and literature in Allahabad University, India, I had occasion to study Kabir in a limited way. His amazing insight into human affairs and simple style impressed me. His bold and direct attacks on all kinds of hypocrisy moved me as a youngster looking for something novel. Later, with my limited perception and acquaintance, Kabir appeared a model of his time, typical to Indian soil and also relevant to understanding modern India.

Subsequently during my life in Canada and contact with the West and on reading Kabir from the religious and philosophical angle, I have found that he has equal, if not greater, appeal to modern thought outside India as well. This drew me more and more to the study of Kabir. My conviction has only been reinforced with whatever excursions I have been able to make in this field.

With this background, and with the inspiration and guidance of Prof. Nalini Devdas and Prof. Gualtieri, it was a few years back that I decided to undertake the study of the concept of Brahman in Kabir as a topic for my thesis in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts under the auspices of the Department of Religion in the Carleton University. On further enquiry and discussion the topic was finally settled to be 'the images of Brahman in the poetry of Kabir'. I found
the topic interesting to me in view of my background. Still, in spite of encouragement and help given by Prof. Librande and Prof. Dourley completion of the work has taken a rather long time. This is due to my preoccupations with my children and household and my frequent emergency trips to India.

I fully own the delay and deficiency whatsoever and wish to record that whatever worthwhile, I have been able to accomplish in this venture, is due to the guidance and assistance that I have received from Prof. Nalini Devdas. During my India trips I had the occasion to meet and discuss my proposal with Prof. Ram Kumar Verma who had been my teacher, Dr. Paras Nath Tiwari, an eminent scholar of Kabir and Dr. W.J. Dwyer who has done admirable study on Kabir and have had their valuable suggestions. I am grateful to each of them for their guidance.
EXPLANATORY NOTES

(A) Note on transliteration from Sanskrit and Hindi

1. Transliteration of Sanskrit words into Roman script is primarily based on the Sanskrit - English Dictionary of Monier Williams subject to flexibility in the case of words which are being otherwise spelled in popular usage. Take the word "Sanskrit" itself which has been spelled as Samskrit by Williams but which is now commonly written as "Sanskrit" and is treated as correct by the highest academic standards. Similarly certain signs used by Monier Williams to denote emphasis etc. which are not conveniently available in the type machines, have been replaced by popular forms. Therefore, instead of Ámśā, I have chosen to write Ansha and Shankar instead of Samkara.

2. Transliteration of Hindi words is generally based on pronunciation and modern usage. I have extensively used Ahmad Shah, Macauliffe, Vaudeville, Dwyer and Tagore's works on Kabir except in cases where I have reasons to disagree. Necessary care has been taken to maintain uniformity and consistency.
(B) Note on References

References have been numbered in seriatum for each chapter. The details of the reference have been given in foot notes of each page. An asterisk mark has been put along with reference number in the main body of the thesis to indicate where original Hindi text in Devnagari script has also been quoted. This text is available in the end of each chapter and can be identified there by the original reference number.

The information on references includes, beginning from the left side of the foot note, the reference number, the name of the author and in rare cases the name of the publisher, title of the book, page number of the book and pada or sakhi or poem number wherever available and necessary, in that order. Author and title names have been abbreviated in the manner given in the list of abbreviation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BP</td>
<td>Belvedere Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BU</td>
<td>Bhihadaranyaka Upanishad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU</td>
<td>Chandogya Upanishad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Charlotte Vaudeville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPD</td>
<td>Hazari Prasad Dwivedi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPK</td>
<td>One Hundred Poems of Kabir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Indian Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF</td>
<td>Kabir and His Followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KG</td>
<td>Kabir Granthavali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSP</td>
<td>Kabir Sahitya Ki Parakha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manas</td>
<td>Ram Charita Manas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MU</td>
<td>Mundaka Upanishada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHSP</td>
<td>Nirguna School of Hindi Poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORLI</td>
<td>An Outline of Religious Literature of India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Parashuram Chaturvedi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDB</td>
<td>Pitamber Dutt Barthwal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>Paras Nath Tiwari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RK</td>
<td>Radhakrishnan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RKV</td>
<td>Ram Kumar Varma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBS</td>
<td>Sant Bani Sangrah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>Syam Sunder Das</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR</td>
<td>Sikh Religion, Vol. VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSI</td>
<td>Six Systems of Indian Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SU</td>
<td>Shvetashvatar Upanishad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FOREWORD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPLANATORY NOTES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Note on Transliteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Note on References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABBREVIATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER I

**KABIR AND HIS TIMES**

(A) Kabir's times, socio-religious conditions

(B) Religious literature before, during Kabir's time and after him

(C) Language of Kabir

(D) Kabir's personality

(E) Kabir's place in the history of Hindi literature

## CHAPTER II

**KABIR'S CONCEPT OF BRAHMAN AND HIS USE OF IMAGES.**

(A) The concept of Brahman in Kabir

(B) Kabir's idea of devotional love for Nirguna Brahman

(C) Kabir's position vis-a-vis the question of identity
(D) Mysticism in Kabir's poetry

(E) Imagery and symbols in the poetry of Kabir

(F) Sources of Kabir's imagery

(G) Kabir's imagery in poetry of paradoxes

CHAPTER III

IMAGES FROM NATURAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

(A) Images from nature: Sun, Moon, Light, Fire, Water, Ocean, Tree, Chakva, Muskdeer, Honey, Sugar, Diamond, Jewel, Chintamani, Pearl

(B) Images from the social environment:

Weaver, Potter, Painter, Goldsmith, Merchant or Trader, Boatman, Physician or Gardu, Rajigar, Musician, Diwan or Judge

CHAPTER IV

IMAGES OF RELATIONSHIP AND DEVOTIONAL LOVE

(A) Lord and Master image

(B) Guru image

(C) Mother, Father and other images of joint family

(D) Husband and Wife or images of conjugal love
CHAPTER V

IMAGES REGARDING IDENTITY

(A) The Vedanta Tradition
(B) The Sufi angle
(C) Identity images: spouse images
(D) Images regarding individual self merging into Universal Soul
(E) Images regarding Universal Soul merging into individual Self
(F) Images regarding Oneness of Universal soul and individual Self

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ADDITIONAL NOTES
Kabir was a Saint and a religious teacher. To communicate his ideas, as a saint and a preacher, Kabir has used his poetry as a medium. He is a great poet of medieval Hindi literature, commonly known as Nirguna school of Hindi Poetry. Through various images and symbols Kabir has given us his concept of Brahman. Kabir has been widely studied from many angles and in the course of this study, has been sometimes misrepresented by the Vedanta or Islamic prejudice.

The study of his concept of Brahman, more specially through the images and symbols used by him, has not received due attention from the critics. The present study will concentrate on the text of Kabir and draw conclusions about his idea of Brahman on the basis of images and symbols. This will allow the poet to speak for himself and hopefully enable us to correct some of the earlier prejudices.

In his poetry Kabir does attempt at giving expression to his experience of the union with Brahman who is the Creator and the Caretaker of all. Kabir's Brahman transcended while He included all metaphysical categories, all credal concepts and definitions of saguna and nirguna, personal and impersonal, transcendent and immanent, dvaita and advaita. The study of the images of Brahman involves the understanding of the concept itself. The images and symbols of Brahman and associated concepts from the poetry of Kabir are collected and classified. The poetry
some believed in pilgrimage and some in fouling the body
with smoke. One worshipped Shakti and the other Shiva,
another sacrificed animals. One roamed in the forest
with grown matted hair and other went naked and none
tried to find the real truth so that they can get rid of
the bondage of life and death.¹

Hinduism, with its liberal and flexible traditions had become an
umbrella under which numerous sects and diverse forms of worship could
exist and flourish. Shankar (8th Century A.D.), had made Hinduism
philosophically strong and well equipped to resist the old heterodox
faiths viz. Buddhism and Jainism, but he could not interpret it in terms
understood by the masses and such an interpretation, which could provide
the people a basis for really popular religion, was needed. This need
was greatly fulfilled by the improved and reactivised form of Vaishnava
Bhakti movement under the leadership of Ramanuja who lived in the
eleventh century A.D. The development of Vaishnavism with an emotional
basis as a distinct cult in South India was due to the Alvars, but its
philosophical basis was provided by Ramanuja. One of the most remark-
able features of the Vaishnava bhakti was its awareness of social prob-
lems. The Bhakti movement, along with its social awareness and liberal
traditions, was brought from south to north India by Ramananda (1299 -
1410 A.D.). This movement, which spread over the whole of India, which
imported moral significance and value to the lives of millions through
the centuries, had two objects. In the first place it was a protest
against formalism in religion and externalism in worship. It sought to
bring men back to the realization of the truth that religion is an
affair in which the whole of mind and spirit are involved and that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SSD</th>
<th>KG</th>
<th>161</th>
<th>380</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>163</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
idea. While facing these often insurmountable difficulties, as a student of Kabir I have always kept in my mind the following words of Greaves:

These very difficulties constitute its peculiar value to the student who wishes to learn the language of the people. It disciplines the mind into recognising words which have been distorted and twisted and teaches one that a sentence can be turned upside down and inside out and yet remain intelligible.

***

Before going into Kabirs' concept of Brahman, we should keep certain points in mind. Philosophy is perhaps not quite the right word for Kabirs' ideas, since the main function of his poetry was to help people find salvation, not to discuss the kinds of problems that have long since interested philosophers. Kabir's copious utterances may be classified according to their meters (chanda), but they cannot be arranged in dates. The clues to his spiritual history are lost, and the phrases of his experience toss to and fro in his verses, lighting up his character and illustrating his mood, but obscuring the stages of discipline in which his spiritual genius developed. He did not compose long treatises. His work consists of many short didactic poems, independent of each other and often expressed in terse and vigorous language. Kabir's ideas are not stated in a systematic manner. He
makes statements which sometimes appear to be contradictory but can be reconciled if we interpret them together.

In fact, all 'isms' and 'vadas' can be deduced from his poetry, but Kabir identifies himself with none and transcends each one of them. We cannot get the spirit of Kabir's religion and concept of his Brahman-Atman by taking a few lines from any one point of his poetry. It can be understood only by surveying the whole growth and grasping that inner meaning which is struggling for expression at every stage. It is an essential part of our methodology to take Kabir's utterances not each one in isolation, but as a whole.

Kabir is not a systematic theologian, and any attempt to classify his thought through the categories of classical Indian systems is bound to distort it. Bear in mind that Kabir was first and foremost a bhakta poet and a mystic, not an intellectual; the theological analysis will not play a decisive role in this study. This is not a comparative study. Other schools of thought and figures of the religious history are generally introduced only by the way of a clarification of a point in Kabir.

The great figures and the famous writings may serve as reference points in understanding one aspect or another of Kabir's concept of Brahman, but any attempt to align Kabir with one particular individual or school will generally end up in trimming or stretching Kabir to fit
In someone else's suit. For instance, Kabir's many terse statements about oneness of Brahman (universal soul) and Atman (individual soul) are a pointer to his belief in advaita (nonduality) or in the existence of the one single Reality. It would be reading Kabir through coloured glasses to explain him from Vedant's point of view. Essential oneness of Brahman and Atman is the main point which reminds of Shankar (8th century) to the student of Kabir. But Kabir's poetry does not evince any particular agreement or disagreement with Shankar's doctrines.

The terms Sansar, Avidya, Maya, Jiva, Surati, Saguna, Nirguna, Shunya, etc. are the terms of speculation common to different systems. It is to be noticed that the systems are distinguished by the different significations assigned to those terms in the different schools in senses which are essentially distinct. These terms are also used by Hindus: intellectual or non-intellectual, educated or uneducated, rich or poor in their daily life as part of the day to day talk. Kabir generally uses these terms in his poetry in the sense common to people of his times. The same term can be used at different places to denote different concepts. The context is at such places to be the deciding factor as to what definite concept the terms denote.
CHAPTER I
KABIR AND HIS TIMES

Kabir is a product of mediaeval India which begins from A.D. 1000. The country, during most of this period, was disunited and unprepared to face outside intrusion. Its vitality and capacity to resist or assimilate an alien culture was greatly reduced. Such vitality comes from the common people, but the common man in India was already a disadvantaged and dispossessed person. The vast majority of the Indian people were indifferent and inert to intruders. The classification of castes inside the Hindu society, instead of being a system of division and specialisation of labour, had become a gradation of social order with superiorities and inferiorities attached to them.

The advent of Islam in the eighth century created a new situation in the country. For, although before the coming of the Muslims a number of Central Asian tribes had invaded India, they had been rapidly assimilated into Indian society. The Muslims, however, brought with them not only a highly distinguished religion, but, unlike their predecessors, they also maintained stronger links with the countries of their origin. The policy of exploiting and fleecing the children of the soil to their utmost and making their life miserable was being followed by these Muslim rulers. There was no religious freedom for the natives. There prevailed an atmosphere of mistrust and hostility. One of the major differences between Hinduism and Islam was that Hinduism, although retaining a general racial structure, gave freedom of worship to individuals; Islam abolished caste and thereby created a superficial equality among various sections but made religion a matter of community. This
resulted in backward classes and people in the lower strata of the Hindu society being attracted to Islam and to Sufism, which was only a variant of Islam. These were the people who have been deprived of a place in the Hindu society and had earlier been influenced by the anti-Brahmanical character of Buddhism. With the advent and eventual consolidation of Muslim rule, the relationship between Hindus and Muslims developed into a sort of conflict between two races and two cultures. The climax was reached in Timur's invasion of Delhi in the year 1398 which is usually regarded as Kabir's year of birth.

India was a multi-religious society during this period. Jainism was not a popular and widespread religion and Buddhism had developed or, rather, degenerated into various branches of Yogis, Siddhas and Natha. Hinduism, which is not a religion of fixed rites and ritual, was the mainstream of Indian society with all its characteristics of liberalism and innumerable divisions and subdivisions. This religion has its root in the Vedas, the Epics, the Puranas and the Tantras. It is not a dogmatic creed with one deity and one scripture. It is a vast complex whole. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi in his famous Hindi critique on Kabir says that in the days when Kabir was preaching, Puranic Hinduism was dominant, but it was the religion of the ordinary householder. In India there were many other current religious practices:

Some crammed Vedas, some renounced the world, some assumed poverty, some were busy in charity, some thought drinking the best form of penance, some practised black magic and quack's trades and called themselves Siddhas,
some believed in pilgrimage and some in fouling the body with smoke. One worshipped Shakti and the other Shiva, another sacrificed animals. One roamed in the forest with grown matted hair and other went naked and none tried to find the real truth so that they can get rid of the bondage of life and death.

Hinduism, with its liberal and flexible traditions had become an umbrella under which numerous sects and diverse forms of worship could exist and flourish. Shankar (8th Century A.D.), had made Hinduism philosophically strong and well equipped to resist the old heterodox faiths viz. Buddhism and Jainism, but he could not interpret it in terms understood by the masses and such an interpretation, which could provide the people a basis for really popular religion, was needed. This need was greatly fulfilled by the improved and reactivised form of Vaishnava Bhakti movement under the leadership of Ramanuja who lived in the eleventh century A.D. The development of Vaishnavism with an emotional basis as a distinct cult in South India was due to the Alvars, but its philosophical basis was provided by Ramanuja. One of the most remarkable features of the Vaishnava bhakti was its awareness of social problems. The Bhakti movement, along with its social awareness and liberal traditions, was brought from south to north India by Ramananda (1299 - 1410 A.D.). This movement, which spread over the whole of India, which imparted moral significance and value to the lives of millions through the centuries, had two objects. In the first place it was a protest against formalism in religion and externalism in worship. It sought to bring men back to the realization of the truth that religion is an affair in which the whole of mind and spirit are involved and that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>SSD</th>
<th>KG</th>
<th>161</th>
<th>380</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>163</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
it is not merely a matter of rites and ceremonies or even of dogmas and doctrines. Secondly, the movement was an earnest effort to reconcile the Hindus and Muslims.

The leaders of this movement appeared in every region of India. They addressed their message largely to the common people and spoke to them in their own dialects eschewing the learned languages. The Siddhas, the Vaishnava and Shaiva saints, Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya, Tukaram all taught and spread the religion of Bhakti, whether Saguna or Nirguna. Nirguna bhakta differed from the Saguna bhakta in one important way: they tended to define God in somewhat abstract terms, without using any visible symbol to represent Him and did not call upon Him under the name of any incarnation, i.e., Ram or Krishna. They worshipped a formless God and were against idol or image worship. Saguna bhakta, like Nirguna bhakta acknowledged the formlessness and incomprehensibility of God occasionally but the former concentrated their whole attention on the beauty of avatar form and used idols of God for worship.

A detailed and in-depth study of Kabir's works also throws some light on the religious scene during his life time. It was a time when various religions had disintegrated into numerous sects. These were opposed to and critical of each other. The outer paraphernalia and rituals dominated the religious life, and the soul of the major religions had been relegated to the background. Kabir, in his own characteristic style, describes the situation. He says that wherever
you search you do not find a single person who is conversant with the mystery of God. The six schools of thought and ninety-six pretensions all look anxious and restless but all of them are neck-deep into the dark well of ignorance. Obviously, the six schools mentioned here do not refer to the six systems of Indian philosophy. The word 'Darsan' here means an outfit or a robe which were very common during those days and were taken as official uniforms of different sects. These were peculiar to each sect and there were distinctive marks for Sannyasis belonging to these sects. Dadu has also referred to six schools. Ninety-six sects, which Kabir called pretentious, included twelve jogis, eighteen jangams, twenty-four sevras, ten sannyasis, fourteen derveshs and eighteen brahmans.

From the study of the Kabir literature it emerges that there were Vaishnava, Shaiva, Shakta, Smarta and Nath sects popular among the Hindus. In his poetry Kabir has mentioned the main pillars of Hinduism, the Vedas and Smritis and has called them deceptive and confusing. He has disapproved of the theory of incarnation, idolatry, fasting, pilgrimage and ceremonies associated with birth and death. Out of all the Hindu sects, Kabir appears to have respect only for Vaishnavas. Similarly, Kabir has criticised and condemned time and again the Kazi, the Mullah, the Sheikh and the rituals associated with Islam. He has called Buddhist, Jain and Shakta hypocrites. The study of Kabir's poetry also reveals that while he was ruthless in criticising the rituals and the

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PC</td>
<td>KSP</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ahmäd Shah</td>
<td>Bijak</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
outer side of religions he has all along defended the moral content and
the soul of religion.

There was very little literary activity and not much religious
literature in Hindi during the time of Kabir. Of the disciples of
Ramananda, Raidas and Pipa were contemporaries of Kabir. This was, in
fact, the beginning of the religious literary tradition in Hindi. After
Kabir in the Sant tradition there is Nanak (1469 - 1538 A.D.), Dadu the
cotton cleaner (1444 A.D.) and Sunder Das the younger, who was a dis-
ciple of Dadu. Prannath the founder of Dhami sect (1618 - 1694)
Babalal, Malukdas, Paltu, Bulleshah, Charan Das and Tulsi Sahib. All
have written some kind of poetry in the Sant tradition. Sibdayal, the
founder of Radhaswami sect, born in 1728, is also counted as one of
them. Apart from this Sant tradition of religious literature, the
Saguna school developed much faster and produced poets of greater
stature and eminence. These include Surdas (1574), Tulsidas (1532 -
1623) and Meeraabai, contemporary of Tulsidas.

As regards the literary form of the poetry written by Kabir and
other Sant poets it consists of Muktaka, that is, a detached stanza,

---

6 PC Hindi Sahitya Ka Brihat Itihas IV 104

In Hindi literature Sant tradition is taken as nirguna bhakti
tradition. These Sant poets use Hindi as their medium of expression.
They are non sectarian, opposed to idol worship, and staunch supporters
of bhakti towards a formless, unborn, omnipotent all pervading God.
independent and complete in itself. They have not written any long
treatise or epic poetry. This poetry consists of Banis; sayings of the
saints, Pada and Sakhi. While Pada is a long lyric or song, Sakhis are
couplets in the form of Dohas. These were the forms which Sant liter-
ature initially adopted and later developed. The prototype of this form
are to be found in Sabad and Jogeswari Bani of Nath Gurus. These prob-
ably served as model to Kabir and other Sant poets to work upon and to
evolve.

There was not much literature in Hindi before Kabir. The
language of the Indian elite had traditionally been Sanskrit and during
the regime of Turks and Moghals it was Persian. Kabir was the poet of
the people, particularly people belonging to the lower strata of the
society. He addressed these people through his poems compiled in
'Bajik', 'Granthavali' and 'Adi Granth'. As stated earlier, Kabir had
no formal education. This had placed special responsibility on him
which he fulfilled by adopting Hindi Bhasha - that is the language of
the people, as medium of communication with the people. Thus, Kabir was
the people's poet writing in the people's language. Because of this,
there is a lot of controversy about the language of Kabir. He was in
fact bringing about a sort of revolution in using the vernacular,
instead of Sanskrit for religious purposes. This radical change was
opposed and criticised by orthodox Brahmin scholars. Kabir was con-
scious of this and whatever he was doing was with purpose and
intention. At a later date Tulsiadas (16th A.D.) was to follow his
footsteps and to carry the language and to perfection. Still, Tulsi also met with similar objections. Kabir has said that Sanskrit is like the water of a well, while Bhasha i.e. vernaculars, like the flowing water of a river. Tulsi Das has also said a very similar thing. Keay is not off the mark when he tells us that the use of the vernacular, instead of Sanskrit, for religious teaching, made it possible to popularize religion in a way which before had been unknown and in doing this Kabir, if not the first, was certainly one of the pioneers.

Like his personality and his ideas, Kabir's language has also been some sort of a riddle for the critics. M.B. Jaiswal maintains that the basic language of Kabir's verses is old Khari Boli and the mixture of dialects it exhibits simply reflect the Rashtra-Bhasha, national language of his time, as it was employed by Gorakhnath and some centuries later Prannath, Daulat Ram and Laloo Lal. Bhagwat Prasad Dube, who had undertaken a linguistic study of Kabir's works in his 'Kabir Kavya Ka Bhasha- Shastriya Adhyayan' is of the opinion that the basic language of his verses is Braj. For Mahendra Kumar Kabir's language is a mixture of Avadhi, Braj and Khari Boli with some sprinkling of Rajasthani, Bhojpuri and Punjabi. Vaudeville, in saying that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BP</th>
<th>SBS</th>
<th>68</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tulsi</td>
<td>Manas</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Keay</td>
<td>KP</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Kabir</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kabir was writing in some kind of lingua franca of the Northern India, which she calls Hindui, appears to be a little more clear than Mahendra Kumar. Kabir's language is refined Avadhi, rather than Bhojpuri, which was a dialect and had no literature. This was influenced by Persian and Arabic also, and more so in the case of Kabir who had a mixed cultural background. There is such divergence of opinion among linguists and critics regarding the heterogeneous character of the language of Kabir that one is inclined to join the great historian of Hindi literature Ram Chandra Shukla in calling it 'Sadhukkari Bhasha', i.e. language of the roaming saints, or the first editor of Kabir Granthavali, Syam Sunder Das, who characterized it 'Panchmel Khichri', a mixture or a cocktail. Vaudeville has called it a mixed Hindi dialect a kind of dialectal-potpourri, which is not amenable to the classification of the linguists. There is no denying the fact that Kabir's language has a composite character and includes Khari Boli, Rajasthani, Avadhi, Bhojpuri and Punjabi, sometimes even Bengali. Swami Kumar Chatterjee, another eminent linguist, also agrees with the composite character of Kabir's language made of the elements from Braj, Koshali and Bhojpuri. There is variation even in the different works of Kabir. Language of the Dohas differs from that of the Padas and Ramains. The style is more archaic in the Dohas or Sakhis as noted by Barthwal, and Khari Boli, Rajasthani

11. CV
Kabir 68
12. CV
Kabir 67
and a few Punjabi forms are more numerous in the Sakhis whereas Braj tends to dominate in the Padas. There is some difference in assessment regarding the extent of the influence of Nathpanthi and Yogic literature on the language and style of Kabir. Chaturvedi does not agree with Shukla and Barthwal and asserts that the Sakhis of Kabir, particularly dealing with love and separation, appear directly influenced by Rajasthani folk songs and ballads. Vaudeville finds a striking resemblance both in language and style between some of Kabir's Sakhis and the Sakhis of the Muslim saint Sufi Sheik Farid. Speaking about the language of the Bijak, Keay has to say the following:

The most authoritative record of the teaching of Kabir is found in the Bijak, a collection of poems which form the scriptures of the Kabir Panth. These hymns are written in Hindi in various metres.据

According to Ahmad Shah, Hindi is the dialect spoken in the neighbourhood of Benaras, Mirzapur and Gorakhpur, all district towns in the eastern part of U.P. Grierson challenges this statement and says that the language of Benaras, Gorakhpur and East Mirzapur is one form or another of the Bhojpuri dialect of Bihari and that there is not a single form typical of this language in the Bijak. The language is really old Avadhi, a dialect of Eastern Hindi used in West Mirzapur, Allahabad and Avadh and similar to that used by Tulsidas in his famous Ramayan. Basing his opinion primarily on his linguistic knowledge and understanding, Grierson says that any dialect spoken east of Braj Bhasha area is often referred to as Purabi, so that Kabir's language would be old
Purabi. Kabir himself has said about his language 'My speech is of the East, no one can understand me. Only he can understand me who is from the furthest East.' Chaturvedi and Vaudeville do not agree with purely geographical interpretation of the 'East' and there is a controversy about the actual meaning of what Kabir has said.

Every man is, to a greater or lesser extent, the product of his times. Kabir, though unique and extraordinary in many ways, could not be an exception to this. He was a man of great sensitivity and was, therefore, greatly moved by various cross-currents of his time. The social, political, religious and economic conditions prevailing before Kabir contributed their share in the making of his personality. He was born at Benaras which has a special place in the religious life of India. There is a controversy about his lineage as to whether he was a Hindu by birth and Muslim by upbringing. Many accept Ramananda as his Guru and almost all historians agree that he refused circumcision. From his writings we know that he had intimate knowledge of the Hindu religious ideas and was also fairly conversant with Islam and its various tenets.

It is generally agreed that the basic elements of Kabir's religious thinking are Hindu, and are predominantly influenced by the

14 Ahmad Shah Bijak 203 194
15 Macauliffe SR 123-24, 127
Bhakti movement. Ahmad Shah, who had edited and translated Kabir's Bijak discusses this issue with objectivity and in detail. His conclusion is that, where tradition on both sides is thus unanimous, we can safely assume that he was brought up in the family of Julaha. But, apart from this, Shah says;

We can find in him no trace of Moslem influence, unless it was contact with Sufism. The study of the Bijak certainly leaves the impression that the basis of Kabir's mental equipment was Hindu. His apparent acquaintance with Mohammedan belief, customs and phraseology might be external and acquired. But with his Hinduism the case is entirely different. His mind is steeped in Hindu thought and mythology and his mother-tongue is Hindi. 16

There is no doubt that Kabir was influenced by Islam. But the contribution of Islam to his poetry is rather of the negative type than of the positive. From Islam he imbibed a critical attitude towards certain Hindu beliefs and customs. The rejection of idolatry and avatar worship are of Islamic origin. Idolatry has been considered to be the lower kind of worship in Hindu scriptures. Shrimad Bhagwata tells us that idol is meant for those of the undeveloped intellect. 17 Kalpataru states the same idea. 18 Shankar put it under lower knowledge. Time and time again it has been criticised by Siddhas, Naths, Sants and other bhakta poets. So this was not a totally strange idea in Kabir's time but it is certain that the emphasis which Kabir attached to this had its inspiration from the teaching of Islam.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ahmad Shah</td>
<td>Bijak 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>PDB</td>
<td>NSHP 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>RK</td>
<td>Brahma Sutra 127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Idol worship, too, has its higher side. The stone or the metal itself is never meant to be considered as God. Chanakya (400 century B.C.) says: "Neither in wood, nor in stone, nor yet in clay is there the Deity. The Deity is there by virtue of bhava (mystic feeling) alone. It is, therefore, the bhava, that is the cause (of seeing God in images or other outward objects).

Chanakya-niti – VII 12.
There are lesser known critics like Pandit Walji Bhai of Borsad in Gujrat (India) who had gone so far as to claim that Kabir Panth was really instituted by Jesuits. Keay has rightly pointed out that this is an extreme view. He has added that some scholars have found similarities in the teaching and practices of Kabir's sect and that of the Christ. This may point to his having come in some way under Christian influence. Analysing this, he has further stated that Jesuit missions were not founded in India till after the death of Kabir, in the latter part of the 16th century. In those days of slow travel and communication, it does not seem very probable, therefore, that Kabir had any direct contact with Christian teachings, though one cannot say that it was altogether impossible. What is undisputed is that Kabir was critical of all kinds of superstitions, laxity in moral principles and all degenerate forms of religion. He was a votary of a 'religion of man', a universal religion, some sort of catholicism and this may be the cause of similarity in the thinking of Kabir and the basic elements of Christianity. Macauliffe echoes this sentiment when he says that Kabir has written works which all religious denominations can accept and which, if pursued without bigotry, are advantageous for the salvation of all persons.

Kabir occupies a unique place in the religious and literary history of India. It is in his writings that the Nirguna School acquired maturity and perfection. But the idea itself had occurred

---

19 Macauliffe  SR  126
before Kabir in poetry and was gradually taking shape. Among those who preceded Kabir in this line are Jaydev (1170 A.D.) the author of famous lyrics of Gita-Govinda, Namdev (1270 A.D.) who was born in Satara District of Maharashtra and who wrote in Marathi and Hindi both. Trilochan was a contemporary of Namdev. Ramananda, who was born in 1299 A.D. in Allahabad and was a disciple of Raghavan contributed much to the development of Nirguna School. His main disciples included Pipa, the Khichi Chauhan Rajo (1354 A.D.), Sadhana, the butcher, Dhanna, the Jat: Siana the barber and Raidas the cobbler. Barthwal who has undertaken an extensive study of the traditions of Indian mysticism based upon the Nirguna School of Hindi poetry, is of the opinion that these precursors of Kabir represent an intermediate position between the Saguna and the Nirguna. They do not, like the extreme Sagunis (common people who were content to worship avatars) wholly ignore the infinite aspect of God, nor do they, on the lines of pure Nirgunis, strip from the Divine'Nature all its attributes symbolised by the image and the incarnation and gave up home and family life i.e. Biragis. Most of the characteristics that subsequently developed into the Nirguna School are present in embryonic form in their teachings. There is the tendency to break the bonds of the caste in the sphere of religion. These teachers prepared the path for Kabir who carried the tradition to great heights.

Kabir has a many dimensional personality. Each one could see something of someone in him. The great linguist Grierson, who took quite a lot of interest in the cultural history of India, calls him the
spiritual father of Nanak (1469 - 1538 A.D.) who founded Sikhism. Westcott eulogizes him as "the Luther of Mediaeval India". Westernized intellectuals tend to consider him as a great mystic; the herald of the universal religion of man, the champion of the unity of mankind and a bold social reformer. Anglo de Gubernatis, in his introduction to 'Padre Marco', tells us that Kabir's ideas are fundamentally Buddhist. The great Hindi critic Hazari Prasad Dwivedi and others like him have addressed him as a great social reformer. Vaudeville has beautifully summed up:

In Indian religious history, Kabir is unique, to the Hindus he is Vaisnava Bhakta, to the Muslims a Pir, to the Sikhs a Bhagat, to the Sectarian Kabirpanthis an Avatar of the supreme Being; to modern patriots, Kabir is the champion of Hindu-Muslim unity, to neo-Vedantins a promoter of the Universal Religion or the Religion of Man, who steadfastly opposed the superstitious beliefs and empty ritualism of orthodox Islam. In modern, progressive circles today, Kabir is held in high esteem as a social reformer, a bold enemy of Brahmanical pride and caste distinctions, a revolutionary whose scathing attacks on caste prejudices the principle of untouchability, and all forms of social discrimination are forever famous and comforting to the enlightened Indian mind like a breeze of fresh air.

General Harriott had underlined the resemblance between the Sabda doctrine and Platonic 'Logos', an idea which was to be developed later by Westcott and Grierson. Garcin de Tasse notes Kabir's unique distinction of being venerated by Hindus and Muslims alike. Hunter

20 Kabir's use of many terms as nirvan, shinsa, sunna, madhimarga etc., (which he picked up from Siddhas and Naths but used mostly in his own sense without regard of their technical meaning) may give an idea of his being a Buddhist.

21 CV Kabir
takes up the same theme when he tells us that Kabir tried to harmonize Hindus and Muslims and build up some synthetic religion while Vaudeville does not agree with these efforts to represent Kabir as a social reformer of Hinduism or even as an apostle of religious tolerance or Hindu-Muslim reconciliation. Rev. Prem Chand, Rev. Ahmad Shah and Bishop Westcott and, to a much greater extent as compared to these, Pandit Walji Bhai Pastor of an Irish Presbyterian congregation, who has been mentioned earlier, find a Christian ring in Kabir’s utterances. Shah is nearer the truth when he says that, though thoughts resembling his are to be found in the writings of Hindu philosophy and especially in the Muslim Sufis of all ages, yet the presentation of them is peculiarly his own.

In Kabir we see a poor unlettered weaver in a humble home, having to struggle hard to earn his daily bread, but with a deeply religious and earnest mind which longed for union with God. In his intense eagerness to find out the reality of things eternal and his hatred of shams, he is contemptuous of all merely formal and outward piety and has no regard for conventions of caste of society. He is in many ways a man of humility and docility and yet does not restrain his language in denouncing that which seemed to be false and hypocritical. He has a deeply sensitive nature and yet nothing will turn him aside from what he believes to be truth. Often misunderstood by his family and brought into violent opposition with the society around him because of his denunciation of its sins and exposure of its follies, he takes refuge in God and finds his solace in communion with Him. Keay who calls Kabir a 'Rugged Prophet' has very rightly said that, "like other
great men, he was in many things before his age, seeing things which the world around him would take centuries to learn and yet, like other great men also, he never shook himself entirely free from his environment and the limitations which it involved."

Thus Kabir occupies a very special place in the history of Hindi literature. He has sometimes been called the 'Father of Hindi literature'. Keay does not agree with this assessment, yet he describes Kabir as one of the first great writers of religious verse in Hindi and assigns him an important place, a high place, in the history of Hindi literature. Kabir has himself told us that "he did not touch ink, nor paper, nor taken pen in hand; of the greatness of the four ages Kabir has given instructions with his lips".

He never composed any long treatise and his work consists of many short didactic poems, often expressed in terse and vigorous language. Evaluating the overall contribution of Kabir, Keay says that "there is probably no Indian author whose verses are more on the lips of the people of North India than those of Kabir, unless it be Tulsidas. The words of the two men of the past can still be heard in every village of Hindustan". The British scholar J.N. Farquhar says that "Kabir's best utterances are probably the loftiest work in the Hindi language and hundreds of his couplets have laid hold of the common heart of Hindu-

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Keay</td>
<td>KF</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Ahmad Shah</td>
<td>Bijak</td>
<td>202 188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Keay</td>
<td>KF</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kshiti Mohan Sen testifies to this in the following words, "Kabir's superior spiritual achievements came to have a sovereign influence on the people of the Indian mediaeval times. Kabir's influence, direct or indirect on all liberal movements that occurred in the mediaeval times after him, is uncommonly deep." Ahmad Shah also agrees with Sen regarding the enormity of the impact of Kabir on religious thinking after him. Shah states,

But apart from purely literary or philosophical considerations, the real importance of Kabir rests on the enormous influence of Kabir on generations after him. The fifteen Bhagats of the Granth of the Sikhs have borrowed largely from Kabir and that his influence is strong throughout the whole of the Adi Granth. Throughout the hymns of Surdas there are considerable traces of Kabir's influence and Tulsidas, the greatest of the Hindi poets is believed to have this to say of Kabir's place in Hindi literature. 'Kabir sang the real thing, whatever little remained was held by Surdas, Tulsidas sang the praises of the name of Ram.'

Shah has made a very comprehensive statement in the ranking of Kabir in the history of Hindi literature. He says:

In any attempt to estimate his rank as a poet, it is necessary to keep in mind three considerations. He is the pioneer of Hindi literature, the father of all Hindi hymns, for there are none before him and the famous Granth is largely his. He stands as far from modern Hindi as Chaucer from the poetry published in the Spectator of today.

It may not be far from the truth to say that Kabir in many ways paved way for the poetry of Surdas and Tulsidas the two giants of Hindi

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Farquhar</td>
<td>ORLI</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Sen</td>
<td>Mediaeval Mysticism of India</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Ahmad Shah</td>
<td>Bijak</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Ahmad Shah</td>
<td>Bijak</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
poetry and that it could not have been possible for Sur and Tulsi to write what actually they did write but for the work of Kabir being before them.

To sum up, Kabir is a great poet of the Hindi literature of the medieval period which was a time of great religious and literary achievements. He is a bold, original and revolutionary thinker and a great social critic of his times. He is the finest representative of the Nirguna school of Hindi poetry. Besides representing the current trends of his time in his poetry, Kabir has made contributions in the sphere of religion and philosophy. The idea of Nirguna Brahman expressed through various symbols and images in his poetry in his metric style is an original contribution of Kabir. As a great poet of the people, Kabir made available to the common man through his poetry the idea of the Ultimate and Absolute Reality the concepts of Brahman, Atman, and other philosophical notions which were already in existence in Indian thinking but were in the exclusive domain of the high caste intellectual elite sitting in their ivory towers. He brought highly philosophical and sophisticated questions down to earth. He had no formal education and might not have been a man of great learning, yet he was a man of great spiritual insight, wide experience and astonishing intuitive knowledge. Through his highly inventive images and symbols, in his own inimitable style, Kabir communicated with the common people in their own language and idiom on these questions. In an age of great despair and confusion, Kabir, injected in the Indian people a sense of self-confidence and self-respect which, at the time, they needed most.
1. एक जीवन उठ जाताहर, रक आंगि बिमृति बैरे उपार।
इस आराध्ये संकेत सोन, उस परदा दे दे बड़ी जीव।

2. धर परसं गाथ एक भसी उदासु, धर नगर निरंतर रहै निबास।
एक जीव आसुतित लर बूढी सोने, पैंटै रोंक नाम संग रहै तलें।

3. आलम दुनीं सब्बे पिरी सब्बों हैर बिन युकूल अरामां।
इस दस दिव्यांब पांडुं, अकुल फिन हैर जाना।

4. जीवि जोगभ सेकसेक, बाथ सेन्यांसी सेलक।
प्रदर्शन दादू राम बिन, सब्बे कुपत हैर भेष।

7. संशकृत है डूब-जल, भाषा बढ़ता नीर।

8. स्थान दुरंत पय विस्य बाहि, गुदर करिद वहर पान।
गिरा ग्राम्य सिंह राम जस, ग्रावसिंह तुमर दुनान।

23. मसि काघट दूसरा नहीं, कलम गहि नहीं बाय।
चारि जुगि बूंजै महतम, गुयाभि जनाईं बाय।

दलाई हक़ार: बोजनु: २०२: १०१।
CHAPTER II

KABIR'S CONCEPT OF BRAHMAN AND HIS USE OF IMAGES

Kabir's Brahman whom he knew and adored and whose loving union he sought, transcended while He included all metaphysical categories, all credal concepts and definitions of Nirguna and Saguna, transcendent and immanent, personal and impersonal; yet each contributed something to the description of that Infinite Who revealed Himself, according to their measure, to the faithful devotees of all creeds. This Brahman of his, Kabir proclaimed, is nirguna. He practiced and propagated devotion towards nirguna Brahman. What or rather who is this nirguna Brahman? To know this and to understand it would be of help to have a glimpse into the background of the concept of Nirguna Brahman.

In the long history of Indian thought, there have been some well elaborated concepts of God. The fundamental religious belief of a Hindu is in the reality of the existence of God, as the one, unborn, eternal and universal spirit, immanent and transcendent in the universe as its Supreme Being or Brahman. The Hindus agree in the conception of God in His two different aspects called the Nirguna (attributeless God) and the Saguna (God with attributes). In the Nirguna rupa or attributeless form, Brahman is indescribable and incomprehensible. Being devoid of form and other sensible qualities, Brahman is not the object of perception. He is utterly beyond here and now, forever above all that can be seen and imagined, known or named. He is above and beyond all that is
finite and concrete. "His form does not stand within the range of the senses. No one perceived Him with the eye". "That being is far beyond this world is formless...". Therefore, Brahmā cannot be known like all other things, by being defined as so and so. We can speak of the Absolute only in the negative way. We can only say, "not this, not this".

The negative account should not lead us to the suspicion that Supreme Itself is negative. It is the basis of all existent things. The negative definitions point out how the positive attributes known to us are inadequate to the Highest. Radhakrishnan explains:

Contradictory predicates are attached to Brahmā to indicate that we are obliged to use negative conceptions so long as we employ the dialects of the intellect though positive features are revealed when Brahmā is intuited. It is subtler than subtle, greater than great (Ken. 1.3). It moves; it does not move, it is far and it is near, it is within all this and without all this (Isa. 5). These seemingly inconsistent accounts are not the sign of any confusion of thought.

The Supreme Being is both transcendent and immanent.

Brahmā, the power which presents itself to us materialized in all existing things, which creates, sustains, preserves, and receives back into itself again all worlds, this eternal, infinite divine power is identical with Atman, with that which, after stripping of everything external, we discover as our real most essential being, our individual self, the soul.
In his religious life, a Hindu worships God in the full of attribute form (Saguna Rupa) which includes an infinity of His attributes of power and love. It is this God with infinite attributes upon whom an individual is expected to meditate and to incorporate the effects of his devotion and meditation toward the development of his spiritual life. It is emphasized that there can be no likeness, no picture or image of God, but man has to have a symbol to stand for his God. Man is, therefore, allowed to have any symbol of God for worship.

These symbols (pratikas) are definite representation of Brahman under some form perceptible by the senses. By symbol, in a wider sense, we understand all the representations conceived with a view to the worship of Brahman, representing one or many aspects of Divinity with a name befitting that particular aspect. Brahman's creator, preserver and the destroyer of the universe, aspects are represented by the gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Sun is god of life, Laxmi is goddess of prosperity. Other gods and goddesses represent many attributes of the Supreme God. In its absolute character every god is God.

When the Hindus pray to Ram or Krishna, they pray to God in that name which can, without loss of religious value, be replaced by any other name; say that of Allah or Christ.  Ram of Tulsi das (16th

---

6 Deussen Philosophy of Upanishad 101
century) whom gods, sages, and seers from Brahma downwards meditate in
their devotion is not just the Ram of history, the son of king Dashrath,
the ruler of Ayodhya. He is eternal, unborn, the one without a second,
timeless, formless, stainless Brahman:

The saints, men of wisdom, Purana and Vedas, all declare that there is no difference between Saguna (Divine manifestation with attributes) and Aguna (without attributes). He who is Absolute, Formless, Invisible, Unborn appears as Saguna (with attributes) compelled by the love of the devotee. 7

Nirguna and Saguna are not distinct entities but they are the different aspects of the same Reality. The truth is that infinite names, forms, attributes and expressions of God are but man's effort in different ways of viewing the single truth -- (Tad Ekam) that One Reality Brahman. "Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti" -- "Truth is one; sages call it by various names." 8 The Absolute is too much of an abstraction to be loved, worshipped or meditated upon. The same formless, impersonal, pure and passionless being of philosophy is worshipped by the warm heart of the emotional man as a tender and benevolent deity, as a personal God. Personality is a limitation, and yet only personal God can be worshipped. The personal God is a symbol, though the highest symbol of the true living God. In the Scriptures The Supreme Spirit is indiscriminately called He or It (sah or tat), this meets the demand of both aspects of God; personal and impersonal. 9

7 Tulsidas Manas Balkanda 116
8 Rig Veda 2 3 23, 6
9 The Vedas, the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads interpose both masculine and neuter pronouns to indicate Supreme Being. It shows the idea that the Supreme Being is both personal and impersonal.
The distinction of impersonal and personal, nirguna and saguna is found in all mysticism, Eastern or Western. "If Shankar distinguishes Brahman from Ishvara, Eckhart contrasts the God-head (Deitas) with God (Deus) - the pure God-head stands high above God and is ground of the possibility of God, who is absorbed in the Godhead, which is beyond being and goodness." 10 Evelyn Underhill says in her book 'Practical Mysticism' that:

Now it is a paradox of human life, often observed even by the most concrete and unimaginative philosopher, that man seems to be poised between two contradictory orders of reality. Two planes of existence or perhaps two ways of apprehending existence - lie within the possible span of his consciousness. The great pair of opposites which metaphysicians call Being and Becoming, Eternity and Time, Unity and Multiplicity, and others mean, when they speak of the Spiritual and Natural worlds, represent the two extreme forms under which the universe can be realized by him. -- As they know themselves to dwell in the world of time, and yet to be capable of transcending it, so the ultimate reality, they think, inhabits yet inconceivably exceeds all that they know to be. 11

According to Rudolph Otto: There is an intimate fundamental relationship between the saguna and nirguna concept. The nirguna-Brahman is not the exclusive opposite of the saguna-Brahman, but its superlative and a development of the tendencies which lead to the saguna-Brahman itself. 12 He explains this by means of certain conceptions from Western theology, for example the via eminentiae and the via negationis. He says:

10 RK Eastern Religion and Western Thought 30
11 Underhill Practical Mysticism 40-41
12 Otto, R. Mysticism East and West 127
Both ways are the methods of expressing the divine. The via eminentiae is the way of idealization - the setting up an ideal. Man finds expression for God by attributing to Him all possible ideals at their very highest, or better still, in their absolute perfection. -- The other method of finding expressions for Godhead is via negationis. The Godhead is defined by negative predicates, and the purpose of these is exclusion (remotio, vyavritti). This however, is not meant to indicate impoverishment or emptiness, but the exclusion of all definition as limitaion, impoverishment, or creatureliness. So it is negatio as negatio negationis and therefore (as litotes) it is intended as the very highest positive. And so the via negationis emerges not as contrary to the via eminentiae, not even as a merely parallel mode of expression, but really as a continuation of the via eminentiae itself. 13

Negative descriptions of Brahman as well as positive characterizations, which are to be met in Upanishad are also found in every great religious literature. The mystics, Jewish, Christian and Muslim are witness to this. While thinkers emphasize the illimitable character of God, the religious devotees look upon God as friend, helper and saviour. 14

13 Otto Mysticism East and West 128
14 See: Underhill Mysticism 344
      Otto The Idea of Holy 29
      Arnold and Guillaume The Legacy of Islam 229
These two tendencies run through the Hindu scriptures from the very beginning. In one Brahman is the Absolute which cannot be characterized by phenomenal categories; in the other Brahman is identified with the Supreme person. The former view is close to Shankar (8th century) and latter close to Ramanuja (11th century). Shankar's nirguna Brahman and Ramanuja's saguna Brahman represent two uninterrupted traditions in Indian thought. These traditions are not exclusive to each other but are complementary. In Shankar's thought the apprehension of God as personal is a living factor. While Shankar's Brahman is nirguna and he is pure non-dualist in his metaphysics, he had great faith and devotion to a personal God. He composed beautiful poetry in the praise of Lord Vishnu, Sharda Devi, Lord Vishvanath in Kashi and to Buddha. In Kabir's concept of Brahman both ideas are present but they do not run separately. They are infused together under Kabir's own style.

Kabir's concern is with man as such, and not with man cut up into caste, creed, sect or race. The religion preached by Kabir is of Universal nature. His Brahman could be anybody's Brahman. Likewise Kabir's Brahman has many names without any discrimination of caste or creed. He says: "Where from have two Lords of the world come? Who has deluded you? Allah, Ram, Karim, Keshva Hari -- these are but the names by which the Sire is known".

---

15 Max Muller SSIP 170
16 RK BS 37-38
17 SSD KG 149 327

Dwyer - 'Kabir Ki Bhakti Bhavana'
Dwyer has given list of 86 names containing 25 non-sectarian 9 non-vaishnavite, 10 Islamic, 19 Vishnus, 9 Krishnas, and 14 Rams which in their frequency occur 584 times. 'Ram' Kabir's favorite name is used 237 times.
Kabir, unlike Shankar, makes no distinction between Brahman and Ishvara. Brahman is Ishvara, Sirjanhar or Kartar (creator). Names of God are only names. He made no distinction between names, and uses a variety of names of God with apparent freedom. The names mostly have been lifted out of their original setting and are rarely used in their literal sense. This variety of names like Allah, Rahim, Purusottam, Bhagvan, Gopal, Raghubai Prabhu, Thakura, Parbrahman, Deva, etc., are used in the sense of Absolute. These names do not ruffle in any way his concept of Brahman, but they highlight the endless divine qualities of his Supreme Being.

Kabir has been generally classified as nirguna sant poet and thinker. Rather, he has been regarded as the greatest master of this school in Hindi poetry. Nirguna is not a label which these religious thinkers and poets belonging to this group have given to themselves. This name has been assigned to them by their critics and opponents, who stood by the earlier forms of saguna worship, i.e., worship of idol and incarnations. The nirgunis are thus 'nirgunis' only in the sense of being opposed to the commonly accepted gross forms of saguna worship like idolatry and man-worship, and in no other.18 This factor is very important to understand Kabir's 'nirguna Brahman'. The meaning of this word in its contemporary sense applies more aptly to Kabir's Brahman than in the sense in which it has been used in Shankar's philosophy.

18 PC Hindi Sahitya Ka Brihat Itihas 99
Still the word 'guna' has a background and carries some sense. Guna is a single thread, a cord or twine or something by which anything is distinguishable from anything else: a quality. This is the general commonsense and dictionary meaning of the word. But the Sankhya philosophy, one of the six branches of Indian philosophical systems, gave it a technical meaning according to which there are three gunas, sattva, rajas and tamas and they are all material properties of Prakriti. In Shvetashvatara Upanishad (6.11) the word nirguna has been used in this sense to denote that Brahman does not have material properties and is devoid of the gunas usually associated with Prakriti. Since the gunas are limiting factors and the Brahman is limitless, he cannot be reached through gunas. Evidently Kabir was familiar with the threefold gunas and probably with the implication of the philosophy to which they belong. Like Shvetashvatara (6.16) Kabir had no objection in predicating other gunas of Ram, provided the three gunas, constituents of Sankhya Prakriti, were excluded. Kabir says, "O brother, repeat (japahu) over and over the name of nirguna Ram," and "You are beyond all guna (triguna), nirguna, so to say." "Sat, raja and tam, guna are Your maya shakti (power). One has to go beyond these three to reach the Highest." 19

---

19 PNT KG
89 1
73 6
19 32
Barthwal, in his book *Nirguna School of Hindi Poetry*, clarifies that when Brahman is said to be devoid of qualifying characteristics, what is meant is that Supreme Brahman cannot be pointed out or described by any characteristic signs and cannot be comprehended intellectually by means of any attributes or indicative marks. For this reason it is called unqualified (nirguna) unconditioned (nirvikalpa) and devoid of any limiting adjunct (nirupadhi). That which is not destroyed when finite aspects of time, space and causation are destroyed, is Brahman. Kabir's Brahman has many guna which are beyond the limit of time, space and causation; different from three guna of prakriti. Kabir clearly makes this distinction and says "Ram's guna are matchless or unique (nyaro)." Brahman's divine guna are not to be taken in any sense as indicating ordinary qualities as we know them. These guna or attributes are independent of the organism which in the case of man give rise to those qualities - He is Infinite Beauty without body or form. In other words these are not to be predicated of Brahman as His attribute, but they constitute His substance or form His essential nature. Kabir's Brahman has all the auspicious qualities (guna) but does not have any inauspicious (avaguna) ones. And he makes it very clear "Karta kere bahut guna, avaguna koi nahi" -- Creator has many auspicious qualities but none inauspicious. 20

Kabir calls Brahman as the Primal Principle or the Essence. It is beyond time and space. It is unaffected by any change. It is free and ultimate. It is absolute and beyond causation. "He is without

---

20 Ahmad Shah Bijak 104 18
SSD KG 67 3
form, without quality, without decay. He is pure and indestructible, His form is infinite and fathomless, He has no beginning and no end."\(^{21}\)

"No form, no body, no length, no breadth is seen there. How can I tell you that which He is? It cannot be told by words of mouth, it cannot be written on paper. It is like a dumb person's candy, he has tasted it but how can it be explained by him?\(^{22}\) "This Being is formless, colourless and unconditioned. He has no beginning, middle nor end; no line, caste or clan. How may I describe His glory? He has no name and no dwelling place."\(^{23}\)

How can you see this Nirguna? Bewildered Kabir says "Without attributes what to say and what to name."\(^{24}\)

That which can never be seen with eyes is everywhere. As the seed in the plant, as the shade in the tree, even so the creature is in Brahma, and Brahma in the creature: they are ever distinct yet ever united. He Himself is the limit and the limitless and beyond both the limit and limitless is He, the Pure Being. The Supreme Soul is within the soul, the Point is seen within the Supreme Soul, and within the Point, the reflection is seen again. Kabir is blessed because he has this supreme vision.\(^{25}\)

This inadequacy of the ordinary human consciousness to hold at the same time the entire view of the total Reality does not drive him to despair, for his mind has attained certainty through a direct vision by

\(^{21}\) HPD, Kabir, 258, 26
\(^{22}\) HPD, Kabir, 280, 76
\(^{23}\) HPD, Kabir, 283, 81
\(^{24}\) SSD, KG, 181, 5
\(^{25}\) Tagore, HPK, 24, 7
the grace of the Guru. "It is the mercy of my true Guru that has made me to know the unknown; I have learned from Him how to walk without feet, to see without eyes, to hear without ears, to drink without mouth, to fly without wings; I have brought my love and my meditation into the land where there is no sun and moon, nor day and night. Without eating I have tasted of the sweetness of nectar, and without water I have quenched my thirst."26

His conception of God is extremely subtle; "He is subtler than water, smoke or air"27 He has known Brahman but he is not sure as to how to express Him. It is this difficulty of adequately expressing God's nature which makes him exclaim:

Oh, how may I ever express the secret word? Oh, how can I say He is not like that, and He is not like that? If I say that He is within me, the universe is ashamed: If I say that He is without me, it is falsehood. He makes the inner and outer worlds to be indivisibly one; the conscious and unconscious, both are His foot stools. He is neither manifest nor hidden, He is neither revealed nor unrevealed: There is no words to tell that which He is.28

It is impossible to know Him by the light of ordinary reason, for the analytical intellect is cause of separation. "They are blind who hope to see It by the light of reason, that reason which is the cause of separation -- the house of reason is very far away!29

| 26 | Tagore | HPK | 211 | 27 |
| 27 | SSD | KG | 22 | 12 |
| 28 | HPD | Kabir | 242 | 9 |
| 29 | Tagore | HPK | 83 | 98 |
He is beyond mental comprehension and expression in words. Mind cannot grasp and the speech cannot express the reality. Then again, perceptual knowledge presupposes the existence of subject and an object but in the case of the knowledge of Divinity there is no such distinction. There the subject and object are one for God resides in man and is the essence in him and to know God he must know himself. "I and You, You and I are not two, this truth is known only when the illusion is gone. As long as the essence is not known, so long only are the emancipator and the emancipated talked about."30. Perceptual knowledge of God is therefore impossible.

For Kabir, God is not only the Overlord, ruling over the universe, but also the All-pervading, who permeates through and through and forms the essence in us. This has been succinctly brought out by Kabir when he says, Musalmans' is one God, whereas Kabir's is all pervading.31*

---

30  SSD  KG  117  203
31  SSD  KG  253  212

The idea of unity of God and man was foreign to Muslim notion of Divinity and was considered 'kufr' punished by death. Hallaj Mansur (922 A.D.) died on stake for having declared himself to be one with God (An'il Haq).
Barthwal concludes that the concept of God in nirguna school and in the poetry of Kabir is, more or less, on the pattern set by the Upanishads and the only modification that the Upanishadic thought underwent in the Nirguna school was the highly passionate colouring of love that it received under Sufi influence. The Vedanta propounds the formula: 'Thou Art That' (Tat tvam asi).\(^{32}\) This famous Sutra affirms the identity of the individual soul and Supreme God. The Upanishadic declarations that Brahman is everything (Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma)\(^{33}\) and it is the truth of truths (Satasya Satayam) and that the Atman and the Brahman are One (Aym Atma Brahma)\(^{34}\) are different aspects of the whole truth. But together these Upanishadic statements amount to saying that Brahman is the Reality and that Brahman and Atman are essentially identical.\(^{35}\) To realise what we are is the ultimate goal of human existence. To achieve this object Avidya has to be displaced by Vidya and that is what the Upanishads have tried to accomplish.

When we embark upon studying the images of Brahman used by Kabir in his poetry we are confronted with varying opinions of scholars and critics on this subject. It is tempting to presume that any religious teaching would almost necessarily fall into one or other of the classical schools or be a rehash of old ideas. According to Dwyer, failure
to resist this particular temptation has bedevilled many of the studies of Kabir which have proliferated in recent years. Most of Kabir's scholars have tried to liken his teaching or thought with Advaita or non-dualism of Shankar, monism of Islam or Sufism and at the same time link its tradition to Vedas. Dwyer while sounding a very genuine warning himself slipped when he said that Kabir was an important figure in the Sikh tradition.\(^{36}\) He also joins Dwivedi in telling us that Kabir was heavily influenced by the Yogi.\(^{37}\) As a result of this Kabir's real thought could not be the focal point of these studies which start with certain pre-conceived notions. In the face of this, it is very necessary to take up Kabir's sayings on God and to discover with an open mind just how far they are expressions of an original mind and Kabir's personal religion. In Kabir, as has been rightly pointed out by Dwyer, there is not an objective treatment of specific points of theology, but it has all the appearances of a personal witness and it is generally in such context that Kabir's understanding of God has to be sought.

It is generally held that Kabir's Brahman is nirguna or without attributes. That Kabir's Brahman is nirguna is only partial truth. That it is not saguna or that it is without qualities generally associated with Hindu avatars is also another aspect of the whole truth. The fact is that Kabir's Brahman transcends both saguna and nirguna. This Kabir himself has said in one of the poems which, translated by Tagore,
reads as follows:

Some contemplate the Formless,
and others meditate on form,
but the wise man knows that the
Brahma is beyond both.\textsuperscript{38}

The picture that emerges from the images of Brahman in the poetry of Kabir is that of an omnipresent and omnipotent God without whom nothing could happen and whatever happens, happens because of Him.\textsuperscript{39}

Kabir further dwells upon the unlimited or limitless qualities or attributes of Brahman and says that even if he prepares ink out of the waters of seven seas, makes the whole of earth a writing sheet and writes from the pen made of the entire forestry of this world, it will not be possible to describe all his virutes.\textsuperscript{40} The master's many gunas are written in the heart of Kabir and he fears to drink water lest these could be washed away.\textsuperscript{41} How can such a God be nirguna? It appears in line with the earlier concept of Brahman in the Upanishads according to which in Brahman all inauspicious qualities are absent while all auspicious ones are present. Kabir has clarified on a number of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tagore</th>
<th>HPK</th>
<th>54</th>
<th>XLIX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HPD</td>
<td>Kabir</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
occasions, as discussed earlier, that his Brahman is "not saguna" in the sense that it has no limitations and that in reality it transcends both saguna and nirguna. In his long list of auspicious qualities of Ram, Kabir calls him knower, merciful, rich generous, powerful, giver, etc. Some people might even find an inconsistency in Kabir's approach to the Vedas and other scriptures because, at many places, he appears to be denouncing knowledge based on books while he substantially depends upon the Upanishads for formulating his concept of Brahman.

In this context it may be remembered that Lord Krishna also asked Arjuna, not to get enmeshed in the Vedas which do not rise above the three strands (guna), but to become strandless. In doing so it could never be his intention to belittle the Vedas. Similar was the position of Kabir. In fact all knowledge as embodied in speech has to be relative. It may point to the Absolute, but it can lay no just claims to the absolute character thereof. One ought, therefore, to take the help of any device he likes but should always try to rise above it: to the absolute state, by experience or realization. But without strands, the strandless, without relativity the Absolute cannot be grasped, and Kabir knew this. It is, therefore, in his opinion, not an inconsistency to hold that the Absolute is to be reached through relativity. 'O Saints, said Kabir, how do you scent deception in it. In the relative is the Absolute, and in the Absolute, the relative.'

42 Bhagwadgita
43 SSD KG
In the Shvetashvatara Upanishad, the Soul is neither male nor female nor neuter in gender. It assumes its form according to the embodiment it seeks. The Atman is formless, boundless, beyond all change. The Soul is non-dual, self-illuminated, ever-living, the finest of the fine. It leaves the cage called body at a certain time. As regards the two states of the soul namely, that which is bound by the world and life and that which is free, Kabir hints:

Once one knows oneself
one is lost in One.
Kabir says, if you knew yourself
all coming and going vanishes.

This enlightenment, this knowing oneself and then knowing the One, this meeting of the individual self with the Supreme Soul and the resultant unity of Atman with Parmatma or the Universal Soul gives immense pleasure. This is the state of Bliss. This is the goal of all human existence and according to Kabir this is possible through Bhakti or devotional love. Traditionally, devotional love has been associated with a personal God and saguna Bhakti. In the case of Kabir this has been a controversy as to how is it possible to have devotional love for a nirguna Brahma. An eminent Kabir scholar, Varma has to say the following in this regard:

---

44 SU

Machwe Kabir 29
SSD KG 137 282
SSD KG 243 170
The concept of the formless supreme being (Nirakar) remains in its purity as long as the idea of undifferentiated worship (Upasana) remains inherent in it. When the soft sentiment of Bhakti comes in, the concept is submerged in a powerful surge of love and the nirakar concept is distorted. It begins to show the traits of personality. Kabir was unable to confine himself to worshipping (Upasana) the formless deity (Nirakar Ishwar) and gave himself heart and soul over to Bhakti. For him it was Bhakti which became the means of salvation. Kabir fell into the error; the results of which are clearly evident in the Sant sect. If he had wanted to express his relationship with Ishwar, through the concept of Nirakar, then he should not have used love and Bhakti. If he was unable to do so without love and Bhakti then should have preached the concept of Lord (Bhagwan) in His manifest form. Although this misstep furnished an occasion for preaching, it left the concept of God in a confused state. We cannot call this either worship of the one formless God or for that matter Bhakti of the manifest God either.46

Similarly, Barthwal is also conscious that devotion without personal contact is no doubt a contradiction in terms. Dwyer does not agree with Varma and refuses to appreciate his point. Dwyer thinks that a deep-seated prejudice against the concept of love of God in pure, unmanifested form incapacitates such critics for accepting Kabir's testimony of his own experience. Dwyer may be right in telling us that Kabir is just different and ought to be allowed to remain so, but he is being rather uncharitable to Varma, more so, when the conclusions that he draws are not much different from that of Varma. In fact, Ram Chandra Shukla, Shyam Sunder Das, Hazari Prasad Devedi, Barthwal, Keay and Dwyer, to name only a few, have been faced with the problem of the unconventional approach of Kabir and other nirguna Sant poets. Their

46 RKV Hindi Sahitya Ka Alochanatmak Itihas 294
basic conclusion appears to be that Kabir is unconventional and at times strikingly original in his ideas of Brahman and other related questions but that he does not completely abandon the Indian religious tradition. Outwardly, Kabir bears an image of a bitter critic of things, a ruthless destroyer of systems. Be it religion or social values with regard to anything that comes his way he has his own critique to offer with astonishing courage and boldness. But, as one of the great reformers of his time, he is aware of his responsibility. He was not merely demolishing the existing values. He was reconciling the competing and contradictory ideas of his time and, in the process, reforming and improving upon them.

Viewed from this angle, Bhakti for nirguna Bhagawan, in Kabir, is a point of reconciliation rather than of contradiction. This was natural and necessary for the poet and his time. Kabir tried for this reconciliation in his own way by insisting that his Brahman is above the generally accepted categories of saguna and nirguna. As shown earlier in this dissertation, Kabir's poetry is full of instances to prove this point. And we have to remember that Kabir was doing this, positioned amongst those who were regarded as nirgunis. Sometime later, after Kabir, Tulsi, a sagun Bhakta, tried to pursue the same line when he said that there is no substantial difference between the path of knowledge and the path of devotional love or between nirguna and saguna and that both do relieve us of our worldly misery.47* In spite of these attempts
at reconciliation, the controversy persists. Radhakrishnan, in his book *The Hindu View of Life* asserts that the difference between the Supreme as spirit and the supreme as person is one of standpoint and not of essence. "The Real is beyond all conceptions of personality and impersonality. The super-personal and the personal representation of the Real are the absolute and relative ways of expressing One Reality. When we emphasize the nature of Reality in itself, we get the absolute Brahman; when we emphasize its relation to us we get the personal Bhagwan." Radhakrishnan's thoughts have echo of both Kabir and Tulsi and the essence of the Hindu view on the subject.

The objections raised by some people against the inconsistency and incompatibility of devotion, more so of everlasting and sustaining devotion or love for something abstract, formless, without attributes and qualities apparently seem to be rational and reasonable. But to me the objections appear to be based on a misunderstanding of the position of Kabir. In this background we have to bear in mind that Kabir's is a concept of nirakar and nirguna Brahman and that his Brahman does not have a concrete shape and form which can be easily comprehended, but that Brahman is not unreal. It should be obvious to any inquiring mind that Kabir's Brahman may not be concrete but it is very much real. Then, there may not be a form or shape in the common sense of the term but Kabir's Brahman is really handsome and beautiful and encompasses within itself all beauty and vastness of the universe. Kabir harps on this theme repeatedly. He tells us that by the grace of Guru: "He has
seen without sight that Infinite Beauty, the effulgence of Brahman." 49
Not just that, "he has tasted the divine nectar, felt the contact of
Reality and smelt the fragrance of heavenly flowers." 50 Millions of
suns and moons cannot compare to this God." In the wondrous effulgence
of each hair of His body, the brightness of millions of suns and moons
is lost. 51

We must remember that when he makes this declaration, he is
speaking from a plane of consciousness far above the ideas and images of
popular religion, and from a place, which is beyond the judiciously
adjusted horizon of philosophy. In his efforts to speak of the unspeakable
he is constantly swayed into expressions which were bound to seem
paradoxical and incomprehensible to those who are not familiar with the
depth of spiritual experience. Evelyn Underhill, an expert on mysticism
and a student of Kabir says:

We must not be surprised to find in Kabir's songs - his
desperate attempts to communicate his ecstasy and per-
suade other men to share it - a constant juxtaposition
of concrete and metaphysical language; swift alternations between the most intensely anthropomorphic, the
most subtly philosophical, ways of apprehending man's
communion with the Divine. The need for this alterna-
tion, and its entire naturalness for the mind which
employs it, is rooted in his concept, or vision, of the
nature of God; and unless we make some attempt to grasp
this, we shall not go far in our understanding of his
poems. 52

Explaining further she counts Kabir to that small group of
supreme mystics - amongst whom St. Augustine, Ruysbroeck, and the Sufi
poet Jalalu'ddin Rumi are perhaps the chief - who have achieved that
which she calls the synthetic vision of God, she says:

| 49  | Tagore | HFK | 23  | 4  |
| 50  | Ibid.  | HFK | 41  | 27 |
| 51  | Tagore | HFK | 23  | 4  |
| 52  | Underhill | HFK | introduction | xxii |
This proceeding entails for them—and both Kabir and Ruysbroeck expressly acknowledge it—a universe of three orders: Becoming, Being, and that which is 'more than Being', i.e. God. God is here felt to be not the final abstraction, but the one actuality. He inspires, supports, indeed inhabits, both the durational, conditioned, finite world of Becoming and the unconditioned, non-successional, infinite world of Being; yet utterly transcends them both.53

It is Kabir's attempt to establish with his nirguna and nirakar Brahma a relationship of love and devotion which has lent his poetry a sort of mysticism. It is this which has prompted; or rather driven him to speak the language of imagery and metaphor.

There is another important area of controversy and that is regarding separate status or identity of the individual self after its meeting with the Brahma or Paramatma. This takes us to Kabir's position vis-a-vis Shankar's Advaitavada. Kabir's several critics have considered this question also. After discussing various aspects of this problem Dwyer has to make the following remarks.

The special quality of the Advaita relationship existing between God and his creation as conceived by Kabir in his words does not admit of a direct solution. But we can see two recurring features of this problem in his verse. The first is that his Advaita has sufficient qualification to it to make the declaration of his simply being an advaitin, to say the least; inadequate. The second is his conception of Ram and his relationship with Him in personal terms does not mean loss of personal existence as it does in full Advaita system of thought.54

53 Underhill HFK 24 xxiv
Tagore HFK 7 54 49
54 Dwyer Kabir Ki Bhakti Bhavana 23
Borthwal thinks that as a result of devotional love there is a complete merger of the individual self and Brahman and that there is total loss of the separate identity of Atman, i.e., individual self, and that in this regard Kabir is a perfect advaitist on the lines of Shankar. Underhill, in her introduction to 'One Hundred poems of Kabir' by Tagore, classifies Kabir as a votary of the theory of Vishishtadvaita, modified monism propounded by Ramanuja. The British scholar J.H. Farquhar thinks Kabir to be, with Nimbarka, an exponent of Bhedabheda or unitarian pluralism. As shown above, Dwyer finds 'Dvaita' inadequate to describe Kabir while Trigunayat \( ^{55} \) discovers Anshanshibhava, "Part and whole" theory in Kabir. Walji Bhai, as indicated earlier, finds Christian influence in Kabir. Keay is not sure whether after re-absorption into God as the soul of the world, the human soul or the individual self retains its identity and distinct personality for Kabir. \( ^{56} \)

Nirguna poets, including Kabir, were not conscious poets and artists. Their poetry does not evince the studied care found in a written work. It has the qualities of a careless and causal talk. In one way, all poetry is the vehicle of truth; Kabir's poetry is the vehicle of the truth of his experience. This experience relates to his efforts at union with the Supreme Reality. This extraordinary vocation

\[55\text{ Trigunayat} \quad \text{Kabir Ki Vichardhara} \quad 202\]

\[56\text{ Keay}\]

\[\text{KF}\]

\[36\]
of Kabir and all other Nirguna Sant poets makes them natural mystics. The three conditions or stages necessary for a mystic are: proximity with God, love for God and complete unity of Soul with God. All these are present in the poetry of Kabir and go to make him a mystic of the first order. In Kabir's writings the mysticism and poetry both are interwoven as in the hands of a very dexterous weaver. Kabir's excellence as mystic poet has also been recognised by Underhill when she said that though Kabir was a greater religious reformer, the founder of a sect to which nearly a million of Northern Hindus still belong, it is yet supremely as a mystic poet that Kabir lives with us.

Radhakrishnan says that if experience is the soul of religion, expression is the body through which it fulfills its destiny. So long as the experience lasts, the individual remains rapt in contemplation but no man can rest in that state for all the time. When the vision is no more, he strives to recapture it and retain in memory what cannot be realised in fact. The process of reflection starts. He affirms that "the soul has dealings, direct, intimate and luminous with a plane of being different from that with which the senses deal, a more resplendent but not less real than the conventional one. In addition to the feeling of certitude is found the sense of the ineffability of experience. It transcends expression even while it provokes it."

57 Underhill
58 RK
aware and conscious of the unquestionable content of experience about
which nothing can be said.

To express through poetry, this experience was a difficult task
before Kabir as before any other mystic. Radhakrishnan asserts that any
attempt to describe the experience falsifies it to an extent. In the
experience itself, the self is wholly integrated and is therefore both
knower and the known, but it is not so in intellectual description of
the experience. The works of great Sufis and, amongst Christians, of
Jacopone da Todi, Ruysbroeck and Boehme abound in illustrations of
this. This law operates in Kabir's songs also in his efforts to com-
municate his ecstasy and persuade others to share it. Chaturvedi takes
note of the fact that to express his mystic experience Kabir has not
taken recourse to love stories as has been done by Sufis, nor has given
details of experience of an Advaitin. He has also not followed
Christians in giving stories and anecdotes. Obviously, he has created
his own independant style in this regard.

Indian scriptures give cases of teachers who dispel the doubts
of their pupils by assuming an attitude of silence on this question, but
we cannot afford to be absolutely silent. Though the tools of sense and
understanding cannot describe religious experience adequately, creative
imagination with its symbols and suggestions may be of assistance. The

59 RK An idealist view of life 77
60 PC Kabir Sahitya Ki Parakh 133
profoundest wisdom of the past is transmitted to us in the form of myths and metaphor. If we insist on interpreting these symbols literally difficulties arise. But if we go behind the words to the mood they symbolise, agreement is possible. The symbol and suggestions employed are derived from the local and historical traditions. As Aristotle counsels, they require to be interpreted according to their meaning and not their lisping expression. Kabir was master in this sphere. He has beautifully expressed the character of his poetry:

Has seen the unapproachable, infinite and incomparable

But he cannot express himself even if he tries.

Like a dumb man who has eaten sweets,

He enjoys himself and makes signs above.\(^{61}\)

Kabir and other saint poets writing mystic poetry speak in this language of signs. This speech of signs or of symbols or 'Dhwani' according to traditional Indian poetics, gives the expression of truth, its poetic character. To overcome the difficulties of giving expression to highly complicated experience of meeting with God the mediaeval Bhaktas and Sant poets opted for the use of images, symbols, metaphors and various indirect means. Kabir represents near perfection in this field.

\(^{61}\)
The use of imagery and symbols by the nirguna poets including Kabir, was not entirely their own invention. It had been in vogue from the time of the Vedas. We find that in the Brihadaranyak Upanishad the description of Brahman has been done through images of Sun and Moon.62 This use of images and symbols which had been prevalent in Indian literature since Vedic days came to Kabir through the stages of the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Buddhist literature and Siddha and Nath literature. The Purana stories and imagery had very marginal influence on Kabir. He was rather writing and propagating against this tradition. The main sources of Kabir's imagery are Vedic, Siddha and Nath literature. Apart from the imagery which he had received from the Vedic tradition, Kabir had borrowed freely from the great treasure of the Siddha poetry. The Siddha influence on Kabir's imagery is extensive and substantial; a number of examples may be quoted where this influence touches the border-line of similarity with the images used by various Siddha poets.

The striking similarity can be seen in Charyapada by Siddha Sharhapa of the 9th century63 and in sakhi of Kabir64 where Guru is like a true warrior who shoots an arrow, producing a sudden illumination or waking up. Similarly the image of water and salt has been used by

62. BU
63. PC
64. SSD

KSP
KG
Siddha Kanhapa,65 is beautifully developed and deployed by Kabir later.66 Water mixing with water is also a favourite image of Kabir which he has been used in relation to Brahman and Atman. This had been taken up earlier by Siddha poet Bhaukapa67 in 9th century, has been used by Kabir68 and is one of his favourite.

The Siddhas had taken a number of symbols from the Tantras. Kabir has adopted many of these symbols. Mahendra Kumar has studied this aspect in great detail and depth. On the basis of such study he has given a list of such images and symbols of Tantric tradition which Kabir has physically lifted from Siddha literature. Here are some of them along with their meaning:69

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tree</td>
<td>Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chadar</td>
<td>Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband's sister</td>
<td>Desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cow</td>
<td>Senses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deer</td>
<td>Mind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

65 PC  KSP  26  
66 SSD  KG   10 16  
67 PC  KSP  25  
68 SSD  KG  167 402 
69 M. Kumar  Kabir Ki Bhasha  97
Siddhas and Naths were the exponent and propagators of some form of Hath yoga which through the more ancient Vajrayan sect. found its origin in Mahayan Buddhism. Chronologically the Nath literature follows the Siddha literature and it comes nearest to Kabir. Coming on the heels of Naths, Kabir was in many ways influenced by their thought and literature. This influence extended to the area of images and symbols also. Guru Gorakh Nath who was the founder of the Nath Panth and who flourished in the Tenth Century had preceded Kabir. Kabir has expressed his reverence for Gorakh Nath in a number of places and in all probability Kabir was familiar with the sayings of Gorakh Nath.\(^7^0\) Some of the Sakhis of Kabir appear to have been inspired by what Gorakh Nath had earlier written. Of course, because of his superior poetic talent and greater mastery of language Kabir has invariably accomplished the task much better than his predecessor. A comparative study of some of the examples from the poetry of both Goraksh Nath and Kabir would substantiate this point. Kabir has also liberally borrowed metaphors and images from Nath poetry in general and from Goraksh Nath in particular.\(^7^1\)

In such cases of the similarity between the images and metaphors of the two poets, the underlying difference is that Goraksh Nath, true to his ideal, emphasises the Yoga aspect while Kabir lays greater emphasis on devotional love. The contemporary Sufi literature is also one of the

\(^{70}\) PNT KG 28 48 101 175
\(^{71}\) PC KSP 31
SSD KG 10 15
sources of Kabir in the deployment of images. There may be, and in fact there is, a lot of difference of opinion about the sources and the extent of influence on Kabir's imagery, but there is hardly any difference of opinion or assessment regarding Kabir's singular achievement in the field.

All must be struck by the constant employment, in Kabir's songs, of imagery drawn from common life. It is by the simplest of metaphors that he drives home his intense conviction. Barthwal is of the opinion that of all mystic saint-poets it is only Kabir who has frequently couched his lessons in beautiful images. Even when others do rise to the heights of poetry they do not possess that variety of images we see in Kabir. His imagination shows that avid activity which encircles the ordinary, small things and little incidents and occurrences of everyday life with the glamour of significance. He was possessed of that rare insight which enabled him to penetrate into the very heart of things and made him see great truths reflected in little and small incidents. In a Sakhi from Sant Bani Sangrah quoted by Barthwal, Kabir describes the dilemma of an ant:

An ant with a grain of rice in her mouth
comes across a grain of pulse also
She cannot have both, One she must abandon
in order to have the other. 72
Like a true mystic, things exist for Kabir not for themselves, but as symbols for something beyond themselves. His metaphors and symbols are homely. He does not have to go far in search of symbols and images. Churning, ploughing, brewing, weaving, trading, journeying, cycles of seasons: all yield to him material therefor. Kabir uses images and symbols that are at times obscure. Still, as Machwe has said, "these are less obscure than the private imagery of some modernist poets like Blake or Rilke. There are many passages in Kabir's poetry which outwardly sound simple and yet are deeply charged with metaphysical meaningfulness." Evaluating Kabir's achievements in the field of imagery and symbolism Underhill has made the following observations:

In adapting traditional materials to his own use he follows a method common amongst the mystics who seldom exhibit any special love for originality of forms. Thus we find that some of Kabir's finest poems have as their subject, common places of Hindu philosophy and religion, the Lila or sport of God, the ocean of Bliss, the Bird of the Soul, Maya, the Hundred petalled lotus, and the formless Form.

Apart from traditional images from everyday life, Kabir has drawn from nature a lot of images and symbols. These are of exceptional beauty. They bear testimony to the fact that Kabir was a great and sensitive observer of the beauty of nature. Autumn stripping the trees

73 Machwe
74 Tagore
of their foliage stood for him as a symbol of death, the blossoms picked by the flower-maid for the transiency of worldly pleasure. In one place the body shaking under the weight of growing age is represented by a tree while the Soul is a bird. The lily stands for men, water for Brahman and sunlight for worldly prosperity.

"The Eternal and the Absolute is ever present to his consciousness, yet his concept of Divine Nature is essentially dynamic. It is by the symbols of action that he most often tries to convey it to us as in his constant reference to dancing, or the strangely modern picture of that Eternal Swing of the Universe, which is held by the cords of love. The warmly human and direct apprehension of God as the supreme object of love, the souls' comrade, teacher and bridegroom, which is so passionately and frequently expressed in Kabir's poems, balances and controls those abstract tendencies which are inherent in the metaphysical side of his vision of Reality and prevents it from degenerating into that sterile worship of intellectual formulae which became the curse of the Vedantic school."^75

The images and symbols of conjugal love belong to this category and are very frequent and numerous in Kabir. In fact this has been the case with poets in all languages. The relationship between man and woman is most natural, permanent and deep. It is behind all creation and creative activity which lends it its additional mysterious content. This togetherness of man and woman is the highest joyful experience known to us. Conjugal love, because of its depth and intensity, stands for divine love. It has found universal acceptance. The medieval Christian, myths called union with God as spiritual marriage. The whole

---

75 Tagore

HPK

11
Sufi poetry rests on this symbolic conception. Purush and Prakriti of the Sankhya philosophy have long been viewed as the male and female principles in the great love game. The Upanishads compare the union of the Soul with Brahman to the embrace of wedded lovers.

Hindi Sufi poets in this respect followed the Persian tradition and to a great extent influenced or inspired Kabir and his followers. While there is little doubt that Sufis did influence Kabir and his contemporaries in respect of love symbolism, there is a vital difference in their approach to this. In Persian literature and also in Hindu Sufi literature it is the man who is longing for the favour of the woman. On the contrary, in the Indian tradition the love of woman for man has been more frequently and vividly described. Thus, Sufis, with Persian tradition behind them, conceived of the Lord as the wife or the beloved while Kabir, in conformity with the Indian tradition conceived of the Lord as the husband and the lover. Barthwal has pointed out one more characteristic difference between the Nirguna Sant and the Sufis. In case of Nirgunis the meeting of the Soul and the Brahman is a case of total merger and all distinctions between lover and beloved are obliterated. For Sufis it is union-in-separation.  

Kabir has also written some poetry of paradoxes. These have been called Ulâbansís. The Sandhy Bhasha style (Language of the evening - understood by few) of the Siddhas took the form of "Ulati churcha" or "upside-down talk" in the Nath literature. This is what
developed into Ulatbansis in the Sant poetry in general and in Kabir in particular. Some of Kabir's paradoxes are suggestive while others are secretive. According to Barthwal, Kabir's paradoxes have been a source of misunderstanding of his philosophy and, in saying this, he is not very much off the mark. In Kabir's paradoxes as in his other symbolic poetry, various images and symbols do occur in respect of Brahman. The images of Brahman as husband, bridegroom and sister-in-law's brother are found frequently in the Ulatbansis. At one place Kabir says that the childless husband is sleeping in the courtyard of the house. Then the Jivatma or individual soul becomes a fulfledged bride without the groom that is the Universal soul. This is a paradox in the sense that this is not possible in the normal course and it gives a shock to the common sense of the reader. It is such paradoxes which probably Barthwal had in mind when he made the remark quoted above. Brahman is sister-in-law's brother in a Pada where Jivatma entreats Brahman to take her to His home-land. In yet another place the individual self swears by the sister-in-law's brother. Brahman has been referred to in the image of husband or Man in several other places. Brahman is father also or father-in-law in some paradoxes. "Niranian", (without blemish) that intriguing image or name has also been employed in reference to God in some places.
19 सन्तुं तन्मुन सतनुं कहिं यह सभ से माया।
हिवरो : कृषि : 19 : 32.

31. नीलामन का रज खुशाई / को बोर का खामी रहा सभाई।
दास : कृषि : 253 : 213.

38. कीं कहाँ निराकर की / कीं दयाँ आकारा /
यात्रिदि उस दोनों ने हारा , आर्य आनन्दधरा।
दिविदेय : कबीर : 269 : 49.

39. जे कहूँ किया सु दीर्घ किया .....।

जे किया बुँद मोह है , सो करता औरे कोइ।
दास : कृषि : 485 : 12.

42. घाट समेत की मसिन बीरां , लेखन नग. बनरां।
धरों सब कामद करंग , त्व हिंदु सुगन्ध लिखना जारी।
दास : कृषि : 400 : 5.

41. हरि बेरे बढ़ुल गुण , लिवें तोहिं हिंदूं मोरिं।
पाँचों पिंजूर न उरकता , मसिन की धारिं जारिं।
हिवरो : कृषि : 154 : 54.

52. वैक्य विक्य बेरा ; निजिगुणि भवायिन।
शैला : अध्याय 2 : श्लोक 45.

53. कैली गंगा कारव बहिरि।
गुण से निरुगुण निरुगुण में गुण हैं , बाह बहिरि कहूँ बहिरि।
54. नैव भी न पुमानथ न सेवायं नपरिणः /
यदृ यथसेवायं वन-वन सा पुजपालेः \\
वेलाश्वलेषु उपनिषदः: अध्याय ५: श्लोक १०.
55. कैहें कबीर सो पाया, मुफ्त मेंट आय गेचाया /
आय पिदिणी आपघर आप..... /
दासः कव गदः: २४३: १७०.
56. नगलिहि आनायिः नहि बहुं भेदा, उभय कहिं भव लम्बकः खेशा /
पुलसिः: गणनः: ११५। १५.
57. अभिवा धकल्ब अनुपम देख्या, कभी ब्रह्मा न जाई।
सैं कैरे मन ही मन रहे, गृंजी अपनि भिकारे।
दास: कव गद: ७१: ६.
58. कयस्म निद्युली औषोपनि सूली /
दास: कव गद: ५१: ५।
59. कूर्ति सुधा बभो बिन इल्ला,
60. अब मैघं हो चल नजः के कोर अपने देखा /
दास: कव गद: ७३: १५.
61. कत्रेश्री द्वारी का खुल, नवर जी के सेवा की दिया।
दास: कव गद: ७२: १३.
62. खरगुद गुर बलाधा, घरजियलं भजलार।
दास: कव गद: ५७: ३.
82. साखु की लखी सयुर की धरी।
दासः कृषि: 123 : 230।

83. अजय अलवर बिहारी साह।
दासः कृषि: 151 : 337।
CHAPTER III

IMAGES FROM NATURE AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Kabir has taken a number of images of Brahman from various objects of the nature. These images include fire, light, moon and sun. In one of these images Kabir saw that a storm of divine knowledge has set in and the screens of doubt have all been blown away: even the ropes of Maya have not been left: the two props of indecision have been thrown down and the beam of the worldly love has been broken: the thatched roof of avarice has fallen to the ground and the vessel of evil inclinations has burst. The soul has become saturated by the rain which fell after the storm and when next it saw the sun, (signifying Brahman or the knowledge of Brahman), the mind was illumined.¹ In another place Kabir describes the radiance of the Infinite which is like the rising of the hosts of Sun.² In some places Brahman is presented as either sun or moon or both. Since the Divine Light is entirely different from the ordinary light, Kabir says that the Divine Light has no source in the sun or moon. It is sunshine without the sun and moonlight without the moon.³ God is like the moon and shines in the body of man but his

¹ Macauliffe PNT 162 XLIII
² SR KG 30 52
³ SSD KG 9 1
⁴ SSD KG 10 3
blind eyes cannot see it. To further stress the brilliance and radiance of Brahman, Kabir says that the effulgence of the Supreme Being is beyond imagination: His beauty is ineffable and to see it is the only proof.4*

Brahman or Divine Light has no form or outline. It pervades all. The body is a lake in which a peerless lotus blooms. The Supreme Being has neither outline nor form, the primal light is within it.5* With the advent of the knowledge of Brahman which is like the Sun, all other worldly things which are like petty stars vanish immediately and this is such a spontaneous and natural process that one cannot even notice it. This just happens.6* In his experience Kabir has seen the One, the Inaccessible whose glory is ineffable. That luminous Being, that spouse who is Paras (Philosopher's stone). He is enclosed in his eyes.7* It may be Sun, Moon or fire, but the common theme is that it pervades all existence. God is also like a lamp which blinds people, people obsessed with unreal worldly things, could not see. This is the theme in Kabir's poem translated by Tagore wherein he says that Lamps burn in every house but the blind one cannot see them.8* Besides sun

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
and moon, the pure and simple fire-image of Brahman is also there. According to Kabir, Ram is like fire that pervades all being.

Some critics have assumed that the image of light to signify Brahman is a result of the Sufi influence on Kabir. There are others who think that the idea is so general that this may be sheer coincidence. God had been conceived as Light and Sound in the Indian tradition as early as the days of the Upanishads:

Now that light which shows beyond the highest heaven.\(^9\)

In the Upanishads and in other early classics the final source of light is the light of Brahman and Atman, while other lights have a time for setting, this light of Brahman knows no rising or setting. In one of the sutras Badarayana sums up the position:

Everything shines after that shining light.\(^{10}\)

The premise is that the light or Divine light mentioned in the Vedas is none other than the Brahman itself. There the sun or moon do not shine and all are the reflection of that Supreme Light which is Brahman. The

\(^9\) CU 3 13 7

\(^{10}\) Badarayana, Brahmsutra 13 22
whole Universe is illumined by that. In yet another sutra Badrayan mentioned "Jyoti (light) as Brahman."  

The word Light (Jyoti) stands for Brahman. What is emphasised in such sayings is that Brahman is the eternal uncreated Self, the luminous, Light of lights. Other sources of light are dependant upon this Light, the Atman, and act only through this.

Light as an image of God has been a favourite with the Sufi poets also and they have expressed similar ideas. Shah Latif says that God is the light of Heaven and Earth.  

Numerous such images are to be found in Sufi poetry. With a similar ring Kabir says:

If the lamp and the flame are brought
and oil is brought as well.
Once these three become united
the moths will flutter and burn.

11  Badrayan  Brahma Sutra  1   24
12  Schimmel A.  Mystical dimensions of Islam  .376
13  CV  Kabir  166  30
PNT  KG  145  30
But it is difficult to say whether Kabir got this image of Light from the Sufis as some critics have tried to make out. But Kabir's originality consists in giving this image some sort of a disarming simplicity. This has been possible because of Kabir's personality and his background of commonality a simple life among simple folk which has the authenticity of the Upanishads and the simplicity of folklore both at the same time.

Images of light and brightness are also there to show the fundamental unity of Atman and Brahman. In a rather detailed arrangement of various images Kabir concludes that when the individual self comes in intimate and full contact with the Universal Soul then it gets real happiness which is bliss, and the fire burning in the body is extinguished. The knots of worldly attachment are loosened and the flame enters into the Flame. 14

Brahman is like water, and one cannot quench one's thirst without drinking water. Those who drink the water of Ram, never feel the thirst again. 15 Similarly those who understand and get the blessings of the Teacher do not feel despair and are full of hope. Ram or the name of Ram, is not ordinary water. This is like the drop of Swati, the rain drops at the time of an auspicious constellation, which

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
when fallen into an oyster make the pearl. Kabir says that the shell within the Sea cries piteously out of thirst but does not care for all the water of ocean, and longs for the raindrop of Swati, since only the raindrop of Swati will make the pearl of Ram germinate in the shell. The raindrop of Swati—nakshatra has been a recurring subject matter of Hindu lore and legend.

Brahman is like the ocean. Kabir advises us not to turn away from the ocean, however bitter it may be. Seeking shelter from pond to pond will earn one no praise. The ocean stands for the Ultimate Reality, God, whom man should ceaselessly seek. Going from pond to pond symbolizes the jivas wandering through endless rebirths. The ocean is big, rather, limitless like Brahman, while ponds are of small size, within comprehension, and numerous. It is this contrast which has been highlighted here.

Among other images from nature is the image of the tree. There is one tree, God; it has endless branches and shoots; its blossoms, (Saints) and leaves are filled with nectar (God’s name). This world is a garden of ambrosia. God who is perfect has created it.
Kabir advises his disciples and his audience to take repose or shelter under that tree which bears fruit around the year. The shade of such a tree is cool and it has abundant fruits and beautiful birds freely play in its branches. Kabir has likened the God to a herb. From mountain to mountain he wandered and ruined his eyes with tears. But he did not find Buti, the healing herb, to give him back his life. 'Buti' is a medical herb and alludes to the Sanjivani, a miraculous life-giving plant which symbolises the meeting with the Beloved.

From among natural objects Brahman has been likened with the male Chakva bird, Chakravaka in Sanskrit. The soul in this context is the female Chakvi. As the legend goes, the pair of Chakva and Chakavi is separated all through the night. According to Kabir the consolation for the Chakva and the Chakvi couple is that they can meet in the day. But a soul separated from Ram can never meet Him either in the day or in the night.

The all-pervasiveness of Brahman has been denoted by images of the smell of musk and of honey. Kabir says that, though the musk is held within its body, the musk-deer searches for it in the forest.
Likewise Ram dwells in the bodies of all, yet the world perceives him not. In yet another Sakhi the poet says that the Lord Himself dwells within the body, yet people do not grasp this mystery and, as the musk-deer roams around sniffing the grass for the musk, these men also wander in wilderness searching for God while He continues to dwell within them. God is also like honey. Kabir tells us to reject the bad and pick up only the good as bees gather honey from every flower finding in them the supreme Soul. 'Ghata-ghata' literally means in every receptacle: 'ghata', pot or receptacle, generally alludes to the human body. The supreme Reality, Parabrahman, i.e. the Universal Soul, is invisibly present in all the jivas, as honey is hidden within the flowers visited by the bees. Brahman is like butter. The body is the churn, the breath of life its churning-staff: the saints eat the butter, the world drinks the buttermilk. Then Hari or God is like sugar scattered in the sand. An elephant, however big it is, cannot pick up the sugar. To pick it up, one has to be humble like an ant and one has to give up the consciousness of caste, creed and other worldly possessions. What an elephant cannot pick up, an ant can eat. The presence of God in the body is like the pupil within the eye. It is
only through the pupil that the eye can see the world outside. Kabir says that like the pupil of the eye, God is within the body, and foolish people, instead of recognising Him, go about searching for Him outside.28*

Brahman is like the Diamond. This image has been repeated by Kabir on a number of occasions. Hari is the Diamond and the devotee the jeweller who displayed it on his stall.29* Kabir has seen this strange thing: the Diamond is on sale in the market but, for want of a connoisseur, it is going for just one cauri (a particular shell used as a very small coin of negligible value, the old English farthing would be the nearest equivalent).30* Sometimes Brahman is the Pearl or the Necklace or some other invaluable object; but almost everywhere Kabir is lamenting for want of someone who knows the worth of the thing. In the case of God or Brahman, it is abject ignorance which is holding men away from divinity. The poet refers to the ignorant as blind hypocrites and curses them for not knowing and reaching God. Kabir tells people that the perfect Jewel dwells in their own souls and that they should bring it to the connoisseur. He assures them that He who is free from care, cares for them, as these are the ways of the Lord.31*
In another place, the Hansa or Swan is a symbol of the purified soul while bagula or the heron is its antithesis, a hypocrite. Knowledge or discernment cannot be yours, says Kabir, unless you have the grace of God. Pearls were scattered on the path but those who passed by were blind people, meaning thereby, that they were deprived of the grace of the Lord. The poet tells us that without the light of God, the world steps over the pearls without recognising their worth.

According to Dwyer, the paradox of the unrecognised presence of God in man's soul, waiting to be manifested by the very one who does not know He is there, seems to have caught Kabir's fancy. God dwelling within is compared to 'chintamani', the magic jewel which grants every wish of the possessor. The expressiveness of the metaphor is enhanced by 'chintamani' being an epithet of God. The chintamani, the thought-jewel, is a symbol of the Supreme Reality just like the Diamond, and it signifies that the Supreme Being is all pervasive. It dwells in every heart. Hari is like a necklace of pearls strung on a fragile string. Kabir warns people to be careful as there are many bushes around: if it gets caught in them, it will snap. Vaudeville, in her foot-note to this passage, says that the fragile string is the Jiva and the bushes symbolise the temptations of the world through which the Jiva is trying to get to its gem of
Ram will be lost. This is also the theme in another place where the soul and God both have been likened to the diamond, Kabir says that when the soul meets God, the once fickle mind is easily absorbed in Hari. Kabir says,

This Diamond-God fills everything with light, I have found this by the instruction of the true guru, the genuine teacher. The praise of God is an endless story." Kabir claims having seen such a Diamond as fills the world with its light. The concealed Diamond, according to the poet, became manifest when the poet met the guru who showed it to him.

There are a number of images of Brahman inspired by the social environment of the poet. Kabir was a weaver and belonged to the working class, a backward community in the northern part of India. Most of his disciples and close associates and near and dear ones belonged to this social strata. Among the inhabitants of north India, these are the hard working groups doing creative and very useful work for society. Religiously and culturally Kabir could feel at home equally among the Hindus and the Muslims. This gave him a unique advantage which other poets before or after him could not easily exploit. This enabled him to have a varied and rich experience of the down to earth life of the people. It is because of this background that images from the social environment come very naturally to him.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PNT</th>
<th>KG</th>
<th>227</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Kabir</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Meadliffe</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Images from the social environment include the image of Brahman as gardener. Kabir tells us that our own body is like a garden and that Brahman is a Gardener who maintains the garden by keeping watch over it day and night. He says that there is no danger to this garden from any quarter when Hari is looking after it.37

Since Kabir himself was a weaver and he loved his work, the image of Brahman as weaver comes to him spontaneously. We have the following passage, as translated by Ahmad Shah:

No one knew the mystery of that weaver who came into the world and spread the warp.
The earth and sky are the two beams; the sun and the moon are two filled shuttles.
Taking a thousand threads he spreads them lengthways, to-day he weaveth still, but hard to reach is the far end.
O friend says Kabir, Joining Karma with Karma Woven with unwoven threads, splendidly the weaver weaves.38

The great Weaver of the universe here is Brahman and the graphic details are remarkable since they are related to an instrument regularly handled by the poet himself.

---

37 SSD KG 120 216
38 Ahmad Shah Bijak 67 28
SSD KG 212 49
Similar to the image of Brahman as weaver is the image of a potter. Creativity is common to all the three: the Brahman, the weaver and the potter. Kabir says that out of the same earth the potter moulds vessels, but paints different designs on them.39

Brahman has also been pictured as the Goldsmith. Kabir says that the touchstone of Ram, the Goldsmith is infallible and no falsity will stick to it. He alone will stick to it who, though living, be dead. Dead while living (jivan mrita) or free while living (jivan mukta) is a state wherein the vision of the Ultimate Reality is had, while yet living. For then the seer, though living in human body, cannot be called as living in the sense in which we ordinary people live.

The poet uses the word 'Kasauti' here, which means the touchstone, a kind of black stone used by goldsmiths and jewellers to test the purity of gold. Rubbed on the Kasauti, real gold leaves a golden mark on it.40 Brahman is like a merchant. In one of the Sakhis Kabir says that his Lord is like a merchant who easily goes on trading. He weighs the whole world without balances and scales. The poet further says that without the Lord, the perfect Trader, he is not worth a single caurie-coin. But in the company of the Lord, the Rich One, he can fetch
tens of thousands of coins. The image of God as Dealer, with all the attendant factors, comes in full scale in the following passage.

Some deal in bronze and copper, others in cloves and betel-nut:
The saints deal in God's name: that is my merchandise
O dealers in the name of God,
The priceless diamond hath come to hand, and worldly thoughts have fled.
They whom the True One attached to truth, remain attached to it: truth is their occupation.
They dispatched a load of the true thing, and it reached God the storekeeper.
God is Himself the gem, the jewel, and the precious stone: He is Himself the jeweller:
He is in every direction immovable:
He setteth everything in motion:
He is a permanent dealer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meculiffe</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RKV</td>
<td>Sant Kabir</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Lord is the Boatman as well. In a pada composed in Rag Maru, the poet vividly describes things connected with the vocation of a boatman. The whole world is like a sea or a river. The desires and other sensuous activities are like its waves and water. Gold and Women are its curves. And then the Teacher, the Lord is a Boatman who would carry us through all these dangers and obstacles. The name of Ram is like a boat without which the world is in distress. 43

Ram is also the Physician, a medical practitioner and, in that case, the devotee is a patient whose malady He knows well. It is only Ram who can cure this patient. In another Sakhi Kabir invokes the individual soul to set out for that country where dwells God, the physician and where neither death nor old age can reach. Here none has ever heard of dying. 44 Ram is also one who can cure snake poison. The poet is lamenting over his fate in not receiving the grace of Madhava. He is badly entangled in worldly affairs, and physical pleasures are engaging all his attention. He has been bitten by a snake and he is unable to get a Cardu, a physician who cures snake-bite. 45

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>43</th>
<th>SSD</th>
<th>KG</th>
<th>147</th>
<th>321</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kabir's Brahman is the only Actor. It is he who acts and creates. There are many, or rather all, who see the act but none can act without Him. In one of the passages translated by Macauliffe, Kabir says: "When the Actor (bajigar) beateth the drum, everybody cometh to see the show. When the Actor collecteth the stage properties, He abideth alone in His happiness". He is the Musician too. Kabir advises us to allow the Musician to play and not to tease the kukuhi of the Kaliyug. He asks us to mind our own business, and not to meddle with the affairs of others.

There is also the image of Diwan or Judge. This image may possibly be drawn from the Islamic concept of the Day of the Judgement. Kabir tells us that it will be easy to render accounts provided our heart is pure. In the court of the True One or Allah, there will be no one to protect or plead for us. In all these images the basic point is that these have been taken from the social surroundings of the poet and also that they denote the role of God as Creator or Maker. He may be the Gardener tending the plants in the garden or the Goldsmith engaged in giving shape to jewels and ornaments. He may even be the

---

46 Macauliffe SK 218 4
RKV Sant Kabir 133 4
47 PNT KG 157 13
48 PNT KG 210 2
Painter painting this picture called universe of perhaps the Musician creating melodius sounds. In all these images the image of a creator comes to the mind of the reader and that is what Kabir intends to achieve in his own simple rustic style.
1. स्वी भांदे आँ ग्यान की आंधी हो।
अनि के रात भिदं सुन जाने माता रैले न आंधी हो।
सुन्दर ते की दी दूध चिन गिरणी भीटे बलेंगा इतर।
एकना घरी परि घर अपरि दुःख से भांडा छुआ।
आंधी पाँडे जो झल बहु हिटी तंत्र जन भीते।
कभी कभी नन भया गुगाला उड़े भांडा आदान जीनां।

लिखारे: का ग्र०: 30: 52.

2. कबीर जीन अनें का मांहीं अगो नुरन सेणिं।
दास: का ग्र०: 9: 1.

3. कैदिया दोघा देत बिंद, रवि सूरि बिना ऊजार।
दास: का ग्र०: 10: 2.

4. पारशुराम के बिंजे का, कैसा है उनकें?
कुर्सिया की सोभा नहीं, देश्टे ही परवान।
दास: का ग्र०: 10: 3.

5. सरीर सरोवर भीते आँ नूला अनुपं?
पसं जोति पुरस्तिलक से आँकि रेख न रूप।
कमा: सैल कबीर: 64: 10.

6. अदे भया जब सूर का, स्वर्ण तारे दीपय जात।
दास: का ग्र०: 29: 16.

कबीर देखा इतन काम महिमा बनी न आइ।
हेज दूलं पासर दुनी, सैंमादे रेख समार।

लिखारे: का ग्र०: 63: 12.
8. घर घर दीपद बैठी, लड़की नहीं मन मे।

13. दीपद पावक आयणया, तेस भी आनी सेग।
    तीन मिली चौकी जोरथा, तब उड़ि उड़ि पैरे पथग।
    निर्वकारा: का ग्राम = 145: 30.

15. दूरे सिस्ता हवे सूर उपवहे, तन की तपनी उरकानी।
    कहै कबीर अवबंधन बुंदे, जीविषि आति समानी।
    दासा: का ग्राम = 106: 72.

15. राम उद्ध जिह जन पिया, तिह कहै न भरी रियला।
    दासा: का ग्राम = 207: 29.

16. कबीर सीध समेंद की, इसी पियास पियास।
    समदिहि निकायका बार गिरी, स्वारी बुंदे की अस।
    दासा: का ग्राम = 15: 5.

17. कबीर राम ध्यान ली, जितमा सीं कारि में न।
    छठ सार पिनि बीतेि, दोलारी देशि अनें।
    दासा: का ग्राम = 6: 30.

18. कबीर समेंद न होिसि, जी श्यामे सिरे होि।
    पोहारे पोहारे बुंदे अले न, अहिति बीि।
    दासा: का ग्राम = 147: 148.

19. तरवह सुख अनल बुरा हारा, पुरदेश पर रस भरी।
    उह कौति की बाड़ि जैि, तिनि हरि प्रेरि।
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.0</th>
<th>2.0</th>
<th>2.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20. ताराक सनु विशेष हैं, तो बारह मास पर्वत।
शामल हाथा मास पर्वत, पंख छैला करल।
विहारी को ग्राह 203: 3।

21. परबत पर फिरा, जैन गंवाया हैं।
लो बूढ़े मंत्र नहीं, भजों जीवन हैं।
विहारी: को ग्राह 14: 24।

22. महीने बिरुद औरी की, आई मिली पत्नी।
जैन नर बिरुद रौं में, है सिन मिले न रात।
विहारी: को ग्राह 141: 7।

23. क़रौं की मिरंगविहर, दिग्गज बन भीड़।
अन्य दोट मेरी रीम ते, दुनिया देशे नौड़े।
विहारी: को ग्राह 162: 1।

24. सी सारें तन में बसी, मरस न आने लाग।
कबुरी का मिरंग भीं, फिरि मिरंग दीं धास।
विहारी: को ग्राह 163: 6।

25. कबीर अवगुन ना गौरे, गुन ही कीं थीं।
घठ घठ मुहू छी मधुप ज्ञानी परशुभण्ड हीं गोतिं।
विहारी: को ग्राह 236: 2।

26. कबीर मारा जोड़ने पवन भक्तिक नारा।
हैतु भक्त ग्राहन चार्या, दाहिं पिये संसार।
विहारी: को कबीर 250: 18।
into the tender feelings of men and women while describing various aspects of conjugal love in relation to God and the Self. On such occasions the poet in Kabir comes into full play. By the use of images and symbols of conjugal love, the poet is able to make His spiritual ideas of Brahman more charming, tender and worthy of effortless comprehension. And thus he makes the idea itself more humane and touching. Conjugal love is full of tender and sweet stages. There is an element of crude physical presence and pleasure associated with this even in the poetry of great poets who write about such experience. The readers of this type of poetry are, therefore, moved from that angle, but when a Sant poet like Kabir talks of conjugal love in relation to Brahman and the individual self, he sublates the very idea to a higher spiritual plane where the whole experience of love is devoid of physical crudeness. It is this characteristic use of images and symbols which distinguishes Kabir from other poets. It is also this personalized human presentation of Brahman by Kabir that makes the idea of Brahman a little easier to comprehend.

Kabir has described the whole gamut of relationships in a joint Hindu family. This description goes to further prove the deep insight which Kabir had into human feelings and his intimate knowledge of various relationships in Indian society. Here Brahman, usually is Husband and Master of the house while the soul is the wife. The bride is plagued by the mother-in-law, loved by the father-in-law, and dreads the very name of her husband's elder brother. Her husband's sister has
35. हैं मालिन की माल है, छोर छोरी खानी।
जलन करीं महत्का धनी, छोरीं बड़ी सागी।
सिवारे: कौ मधु: 227, 5.

36. हैरे हैरे बागे यहन मन सहीं रहथा समार।
सहकल जोति वन हैरे बिही खाते गुड़ कचना में पाई।
हैरे को अथा अनाहर बोना, हैस हैरे हैरे पढ़नी।
बह अधेर हैरे अस देशमो जग महि रूथा समार।
शुपला हैरे अवं भयो जव गम दिया दिशि।
पास: कौ मधु: 125, 211.

37. कबीर में हुआ इतने, हाँ माँ राम बिना ने। हैरे।
बांधि ले औरा, तीखि ही कब्दर भूख हों दी बढ़ूं मेरे।
बाया बढ़ि माँ भाली, ठहर बिरे रिन रही।
वाका हनारे हैरे सहविले, कबीर अज्ञात नहीं है रे।
पास: कौ मधु: 126, 216.

बनायें जाने बन की आगे।
पास: कौ मधु: 162, 381.

38. कीरी की काट मरसं न जाना। कुछ तर अनन्य, नन्यो जाना।
धरनी काकाल की करागत बनाई। बह दोहे दुहे शप मधले।
यारी नीरा बाल बुझी बोल तलो मन मान।
जालस्थि धर उन्नयन भीना घाट की राम पहरा।
बहरत कबीर कारागान लोगी। दूल्हे सुलंगाई कीरी।
पास: कौ मधु: 212, 59.
39. कुम्हार एंव कमध मारी बहुविधि सुगति बनारी।

40. अब चार उदार भये राम वारी, साधि सरीर कन्ध को मारी।

41. सारी निरां, बांभि, अंधिन करी क्षीरार।

42. किन्ही बनाय भी को संभा, किन हो लहुगुपर।
आयतहि राहु जाजातर मानित, आपै दे पासारी।
आपै दे दिस आप वहाते, मिठा लगे हि बिआपारी।

बमीः सर कहःरः २०१:२।

४३। बाहिय दीड़िः बीसि कोर ईंटी, बहुलः दुःख लहरी।
दासः कठः ग्रहः १५४:३१०।

तिलः न धूरकः शबरः, बौधः ब्रह्म नीरा।
मदः नदरः काणः मदः, दरबः शोकः लोरा।
कौमिनिः अजः कनः भवरः, कौमः बुः बोरः।
जबः कबीरः नवजः हीरः, शेवरः गुरुः कीरा।
दासः कठः ग्रहः १५७:३२१।

४४। युधः सिं वैदः न हमसः रागी, उपयः विभा केसः अपैः नियोयः।
निलः बाहुः मोगः चिलकः आदः, अजः न आदः मिलः श्रमराई।
वहः कबीरः हमः दुःख भारी, बिनः दरसः वैमूः आचिनः मुराई।
दासः कठः ग्रहः १३९:२७७।

अहः सुरः भरः ब्योः महः, हुः बाॅरः न हृदियः कोरः।
पलः कबीरः हिंदः देशः धेरः, अहः बैरः विधालः हेरः।
दासः कठः ग्रहः ६०:१।

४५। तनः सतः उस्यः अजः भूमिनः, जहः वादः न पारा।
तीः गारुः मिलः महः बबुः, परसः विषः विकः कुरा।
दासः कठः ग्रहः १५५:३०५।

४६। बाजः गरः हंकुः वजःरः / समः रसलः लमः आरा।
बाजः गरः स्वाणः सेवः / अपैः रंगः रः आकूः।
बमीः हतः बहःरः १३३:४।
47 बाजन दे काजोल री अति कुल्ही मत देखि!
उसी बिरांनी कमा परी, है अपनी आप निबिरी।।

48 लैना देना सोट्ड़ा और दिल सूची होर।।
उस साँचे दीवान में, पला न पडिए बोइ।।
तिवारी : का प्रच : 210 : 2.
CHAPTER IV
IMAGES OF RELATIONSHIP AND DEVOTIONAL LOVE

In the scheme of Kabir's relationship with God, the image of Lord or Master fits in well. The image of the Lord of Kabir is that of a kind, loving, blissful and perfect master. Kabir is in a dilemma as to how to describe the Lord. If he says He is heavy, he is afraid, and if he says He is light, he is lying. He further says, "What can I know of Ram when my eyes have never seen Him". He repeats the theme and Vaudeville translates it as follows:

Had I seen Him, what would I say?
and if I spoke, none would believe me,
Hari is only like Hari
joyful sing His praise.

Kabir's Lord has neither face nor forehead, nor form of any kind. He is more subtle than the fragrance of flowers. Such is his transcendent reality. Kabir, in great detail, describes the omnipotence of Brahma:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CV</th>
<th>Kabir</th>
<th>194</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Kabir</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Kabir</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
O God, I know not the measure of Thy regal authority. God turneth water into dry land, dry land He turneth into wells and wells into mountains.

He can raise man from earth to heaven, and when he hath ascended to heaven dash him down.

He can turn beggar into a king and king into a beggar.

He can turn an idiot into a pandit, and a pandit into an idiot.

He can turn woman into a man, and a man into a woman.

Saith Kabir, God is beloved of saints: I am sacrifice unto Him.4

The basic concept behind all this writing is that God is omnipotent. He could do anything at His will. Besides, He is fearless, ineffable, incomparable, munificent, just, merciful and so on. These qualities of the Lord have been very variously described by Kabir throughout all his poetry. The Lord's virtues are endless and these are inscribed in the heart of the poet who does not dare drink water, lest these get washed away. These beautiful lines have been simply, but equally effectively translated by Vaudeville:

---

4 Macauliffe SR 275 II
RKV Sant Kabir 240 2
My lord has endless virtues
which are written in my heart:
I dare no longer drink water
for fear they be washed away.  

Kabir's Brahman is all powerful and, as shown earlier, whatever happens, happens because of that omnipotent Lord and not because of the servant:  
The Lord is so powerful that He awakens those who are sleeping and then distributes His bounty amongst them. He does not fail in any of His ventures and you never lose in His company.  
The poet advises his listeners to be carefree and leave everything to the Lord, as He is fully capable of doing everything and anything.  
He is the Lord of the three worlds and is capable of delivering or fulfilling all desires of men.  
Kabir's Lord is kind and generous. The poet says that there is none to compete with Him in kindness and generosity while there is none to beat the poet as sinner and wrong-doer.  

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CV</th>
<th>Kabir</th>
<th>169</th>
<th>44</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lord is a great benefactor and well-wisher of His men. Since He is the Creator of the Universe and of the people, it is He who maintains them and looks after their welfare. Kabir has no benefactor besides the Creator. He is the protector and saviour of all those who are deprived and unprotected.\textsuperscript{11}\textsuperscript{*} The Lord is loving. He loves and cares for His people. He is Joy supreme and when Kabir could meet the all powerful and merciful Hari, he could get across the dangerous river of Sansara.\textsuperscript{12}\textsuperscript{*}

The image of Brahman as a generous and powerful Lord is one of the most frequently recurring images of Brahman in Kabir. The frequency of this image is, probably next only to that of the nuptial image. Like the nuptial relationship the relationship to God as master and Lord is an equally permanent and profound relationship, more so, in the sphere of religion to which Kabir belonged; and this alliance invokes intense devotion and obedience. In one of the Sakhis, Kabir tells us that when he meets his Lord, he will enquire about His welfare and will have a heart-to-heart talk with Him.\textsuperscript{13}\textsuperscript{*} This deep and profound emotion has been expressed by Kabir in extremely simple language and in an effective

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{PNT} & \textbf{KG} & \textbf{166} & \textbf{17} \\
\hline
\textbf{PNT} & \textbf{KG} & \textbf{223} & \textbf{17} \\
\hline
\textbf{PNT} & \textbf{KG} & \textbf{179} & \textbf{2} \\
\hline
\textbf{PNT} & \textbf{KG} & \textbf{165} & \textbf{9} \\
\hline
\textbf{SSD} & \textbf{KG} & \textbf{66} & \textbf{1} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}
style. He says, "Whenever in dilemma or in doubt Kabir wants his Lord to arbitrate, guide and clear his confusion and to show him the way." Kabir goes to the extent of calling himself a pet dog of his Master and tells us that Motia is his name and that he is driven by his Master according to His dictates. Kabir carries this theme forward in yet another dimension when he says, "I am the bond servant of that all-powerful king for whom there can be no failure." If the faithful wife went naked, the burden of the shame for her wretched condition would lie on the shoulders of the husband. Kabir is following the Vaishnava tradition according to which the devotees' salvation is God's responsibility and if the devotee fails to achieve this, it is the Bhagwan who is answerable and not the Bhakta, the devotee. He further elaborates and says that God can make the mustard seed a mountain and the mountain a mustard seed. There are passages expressing the complete surrender of the devotee in the presence of the Lord. The servant surrenders his head to Him for making use of it the way He likes. He may also sell the devotee in any manner since it is only His association which gives him any worth; otherwise, without Him, he is not worth a cent.

14 SSD KG 76 27
15 SSD KG 15 14
16 SSD KG 95 113
17 PNT KG 176 8
18 PNT KG 165 11
association with the Lord. In this company he finds solace and happiness; without Him he feels sad and forlorn. His life completely depends on Him. He cannot sleep without Him and feels restless in His absence as a fish out of water. Kabir's Lord has all the virtues and qualities of greatness and his Lord or Creator does not discriminate between the noble and the vile, whereas the world is wrapped in selfishness. It may so happen that someone who stands expectantly may get nothing while the all-powerful Lord might wake up someone from sleep and give him a gift. This is the way He delivers justice and favour to His subjects.

To Kabir, Brahman and Guru or Teacher are one and the same. The poet addresses God and says 'Thou art the True Guru. I am Thy novice'. This is one of the often-repeated and important images in Kabir's poetry. The Guru holds a very important position in the tradition of religion and poetry that follows from Kabir. According to Kabir, the Guru and Govind (another name of God) are but one; all beings are but His forms. When Guru and Govind both appeared before Kabir, he was in a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Macauliffe</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
dilemma concerning to whom he should pay his respect first: and the poet decides on paying obeisance first to the Guru who introduced him to Govind who is God. The Guru or teacher is supposed to show the path of salvation and to help the student to know the real self. In one of the padas, Kabir compares his Guru with the beetle in the following manner:

My Guru is a great wasp:
He takes other insects and suffuses them
with his own hue: making them as he is.

This Satguru of Kabir is the true Hero who loosed off a single Sabda (word) and the moment it struck, he fell to the ground and a wound opened in his breast. In another Sahni Kabir says that the Satguru is his hero. Like a smith He heats His iron in the fire. He has purified and made it like gold by the fire: He has brought out its essence. Vaudeville clarifies in her footnote that just as the iron-smith purifies metal ore on the fire, bringing out its true essence, i.e., pure iron, similarly the Satguru scorching the human soul with the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BP</th>
<th>SBS I</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>2, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>3 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>137 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>139 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
fire of separation reveals its divine essence. The Guru is the protector and generous guardian of us all. There is none to compare with Him in this.\(^{27}\) When pleased by the devotion of the disciple (the soul) the Guru or Brahman showers His love and kindness on him:

When I found grace with Satguru
He made a unique revelation to me.
The cloud of love poured forth
and all my limbs were drenched.\(^{28}\)

Among the images drawn from the social environment are the images connected with and inspired by the family. India has a highly organised family system which includes a number of near and not-so-near relations. They all stay under one roof and share the life of each other. It is basically and greatly different from what is regarded as a family in the west. Parents are the senior partners, rather guardians, of the family and even grown-up people in India are prone to be dependent on their elders for advice, guidance and protection. These family images are highly poignant and represent a typical Indian atmosphere while retaining their universal appeal. In this context, Brahman is the

\[\begin{array}{ccc}
27 & 
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{PNT} & \text{KG} & 4 & 3
\end{array} \\
28 & 
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{CV} & \text{Kabir} & 160 & 34
\end{array} \\
\text{PNT} & \text{KG} & 140 & 34
\end{array} \]
protecting Father or loving Mother. The soul is the child or offspring. The child aspires for the love and protection of the father. In one of the poems, Kabir says that his Father gave him this consolation that he made him comfortable wed and put ambrosia into his mouth. Kabir asks, "How could I forget that Father?" When he goes to the next world he will not lose in the game of life if he continues to remember his father, Brahman. His mother is dead (mother here meaning Maya or worldly love), and he is quite happy. He does not put on a beggar's coat: he does not feel the frost. He is sacrificed to that Father who begot him, who put an end to his companionship with the five deadly sins. Kabir's Father is the great Lord of the earth. When Kabir met the true Guru; he showed him the way. The Father of the world then became dear to his mind. Addressing his Father, who is also Father of the world and whom Kabir now knows with the help of his teacher, Kabir says "I am Thy son, Thou are my Father. We both live in the same place."

In another Sakhi the poet compares man with a child and God is presented as a father. The child is the beloved babay of his father and rushes towards him to accompany him. The father gives him some sweets and in the process the child forgets his intention to accompany the father. The Sakhi has been translated by Vaudeville in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>SSD</th>
<th>KC</th>
<th>197</th>
<th>236</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macauliffe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fond of his father, the child
ran to go off with him:
By putting an enticing sweet in its hand
the Father tricked him and went away. 30*

In foot-note, Vaudeville tells us that "this Sakhi appears to be
a kind of small parable, in which God plays the part of the Father (the
Creator Himself) beguiling His child (the creature) with the candy of
Maya, in order to keep him away from Himself." This, according to
Vaudeville, "appears rather strange, though in the theology of Vaishnava
Bhakti, God's grace is conceived as sovereign and man's salvation
entirely depends on His favour". It appears that, in view of her rather
limited acquaintance with the nuances of the language, she has drawn a
slightly incorrect conclusion. What the poet intends to say is that the
child is the darling of his father. The child wanted to accompany him.
But, due to his limited awareness, he gets engrossed in the sweets and
forgets himself or whatever he had earlier wanted from his father. Here
child represents man. God is the Father, the sweets are worldly
pleasure. The difference between the right inference and the con-
clusions drawn by Vaudeville is that it is not the Father or God who has
duped the child, but it is the child himself who has forgotten his real
vocation and has got engrossed in trivialities. Once this interpreta-
tion is accepted, the queries made by Vaudeville lose ground and
relevance. This is the interpretation which is largely accepted by the critics who are intimately familiar with the genius of the language.

In another place Brahman has been depicted as a mother and the individual self as a child. The individual self wants its wrong-doings to be condoned by the indulgent mother. Kabir says, "Hari is my mother while I am her child and why should not she forgive my faults? Whatever mischief the son might do, the mother does not keep those in her mind. Even if the son catches his mother by the hair and drags her, she does not give up loving him and she is always sad if the child is unhappy."

Another pada of Kabir conveying the same sentiment and emotional relationship between a mother and son has been translated by Macauliffe as follows:

A mother beareth not in mind
All the faults her son committeth,
O God, I am Thy child,
Why destroyest Thou not My demerits?
If a son in great anger rush at his mother,
Even then she beareth it not in mind.

It may be observed from the above that Kabir wants the mother, i.e., Brahman, not only to ignore and condone the faults of the erring child.
but also desires the mother to destroy the demerits of the child and to improve him.

Kabir was a 'Bhakta', a devotee per excellence. His relationship with God is based on the heart rather than the head and it is because of this that, instead of dry argumentation and rationalization, there is warmth of human emotions and depth of intimacy in respect of God in his poetry. His poetry is the spontaneous expression of a simple, straightforward person who has established a personal rapport and communion with the God. It is a matter of insight confronting the cold intellectualism of traditional philosophy. Kabir was a zealous pilgrim along the main tract of the Bhakti cult. A.C. Banerjee says in his essay on the Bhakti cult and Sikhism that:

Kabir's mystical love of God might have been influenced by Sufism; a Nath background may also be postulated as possibility, but he was in general agreement with the Vaishnavite saints in treating love of God as the crucial element in the pilgrimage of salvation.33

Love of God is the motivating force, the inspiration in the poetry of Kabir and it may be more appropriate to say that his poetry is a kind of offering to his Lord. Contrary to Yoga which is essentially

---

33 Banerjee, Guru Nanak and His Times
technique, Bhakti is essentially faith, the adoration of a personal God, who is generally manifested in an anthropomorphic form, that of an avatar. It is this visible form of a qualified Saguna God which is the object of Vaishnavite devotion. Bhakti needs faith, love and trust for God. The attitude of the perfect Bhakta is one of humility and of totally giving himself in the hands of God. In its purest and highest form Bhakti is Prapatti, the total self-surrender of devotee to his Lord. This is the kind of relationship that Bhakta has, or tries to establish, with the Lord on the basis of devotional love and this is what Kabir did. But Kabir's fervent devotion is dedicated to an unborn and formless (nirakara) Supreme Being. Kabir rejects the idea of God being born in human form and becoming subject to the evils of birth and death.

In Bhakti the soul has an intense longing to achieve the Lord, to know Him and thus, to know its real self and to be free from bondage. It is with this feeling that at one place Kabir says that the soul wants to burn this body to prepare ink to write the name of Ram and to make a pen with the bones to write a letter to be sent to Ram. With his body he wants to make a lamp and with his life a wick and he resolves to sell the lamp with the oil of his blood so that he may see the face of the loved one. He had been longing for this intensively and had been waiting for years for this to happen. One of the Sakhis, giving

| 34 | PNT | KG | 144 | 21 |
| 35 | PNT | KG | 144 | 22 |
expression to this intensity of desire, has been translated by Vaudeville in the following manner:

This body of mine I will burn to cinders
so the smoke will rise to the sky
Will not Hari then pity me
and rain to quench the fire.36*

Kabir has taken the image of conjugal association or wedlock which again is in contrast with the Sufi mystics who have taken to images of free love between the lover and the beloved. In Kabir, Brahman is presented through the image of the husband while the Atman (the human soul) is presented as a deeply loving wife. In one of the padas, the wife, (the soul) entreats the husband and asks him not to turn his back on her but rather turn his face towards her and embrace her, since they are the same good husband and wife.37* The bride has decorated herself to meet her Spouse, but God, the Life and Lord of the world, did not meet her. The soul says that God is her Husband and she is His wife. While He is big, she is little. The wife and the Husband dwell together but to cohabite is difficult. That woman is blessed who is pleasing to her Husband and would, therefore, not be born again into the world of re-birth (Samsar).38* In another place Kabir says that a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>36</th>
<th>CV</th>
<th>Kabir</th>
<th>165</th>
<th>20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>RKV</td>
<td>Sant Kabir</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Macauliffe</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
woman, that is the soul, who is not liked by her husband (Brahman) has no purpose for which to live and that the love of a neighbour or anybody else is no substitute for the love and liking of the husband. The love of a neighbour is the love of worldly things in this passage, and the poet says that as long as there is love of neighbours the woman cannot receive the love of her husband. Kabir, therefore, advises the wife to relinquish egoism and meet her husband in humility and love, and not waste her life wandering in wilderness.

There appears to be some similarity with Sufi poets in painting the separation of the lover and the beloved. At one place the bride is ignited by the fire of love and is in flames and distressed but she does not seek the shade of trees lest they too catch the fire. The longing of a loving wife for her absent spouse has been described by Kabir which translated by Macauliffe reads as follows:

Woman with her eyes filled with tears and heaving sighs awaits her Lord; Her heart is not happy; she retraces not her steps in the hope of seeing him. Why fliest thou not away, O black raven, so that I may quickly meet my beloved?
The wife wishes to present to her lord all that she has. This has been expressed by Kabir in one of his sakhis which translated by Vaudeville reads:

Kabir, the mango trees are bearing fruit
and the mangoes are ripening.
You will send them to the Lord
if the crows have not eaten them first.\footnote{43}

Quite detailed accounts have been given repeatedly of the pain and agony of separation from the spouse. "The young wife cries, "Listen O, my noble Spouse, come hasten to my side or I will give up my life."\footnote{44} The remarks of Vaudeville in her footnote on this sakhī are rather uncharitable to Indian love stories and are based on incorrect understanding of the situation of women in India. This is not a 'black-mail' on the part of the deserted wife as Vaudeville has chosen to call it. This emanates from the helplessness in which the Indian women have been placed for centuries. For a person not well acquainted with the Indian situation, it would be difficult to fully grasp the predicament in which women are placed. For a non-Hindu couple, on a husband deserting or leaving a wife, the normal course of action open to the wife might have been either to forget the husband and divorce him or to force him to behave. Both these courses have not been open and available to

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{llllll}
 & CV & Kabir & 324 & 134 \\
 & SSD & KG & 174 & 96 \\
\footnote{43} & CV & Kabir & 169 & 45 \\
 & PNT & KG & 147 & 45 \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}
Indian woman and it is with a view to arouse compassion and pity rather than to blackmail that the women in Indian love stories have been made to use this only weapon in their armoury. In the Sakhi quoted above the wife is obviously the soul while her spouse is the Brahman or Supreme soul.

Ram, which is the name most frequently given to Brahman by Kabir, is a spouse staying away from his bride or wife and she is all the time lamenting for his return so that she may see his face and be happy. Without Ram she is sad day and night, as the chatak is unhappy without Swati, and she prays to Ram to hasten to meet her without any delay. On such occasions the usually terse poetry of Kabir becomes richer in emotion and acquires a high degree of poignancy. Tagore, a Nobel prize winner and a poet of deep human feelings, has been able to render one of Kabir's songs with all profoundness of the original:

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

45 SSD KG 122 225
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.46*

The bride thinks that the sole objective of her life is to meet
and embrace her groom and she asks her friends to tell her as to when
that day will come for her to meet her spouse.47* The theme is further
developed where Kabir says:

A woman hath four days in her father's
house; she must then go to her father-in-law's
The blind, the stupid and the silly know not this
The bride with her Sarhi (Saree) around her
is ready to go;
The guests arrive; her husband hath come to
take her home.
She is known as a happy wife who pondereth on the Guru's
instruction.48*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>46 Tagore</th>
<th>HPK</th>
<th>HPD</th>
<th>Kabir</th>
<th>45</th>
<th>XXXV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47 SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>306</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 Macauliffe</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>LX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A wife who betrays her husband can never enjoy his trust and
love. Kabir says that if there be such a wife, who knowingly betrays
Him, she will never enjoy the favour of the Supreme Being, her
Husband. On the contrary, a woman who always thinks of her lord and
is solely devoted to him and would not expect anything from anybody else
will receive the affection of the husband. The husband will, on his
part, keep her with him all the time and will never leave such a devoted
wife. The wife here stands for the soul while the husband symbolizes
Brahman.

The contrast between human conduct and the unworthiness of the
individual self on the one hand and the purity and holiness of the
Divine on the other is a characteristic feature of Kabir's description
of man's approach to God. This idea is beautifully and tellingly
expressed in the image of the wife preparing to greet her husband on his
return. As she is preparing to go to greet him, he appears before her.
He is bright while she is uncouth and therefore, feeling unworthy of him
she hesitates to touch his feet.

Almost the same idea and a similar sentiment had been expressed
earlier, before Kabir, by Muni Ram Singh, a poet in the Jain tradi-
tion. Upon comparing, one finds the superior skill and deeper unde-
standing of Kabir to be clearly discernible. In yet another Sakhi Kabir describes the state of a woman who claims to be the wife of one man but sleeps with another. The poet warns her that when there dwells another man in her heart, the real husband of hers (Brahman) cannot be happy and pleased.53*

A number of other passages in Sakhis and padas have a similar ring: One of the most popular padas of Kabir in Rag Gevari is presents the image of Brahman as a bridegroom. Translated by Macauliffe the passage reads:

Sing, sing, ye brideswomen, the marriage song:
The sovereign God hath come to my house as
my husband;
I made the bridal pavilion in the lotus of my heart,
and divine knowledge the recitation of my lineage;
I obtained God as my bridegroom; so great hath been my good fortune.
Demigods, men, saints, and the thirty-three karors of gods in their chariots came as spectators
Saith Kabir, the one God, the divine Male, hath wed and taken me with Him.54*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PNT</th>
<th>KG</th>
<th>175</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Macauliffe</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>XXIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is to be observed that the marriage which unites the Universal Soul and the individual self is not an ordinary marriage. It is unity at the higher plane and it is, therefore, only natural that this spiritual unity should take place in a different, extraordinary and uncommon manner. The bride here is the soul. Ram, that is Brahman is the groom. The human body is the altar on which this marriage is to be solemnized. Brahma, one of the Hindu trinity is to act as priest: the familiar thirty-three million deities and eighty-eight thousand seers are witnesses to this great unification. It is difficult to conceive of a marriage which is more solemn than this. It is because of this that the conjugal love arising out of such a marriage is sublime, sacred and perfect. After this marriage with the Supreme, the soul is completely purged of all earthly vices and base attributes which are normally associated with worldly existence. Brahman has been designated as Guest, which is another term signifying husband in local parlance. Here the soul is the host. The host represents the wife who is overjoyed on the arrival of the Guest. She says, "This day is dear to me above all other days for today the Beloved Lord is a guest in my house. My chamber and my courtyard are beautiful with His presence. My longings sing His Name and they are become lost in His great beauty."\(^{55}\)

Kabir was a saint, a mystic and a rebel in social matters — all at one and the same time. One wonders at his capacity to go deep down

---

\(^{55}\) Tagore, HPK, HPD, Kabir, 78, LXXXVIII
into the tender feelings of men and women while describing various aspects of conjugal love in relation to God and the Sakti. On such occasions the poet in Kabir comes into full play. By the use of images and symbols of conjugal love, the poet is able to make his spiritual ideas of Brahman more charming, tender and worthy of effortless comprehension. And thus he makes the idea itself more humane and touching. Conjugal love is, full of tender and sweet stages. There is an element of crude physical presence and pleasure associated with this even in the poetry of great poets who write about such experience. The readers of this type of poetry are, therefore, moved from that angle, but when a Sant poet like Kabir talks of conjugal love in relation to Brahman and the individual self, he sublimes the very idea to a higher spiritual plane where the whole experience of love is devoid of physical crudeness. It is this characteristic use of images and symbols which distinguishes Kabir from other poets. It is also this personalized human presentation of Brahman by Kabir that makes the idea of Brahman a little easier to comprehend.

Kabir has described the whole gamut of relationships in a joint Hindu family. This description goes to further prove the deep insight which Kabir had into human feelings and his intimate knowledge of various relationships in Indian society. Here, Brahman, usually is Husband and Master of the house while the soul is the wife. The bride is plagued by the mother-in-law, loved by the father-in-law, and dreads the very name of her husband's elder brother. Her husband's sister has
seized her and she burns with anguish because of separation from her husband's younger brother. "Her step-father quarreleth with her while her mother is ever intoxicated." These images of Brahman in terms of family relationships are highly poignant and they represent a typical Indian atmosphere. At the same time they have a universal human appeal.
1. भारी कहूँ ते बहु वक्तृ, हरया कहूँ ते भ्रू / मैं कहा अग्नि रंग भूरी, वैना कबूड़ न दूरी।


2. दोबारा है ते कहूँ कहूँ, कहूँ न कहूँ परिअरा।
हार जोरा है रही, ते हरिव हरिव गुन गाई।


3. आज़े हुंड माघा नहीं, नांहीं रूप कुरूप /
पुडोप बाज हैं पात्रा, आखा तस्म अनुप।


4. रामासुम भिन्न नहीं जानो दैरी।

विवरण: का ग्रंथ: 240 : 2.

5. सारी बुरी बहू गुन, लिररे जू दिररर मांहि।
पानीं पिऊँ न उछला, मरे के ठीके जाइहि।

विवरण: का ग्रंथ: 147 : 44.
6. साई सं सवा होता है, बंदै थे बुद्ध नांढ़ि।
राज्य सं परबत कौरा, परबत राज अंगिन। 
दास: का गु: 59 : 12.

7. समर पीरा साया। खुला देग भागार।
उस संस्मार का दास हूं, कबहूँ न होते अफाड़ा।

8. विछला दौड़ि अच्छे रहुँ, खारी है समर भय।
लिबारी: का गु: 239 : 5.

9. हम कहियों चिभुवनपति राखा।
मनोजोंदेह सब पुछने बाला।
लिबारी: का गु: 27 : 47.
कह कहो, हम समस्या बाला, चारी पदर्ध देत न बार।
लिबारी: का गु: 26 : 45.

10. हम समस्या नाहीं दयालु, मांहै समस्या पायी।
हम तन धोनुं उदर न कीछ, समयन सुनियत युध्यँ एम्या।
लिबारी: का गु: 26 : 45.
11. कबीर निरधारकर बिन मेरा हिंदु न कीं ।
   लिखिते : कौं ग्रंथ : 166 : 17.
   निरधारकर का गाहक देवनाथ ।
   कब मारि हिंदु मेरे अंदे हैं । पूर्ण प्रभावान ।
   लिखिते : कौं ग्रंथ : 179 : 2.

12. साबल स्नेही ही मिलिंगा तब उतरा पारि कबीर ।

13. कबीर सारी ही मिलिकी हैं । रूढिती हुसलात ।
   आदि ओर की कहेंगा । उद ओर की बात ।

14. अगरा एक नवीं रेमस ।
   कि तुमने अपने भाग सुं लांब ।
   श्रीम बड़ा रम हिंदी सुपाया । श्रीम क्वा।वि आवा मे आया ।
   बाला : कौं ग्रंथ : 76 : 27.

15. कबीर खूप रेमस का । मुक्तिया मेरा नांझ ।
   गले रेमस की भेज की । भिन रेमस लित जांझ ।
   दास : कौं ग्रंथ : 15 : 14.

16. कैं गुलाम मोहि बैलह गुलार ।
17. उस संघर्ष का दास हूँ, कबूतर न हो अकाल / पतिबल हो गई रहे, तैर उस ही पुराण की साज। 
विचारी: का ग्राम: 176: 8.

18. साँदे सों सब हीत है, बंदे सी बूढ़ा नाही / राहे हैं परलो बूढ़े, परलो राहे मांडिंग। 
विचारी: का ग्राम: 165: 11.

19. साई मं सुभ बाडिया, कौड़ी हैं न लहां / जो सिर अयरि तुम धनी, तो छाली मेल करां। 
विचारी: का ग्राम: 166: 12.

20. कब देखूँ मेरे संघ स्वन्हा, जा बिन दुस्स पारी मेरी देखी / तेरा पार निहाई घरी, कब राम लड़ी और जाना। 
अत सल बिन मैं तपस्य दे दिरे बिन मेरा निमा देखै। 
मिस दिन दरी किन मांदे न आंि, दर किंगरी राम कपेकु पाब। 
हिंदे कबूतर कब विकास म रहूँ, अपने जाने मौंहिं रक्षन देखै। 
दास: का ग्राम: 122: 224.

21. एक खड़ा ही नो लही, सब खड़े। विललास / समर गेरा राम देव, शुली देव अगार। 

22. गुल मार्विंद है रबूँ है, हूँजा सब आकाल / आपा में मेरे शर्म मे, तब पावे देदर। 
विचारी: का ग्राम: 139: 28.
23. गुरु मेरी देखुईं कोई, कही लागू यों भाव / 
कहकरी गुरु माथियों मेरी मुंह दियो बलाम //
रंग बनो खँड़ह : 1 : 5.4.

24. तुम्हारे गुरु बड़ी रंगी। 
आनि कीटक करुँ खिंग तो आपसः रंगी। //
पांढ़े औरे पंख औरे और रंगे रंगे। 
आरि पाली न कहीं कीटों भगल भी भगली। //
तिबारी : को ग्रंथ : 3 : 1.

25. सतगुरु सांप्ता सुपिंधा, सबद जु बाहा रंग। 
लागत हो भुरे मिला गया, परा करें धृष्ट। //

26. सतगुरु मेराः सुपिंधा, अच्छों तालों लोटे सुहार / 
कसनी दे कौनन किया, तांड़ लिया ततसार। //
तिबारी : को ग्रंथ : 139 : 30.

27. गुरु हिंद दाला महान नहीं जग मागनहारा। 
तीनि कोई श्रद्धा में सब हैं भरतारा। //
तिबारी : को ग्रंथ : 4 : 3.

28. सतगुरु हमलीं रंगक सिरि, कहा रंग परलंग। 
बरसा बादल निम्ब मा, मीरि गया सब खँडं। //
तिबारी : को ग्रंथ : 140 : 34.
29. पिला हमारी बुद्धि सिलाई। दिन भी दिन तक हमारी सिलाई नहीं की। अगर थिया मेरे मन भाया। तो पूरी तरह न हुए काम मेरा। रख ठहरी इसी बेख़ाम।

दास : कै ग्राम : 236 : 50.

30. यदि पिला पिला जी। मैं आये क्या आगा भाई। लोभ मिली यस्थी दे, आपुन गया भुलाई।

विश्वारी : कै ग्राम : 238 वार.

31. जानि जानि में कालिक हुया। कार न आये गुण बचसनु मेरा। सुख अपराध कै से दिन की, जानिए कै से विल रह गे न है।
कर गाड़ी बेच दे जो धाता, तो उसे उसे उसे माला। कहे कबीर रक्षा दिखाओ, बाहु तुड़के उड़ो महर्जी।

दास : कै ग्राम : 94:111.

32. उस अव्याधि के ले आये। जानि गिरि न रखाये गई। रामज्या हो वारी। गारिया को कोई सुरक्षि अवगत मेरा।
अगर की लाई की जाय। नाभ बीर न रखी माया।


34. यह सब जाने जाने मचि की, तिर्की रंग का नाखुँ।
लेखन करें करंदु की, तिर्की लिखि रंग पढ़िए।


35. यह सब देखा की, बाले मैं भी आये।
आये सीची वेलो कृषि, तब मुझे दे जबी ना।

36. यह तब जाती माति करै, अँहू धूपी जान सरेगियाँ।
    मति तेह रोम दया करै, बरसिल वृद्धायें अरेगियाँ।
    शिवारियाँ: कै ग्रन्थ: १४३: २०।

37. दम तुम बोधु भरोगो नहीं चोरै।
    तुमहिं दुबारे नारी दम की।
    कविया: संस हक्किया: १२५: ३५।

38. हरि नौरा पियू मैं हारी की बुद्रिया।
    रोम बड़े मैं तनक लहरिया।
    शिवारियाँ: कै ग्रन्थ: ७: १४।

39. आँ औँ पियू करे मान नाहीं भागै।
    ते का प्रेयरन ते दुलसाय।
    तन मन आशोत खोंपी सरिया।
    जापि मुक्त्मोह दुहे वसिया।
    दास: कै ग्रन्थ: ७०: १३९।

40. नारी पुरिर्ष बड़े दुह मंगा, दिन दिन जाह्न अभोलो।
    तीज अभिमान मिले नहीं पेश कुं, दुहे बन बन जालै।
    दास: कै ग्रन्थ: १५८: ३१६।

41. बिरह जल्द मैं जलो, मैं विरहित के दूधः।
    दोष न बैलों उपला, माति जाति उठा दूधः।
    दास: कै ग्रन्थ: ६: ४६।
43. कबीर पतला हाथी फलनि, पाकन तारी आंदः 
जाए पूर्वी खस्तम लेई, आव बीघि न खारे कोः।।
दास : कृ गु : 195/96।

44. कबीर कुंदरि चों बैठे हुमि हो कहुत सुजानि 
बेगि मिलि गृह आईशः, नदिंगर हेंजः परोः।।
खिलारी : कृ गु : 157:55।

45. सो मेरा सम कस्म दारि आखः, 
गा दैशे मेरा विध सुखु पावः।।
×
×
×
निनिः कासुर मन रैंगे अवला औरै बालिंग नौरि विधासः।
कस्ते कबीर करि आतुर्ताः, हःहःहः बेगि मिलि गृह माहः।।
बाण : कृ गु : 122:225।

46. आलम आऊँ हमारे गेह रे।
उस बिन दुर्लियां बेद रे।।
सब आई बैठे उम्मथी नारे, मातको सांगत लाजः रे।
दिल दे नहें दिल किसमाको, सब लग बूंडः देवीः।
इन्हे न भजे नादः न आवे, मुखः वर दरे न धोः।।
आगमतः को हे कालम दयाम, क्यों भासि की मारे।।
कबीर को हे काबल हेंसा पर तथ्यकारे, पिव हों कुहः मुनाय रे।।
अब हो बेहाल कबीर आयःः, बिन देखे जिलोः।।
डिलवेदी : कबीर : 262:35।

47. के दिन कब आवे भाई। 
आ कारसि हम देग धरीशः, मिलिवो आस लगाई।।
दास : कृ गु : 143:306।
48. एक दिन चारित्र मैं सार्वजनिक जागरा।
कौशल्यो मैं न जागर भरबार समझा।
कुछ अलिप्तकाली धनी नहीं। यहाँ धर आये मुखलाई आये।

49. साहित्य ही दयाल कुपाने, मपना कर लिक्ष प्रकोपर।
ला सोलाभची आनिस, शुभ सबद लिखिये।
दास: को ग्रंथ: 233-34:14।

50. कबीर जे कोई सुंदरी, आनिं करै बिनिचार।
ताहिं न करबहाँ आदेरै, पतम पुरिव भरबार।
सिद्धिः को ग्रंथ: 177:15।

51. जौ शुंदरी सारू महैं, जैं आन की आस।
ताहिं न करबहाँ परिवर्तै, पसारत न कोई पाल।
सिद्धिः को ग्रंथ: 176:14।

52. दृढ़ सहुगों पिक दिगम्बर दुई, फिरालांक शिवंसंग।
एका अहिंसा करें यह, मिलिकर्ता आगामि अंग।
मुनरामलीलें: पाँडुरंग देख: 30:100।

53. नारी कहीं और की, पहीं और सौंग सी।
आर मील दूबिया करै, सकलमुख दुसरी कियों होई।
सिद्धिः को ग्रंथ: 175:5।
54. दुलहिनों गायब बंगल-चार!
हेम धारि आये राजा राम भवतर?
तन रात की ही मना रात करि हो पाखि़न तत्त बराबी?
रामदेव भैं है उल्लेखिन आये तमाम भैं जोखन अभिमानी?
सरार सरार बैंदी करिहों, बुलना बैंद चिव्वरा?
रामदेव बैंदी अवर लेहती चांदी धूलि भाग हमारा?
मुर बैंदी हैं बैंदी कौलिया (कोट्टीया) आये मुनिक रुखस अगाही?
की हेम बबरी हेम व्याधि-चाले हें पुरिख रखु अधिनांसी?
विवाहि : का गा : 5 : 5.

55. अज दिन हे मैं जाँव बलिहारी?
पौरस खास आई मैं रहूँ, घर आगन लगे आलोना?
ढिवेदि : कबीर : 266 : 88.

56. मैंने अरिबिया जान सुझाव भई?
देशर भरम सारा संग अच्छी करि, हाँर पीच तटी गई॥
रास : का गा : 153 : 305.

मैंने मति मैंने राम बिनरिया, तिसि बिचि रहन नये द्वाराल।
सेज नहीं शिकेर नहीं देखि, यह दुलार काली के हो दयाल।
सानु की दुर्लोक दुखर कोध्यार, नेन दे लरस उसे नहीं?
नगद सीधे गारन गोली, देवर भैं विभ्रत जोर के श्याल।
CHAPTER V
IMAGES REGARDING IDENTITY

Now we come to the most crucial question in the study of images of Brahman in Kabir. What happens to soul or Atman at the time of Salvation or release? Does the soul retain its separate identity or does it completely merge into Brahman and lose its separate existence? Or is it that it has no separate existence at all and it is only because of the veil of ignorance or Maya that there is an appearance of its separate existence? These are some of the interesting questions that have been touched upon by Kabir in the course of his description of Brahman. These are also the vital questions that have been engaging the attention of the Indian philosophers for ages.

The Advaita School of Vedanta faced this question initially. How can the soul and the world be both identical with and different from Brahman? The Upanishads, the Bhagawad-Gita and Badarayan's Brahma Sutra form the triple basis of the Vedanta, the three starting points: 'Prasthanatrayee' as they have been known to students of traditional Indian philosophy. The Advaita Vedanta view on the subject may be summed up in the following manner:

Brahman is the cause of origination, subsistence and dissolution of the world and at once the material cause (upadana-karana) as well as efficient cause (nimitta-karana) of the world. There is no
difference in cause and effect. The transformations are appearances of name and shape (nama-rupa). World of experience is not ultimate reality (parmararthik), but only empirically true (vyavaharik). The difference of knower, known and knowledge are imposed on reality. When reality is known, these differences which hide the true nature of reality disappear.

Shankar's main concern was the nature of relationship between the individual self (atman) and the Universal Self (Brahman). His general position was that these were completely identical, and that all disappearances of plurality and difference arose out of the data presented by the mind and senses. In any ultimate understanding, he insisted, the only reality was Brahman. To recognise this highest truth is to attain release. The path of wisdom leads to instantaneous release (Sadyomukti) and path of Upasana leads to gradual release (Kramamukti). The identity with the higher self is not the destruction of the soul; there is no more specific cognition or objective knowledge is left.

Ramanuja modifies the concept and turns Vishishtadvatin. The same inquiry leads Madhva to Dvaita, Nimbarka to Bhedabhedas and finally Balabha to Shuddhadvaita.

Ramanuja's system is called Vishata-Advait, the doctrine of unity with attributes or Advait with a difference. For Ramanuja God, the soul and the world are distinct, though not separate; and the
Upanishadic statement that everything is the Brahman has to be interpreted by treating the latter two, the soul and the world, as predicates (vishesanas) of God. Brahman is Ishvara—possessed of the soul and the world. Brahman then would be One and yet the individual would be real.

The relation between Brahman and the other two is the relation between the body and the soul. According to Ramanuja, mukti or release is a state when the individual is freed from avidya or when his ignorant sense of separateness from God disappears. The individual lasts forever and ever and even in release enjoys its individuality.

Madhva's philosophy is called Dvaita (dualism). It is the dualism of the Brahman and Jiva. The physical world also is real and in fact forms a third entity. The philosophy is, therefore, pluralism and not merely dualism. Dvaita insists on the eternal distinction and difference between Jiva and Brahman. Bhedabheda expounds the dual and the non-dual relationship between the two. But Vishishtadvaita is different from all these systems as it states that God is immanent in all beings as their inner-self and at the same time transcendent. The distinction between the Atman and Brahman is eternal but the sense of separateness disappears in the state of union.

As against the Advaita doctrine, Nimbranka takes Brahman to be saguna, transcendent, yet immanent. The accepted interpretation of the saguna concept is that Brahman with prakriti or maya is Saguna Brahman. Brahman is the living God, the totality of all things that are, and
Brahman includes both Ishvara and Jiva. Commenting on the significance of Saguna Brahman, Badarayan says that the personified form of God has devotional value and is not worthless as some might be inclined to think.\(^1\) The Upanishads have invariably been emphatic on the point that it is difficult to comprehend the concept of Brahman and still more difficult to communicate such comprehension. This is the position in Ken Upanishad when it states that:

> The eye does not go there, nor speech, nor mind, we do not know, we do not understand how anyone can teach it. It is, indeed other than the known and above the unknown.\(^2\)

The Taittariya is not much different from this in stating "From which all speech with the mind turns away unable to reach it"\(^3\). The Mundak confirms this saying "He who knows that highest Brahman, becomes even Brahman."\(^4\) "In the final stage Badarayan thinks silence is the best way to describe the Brahman.

Tracing the evolution of the word Brahman in Indian philosophy, we find that the word probably meant at first prayer or speech from the root 'brihi' 'to burst forth' or 'to grow'. Gradually it came to signify the ground of the Universe or the source of all existence, that which has burst forth into the universe or that from which universe has grown. The other word 'Atman' probably meant 'breath' and then came to be the expression for the soul or self of a living being, especially of

1. Badarayan
2. Ken Upanishad
3. Taittariya Upanishad
4. Mundak Upanishad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Badarayan</td>
<td>Brahmas Sutra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Upanishad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taittariya Upanishad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mundak Upanishad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a human being. And the remarkable discovery which the ancient seers made was that the two are one and the same, the Atman is Brahman. The doctrine of unity is the greatest contribution which the Upanishads have made to the thought of the world.

The Sufis have also taken up this state of Union with God quite in detail. The aim of Sufism is union with the Divine which comes as a result of the love created in man for Divine Beauty. This union is generally conceived in terms of a gradual purification of the heart and the attainment of the various spiritual virtues leading finally to the state of 'annihilation' (Fana) and 'subsistence' (Baqa) in the Divine.

According to the Sufis, in the moment of union, there remains nothing but 'thou' without distinctions, or Divine 'I' without any trace of human 'I'. While love can be felt and experienced only as long as the search continues, this search, however, usually leads to the discovery that it is useless to pass through outward roads; the path leads through the forests of the soul into man's own heart. Ibn Arabi envisages the state of union, the supreme experience which is impossible to describe in any adequate formulation, in terms somewhat different from other Sufis. For him, knowledge of God or union with Him in the supreme state of contemplation does not mean a ceasing to exist individually (Fana), or a ceasing of that ceasing (Baqa). It means to realize that our existence from the beginning belonged to God, that we have no existence

---

5. Schimmel A. Pain and Grace. 179
to start with which could cease. All existence as such is a ray of the Divine Being and nothing else possesses any existence whatsoever. Substantially speaking, "spiritual union, brought about through the force of love for Divine Beauty, implies that the Divine Nature becomes the content of human nature, and human nature becomes surrounded and immersed in the Divine." In the first mode, union implies that God becomes the subject who "sees" through the eyes of man and "hears" through his "ear". In the second mode, man is plunged in God so that he "sees" through God and "hears" through Him according to the well known hadith: "He who adores Me never ceases to approach Me until I love him, and when I love him, I am the hearing by which he hears, the sight by which he sees, the hand with which he grasps and the foot with which he walks". 

Kabir poses this question of identity in his own inimitable manner. The woman, that is human soul, asks her companion to tell her whether her soul resides in her Beloved, that is Brahma, or whether her Beloved resides in her heart. This question has been variously answered by Kabir. For instance Dwyer quotes the following Sakhis of Kabir in the literary convention of a young wife separated from her spouse and complaining to her female companion of her plight:

---

6 Nasr The three muslim ages 114-115
7 Macauliffe SR 315 CCXXXVI
SSD KG 200 189
O my friend, Kabir went on searching until eventually he himself lost all sense of being: when the drop of water is absorbed into the ocean then there is no point in further searching. 8*

O my friend, Kabir went on searching until eventually he himself lost all sense of being: when the ocean is absorbed into the drop of water then there is no point in further searching. 9*

Dwyer comments that the language is picturesque though sufficiently complex to be possibly misleading. The basic metaphor is of man, here the wife, searching for God, the separated husband. The metaphor of the mutual absorption of the drop and the ocean is vividly Advaita in intent but it has to be balanced against the accompanying spousal imagery which is less apt for Advaita contexts, as it implies intimate union, falling short of mutual absorption. Dwyer further states that this form of union is indicated in other metaphorical contexts, though probably most meaningful in nuptial imagery. He quotes these lines:

The bride sings her joyful wedding song:
I have come into the house of my royal husband
Ram. I have set out to marry a husband who

grows not old. 10*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SSD</th>
<th>KG</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The relationship between spouses is one which Kabir frequently invokes to express his union with God, and such contexts are replete with the tender emotions of love-poetry of the highest order. The union between spouses is the closest union of persons in human experience and is the nearest one human being can come to losing oneself in another. Yet such a union is never taken to imply a loss of individuality or personality in the lovers. It is a union, unity in duality. Such metaphors as depict spousal unity are expressing a union which can be called Advaita but one which does not obliterate Dvaita altogether.\textsuperscript{11} It is this situation which is to be found in many of Kabir’s poems. Giving us the beloved image of Brahman Kabir expresses the joy of meeting God in the following lines:

My beloved has come after a long absence; it was my good fortune to find him seated within my own house. The temple of my heart was illuminated as my dearly beloved took me to his couch,\textsuperscript{12}

With intense devotion and love, Kabir develops greater sense of confidence in his dealings with God, becomes more demanding and more assertive. This emanates from his singular devotion. In one of the

\textsuperscript{11} Dwyer, Kabir Ki Bhakti Bhavna 19
\textsuperscript{12} PNT KG 6 6.
Sakhis Kabir tells us that his heart remembers Ram, rather his heart itself is Ram; and now, his heart being Ram, to whom should he bow? In that Sakhí it was a state of anxiety and uncertainty. In this poem the poet is on a firm ground and has concluded that by remembering Ram his heart itself has become Ram. A similar theme occurs in the 'Pahud Doha' of Jain Muni Ram Singh, who preceded Kabir and lived sometime in the 11th century. It is difficult to say whether Kabir had actually been acquainted with Jain Muni's lines under reference or whether the similarity of idea is only accidental, but it is certainly striking. As usual, the passage by Kabir is artistically much superior and more profound in sentiment. With the passage of time and gaining of experience one exudes greater confidence in himself and in his devotion, and thereby lays greater claim over his Lord. Continuing this thread, he clarifies his position further when he says; 'Him whom I went to seek, I found just where I was. He now has become myself whom before I called another.'

Here the poet emphasizes the nearness and intimate relationship between the individual soul and the universal soul. In the earlier two passages, the individual soul was being elevated to the position of union with the Universal Soul or Ram. Now as a result of devotion and
knowledge, instantly 'He' is becoming 'myself'. The distance is closing down. Macauliffe has translated the relevant portion in the following manner. "Kabir, the position thou wast seeking thou has found, thou hast changed into God whom thou thoughtest was different." Kabir asserts with confidence that as long as the essence is not known, only so long are the emancipator and the emancipated talked about. The poet is of the opinion that the ego is the main hurdle in the attainment of Brahman. He says "As long as I went on thinking and talking of I, I could not identify the Creator." "The truth is that I and you are not two different entities. Both are one and the same. This knowledge has led 'I' to merge into 'Thou'." The same theme has been taken up by Kabir in a little different vein. Translated by Vaudeville the passage reads as follows:

Repeating Thou, Thou, I become Thou
in me, no 'I' remained;
Offering myself unto Thy Name,
Wherever I look, Thou art.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>16</th>
<th>Macauliffe</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>SSD</th>
<th>291</th>
<th>LXXXVII</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Kabir</td>
<td></td>
<td>117</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td></td>
<td>149</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With the knowledge of the essential truth the feeling of duality evaporates. Humility takes charge of the human soul. Kabir expresses this idea in the following words:

When I was, Hari was not,  
Now Hari is, and I am no more;  
All darkness vanished,  
When I saw the Lamp within myself.  

The same ideas, with some variations have been expressed by Kabir in other places also. At one place the poet says that worldly things and relations are the barriers in the union with the Universal Soul. With knowledge and devotion, naturally and spontaneously, they all—sons, riches, wife, sensual desires—have vanished, and now the servant Kabir is in intimate union with Ram. And, according to Kabir, achieving Ram or Prabhu means losing oneself. "When you embrace Him you have already lost yourself." The poet asks, or rather asserts:

Why should I return to this world? Transmigration taketh place by God's order; he who obeyeth it shall blend with Him. When this fabric of five elements perisheth, my wandering shall be at an end. Forswearing sects, I look on all as equal and meditate on the one Name. I devote myself to and perform the duties which God assigned me. If God bestow mercy on me, I shall be absorbed in Him under the instruction of my Guru. He who in life is in death, and who from death returneth to life shall not be born again. Saith Kabir, he who is permeated with the Name fixeth his love on God.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CV</th>
<th>Kabir</th>
<th>199</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Kabir</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Macauliffe</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RKV</td>
<td>Sant Kabir</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This unity with God, this intimacy, arouses confidence in the poet, and in another Pada, in almost challenging tone, Kabir says, "Since Hari and I are one, I will die only if Hari dies and why should I die if Hari does not die? The mind has become one with mind, has found the ocean of bliss and become immortal." This is the voice of a profound believer in the existence of God. The consciousness of dualism lasts only as long as one is asleep, that is, as long as there is ignorance. The moment the soul is awakened and knowledge dawns, there is only One and not two: the unreal feeling of the two identities disappears with the awakening. According to Vedanta thought in general, life in samsar (world) is but a dream in which the Jiva falsely assumes that he is distinct and, therefore separated from the one Reality, the Brahman. When he wakes up, i.e., when he is spiritually enlightened, he realizes his essential unity with the One being.

In these images Kabir emphasizes the basic unity or the fundamental oneness of the soul and Brahman or Universal Soul. When he says that 'mind has become one with mind' or that the soul has merged into universal soul,' or that 'water has mixed with water', he is emphasizing this essential oneness. This is also the case when he says that the flame has been absorbed into flame. In a similar vein he says, "Brahman and I are one and the same. It is like water mingling into water after which there is no distinction or distinct entity and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Macauliffe</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>249</th>
<th>IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>RKV</td>
<td>Sant Kabir</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
there is no consciousness of 'thou' and 'I'. This is the state of complete unity with God.  This image of water mingling into water has been used to further clarify the point so that there is no room for doubt or confusion. Kabir tells us that it is not a one-way traffic of the individual Soul merging into the Universal Soul. It is both ways. The Atman is in the Parmatman and the Parmatman is in the Atman. One cannot differentiate and distinguish between the two merging into each other. It is like water mixing with water whereafter there is no separate existence to be noticed. The original (bimb) and the reflection (pratibimb) are not different; the original is inherent in the reflection. In the same way jiva and Brahman are one. Just as the water takes different shape in different pots and again becomes one water after the pots are broken; on enlightenment all the doubts of soul disappears and the individual soul (jiva) becomes one with the Universal Soul (jiva).29*
In a much more comprehensive pada Kabir has taken up this theme with all its details. Why must we come to the world again? he asks, and he affirms that we will find Ram when this structure of five elements is dissolved. The human body is made of the five elements viz. earth, water, fire, air and ether. The poet is alluding to the death of the body and the merging of these five elements into one another. According to Kabir, when these five elements of which the body is made dissolve into each other and go out of existence, the Jiva joins Ram. In the reverse process, the earth is soaked by water; water merges into fire and fire into air and then finally all of these merge into ether. Then there will be the state of sahaj-samadhi — where there will be only bliss and tranquility of the soul. Just as the many gold ornaments going through the process of heating melt and become gold, relieved of the all worldly limitations and differences, the soul will merge in 'sunna' or intuitional union of Brahma. Just as the waves of the seas appear and merge again into the sea, so we have appeared only to merge again. Similarly, there is a fundamental oneness in the apparently dual existence of the Swan (Brahman) which is the ocean of Bliss and the Swan (Jiva), and both join each other when the body perishes. This is, philosophically, a very significant and important pada. There are allusions both to Vedanta and to Buddhism. The concept of the five elements perishing has been derived from Sankhya, while the 'gold and ornament' and 'water and wave' ideas belong to Vedanta. The idea of 'Shunya' (void or nothingness) has Buddhist background. This theme has been carried by Kabir into the realm of the abstract when he says that Surati (world of attachment) was reabsorbed into Nirati (state of Samadhi)
without attachment) and Japa in Ajapa, the visible into invisible and the self into the Self.\textsuperscript{31}\textsuperscript{*}

Water is one of the frequently recurring images to denote eternal unity. Translated by Tagore, one of the songs of Kabir runs as follows:

\begin{quote}
The river and its waves are one surf; where is the difference between the river and its waves? When the wave rises, it is the water; and when it falls, it is the same water again. Tell me Sir, where is the distinction? Because it has been named as wave, shall it no longer be considered as water.\textsuperscript{32}\textsuperscript{*}
\end{quote}

In another Sakhi Kabir says that it was a good thing the hail fell on the ground for it lost its own selfhood. Melting, it turned into water and rolled down to the pond.\textsuperscript{33}\textsuperscript{*} On such occasions Kabir's reasoning acquires a kind of rustic simplicity which disarms its critics with the force of its faith and confidence. While in the passage quoted earlier it is the fundamental unity and elemental oneness that has been emphasized, in the Sakhi quoted above the poet wants to say that the soul owes its existence to the universal Self and that it goes back to It again. The Jiva is compared to the hail which is nothing but water, the one Reality, God. Once the hail had fallen on the ground or has become incarnate in a human body, through the experience of unity it lost the consciousness of its own falsely assumed separate identity and was reabsorbed into the One. In yet another Sakhi the poet says that

\begin{tabular}{llll}
31 & CV & Kabir & 201 10 \\
    & PNT & KG & 168 10 \\
32 & Tagore & HPK & 28 XIV \\
    & HPD & Kabir & 245 14 \\
33 & PNT & KG & 167 3 \\
    & PNT & KG & 168 9 \\
\end{tabular}
water turned into ice, then the ice itself melted: all that was, has become Himself and there is nothing left to say. Kabir takes care to underline that it is not a one-way affair of the soul merging into the Universal Soul. The Universal Soul, the Brahman also dwells within or merges into the human Soul. In fact, according to Kabir, this merging is only notional because both are the same or made of the same element. This has been signified by the poet in the following lines:

You search, you search, O my friend,
but Kabir has disappeared,
The Ocean has disappeared into the drop,
how then could it be found?35*

The Sufis have also employed this image of water in speaking of God. Avicenna calls God the giver of forms (Wahib al-Suwar). For example, if water solidifies and becomes ice, watery form is taken away by the giver of forms and the new icy form is added to the material of what was previously water in order to turn it into ice.36 In the words of Annemarie Schimmel:

"Persian poets loved the symbol of rain which emerges from the water, travels for some time through the clouds and then returns to be united with the water. The image of Ocean and waves is very popular. It goes without

| 34 | CV | Kabir | 201 | 9 |
| 35 | CV | Kabir | 196 | 7 |
| PNT | KG | 165 | 7 |
| 36 | Nasr | The three Muslim Sages | 30 |
saying that, for this feeling that everything is part of
divine life, the image of the ocean and the waves
offered itself comfortably. 37

Rumi had described unity with God in one of his ecstatic
gazals, singing of the waves of 'Alast' which shatter the vessel of the
body and destroys it so that it is eventually united with the Ocean. 38
It may be only a conjecture that Kabir has borrowed the water image from
the Sufis. Even in the earliest tradition of the Vedas, the imagery of
water has been used with great poetic excellence. 39

There are different opinions among the students and the critics
of Kabir regarding the nature of the relationship between the soul and
God. Some see, in Kabir's poetry, the traces of advaita that means
there is no difference between Brahman and Atman and they are completely
identical. For some there is advaita but with some distinction (yish-
istadvaita). Still there are few who find the idea of the part and
whole theory (ansh-anshi bhava). And there are some who find between
soul and Brahman a relationship of difference-non-difference
(bhedabheda). William Dwyer is not far from the truth when he says that
Kabir's expression lacks the exactitude of a trained mind. Kabir was
not a philosopher or a scholar in the traditional sense. He literally
subverts the accepted view of what is wisdom and what is folly, an
attitude which must have earned him enemies amongst the traditionalists,
and yet, as pointed out by Dwyer, in doing so he is not seeking to set
up a new or unconventional school of thought. To this extent Dwyer is
correct. But

37 Schimmel A.   Mystical poetry in Islam 62
38 "   Pain and Grace 181
39 Kathopanishad 2 15
he has stopped a little too early. Kabir was a man of great experience and wide knowledge which he had acquired from the company of great men though he did not have an inclination for any particular ideology. This gave him greater freedom and flexibility. This was his strength and also his limitation.

The poet has combined the concrete images and abstract ideas in the following Sakhi translated by Vaudeville:

The mind attached itself to the Unman,
and the Unman stuck to the mind.
As salt loses itself in water,
and water in Salt.40

In the example quoted above it is only one, that is the individual self, which loses its apparent existence but there are examples in the poetry of Kabir where the individual Soul and the Universal Soul both give way to a third thing which is not essentially different from both, and which comes into being as a result of the union of both. Kabir says that turmeric is yellow and lime is white; when both colours are blended, turmeric then loses its yellowness and not a trace of the whiteness of the lime remains. Similarly, according to Kabir when the Bhakta or the individual self joins the Brahman or the Universal Soul, both lose their distinctive existence. Kabir, therefore, sacrifices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CV</th>
<th>Kabir</th>
<th></th>
<th>207</th>
<th>40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>172</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
himself to that love by which tribe and caste and lineage are effaced. Vaudeville goes further in interpretation and says that 'haldi' (turmeric) is yellow but mixed with 'chuna' (lime) both turn red which is the colour of love. In this way when, through Bhakti, the Bhakta merges into the Bhagwan, no distinction remains between them.

There are also examples of Anshanshibhava in Kabir's poetry. In one place he says that Atman is not born nor it is destined to die. The soul is a part of God and, as ink cannot be erased from paper, the Atman cannot be extinguished altogether. Kabir has employed certain images to denote the subdued or concealed existence of the Atman. This has been done by images of salt and water or salt and flour. Kabir says that, when he has found a perfect Guru, the salt has vanished in the flour. "Caste, family and lineage are no more and what name then people will give me?" Kabir says "When a stream is lost in the Ganges, it becometh the Ganges itself. The perfume of sandalwood is communicated to other trees; they then become as sandalwood itself. When the philosophers' stone is applied to iron it becometh gold." Kabir like the stream and the sandalwood is lost in God by invoking Him.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SSD</th>
<th>KG</th>
<th>229</th>
<th>126</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>PNT</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Vedanta Sutra had earlier taken the imagery of clay and pot to denote the oneness of the individual self and the universal soul. The world, which is caused by the Brahman, according to the Vedanta Sutra, is not different from Brahman since effects such as the pot are perceived to be not different from their cause, for example, the clod of clay. A similar theme is taken up through the image of water and jar in which Kabir says that there is water in the jar and that the jar is in the water so that there is water within and without. The jar breaks and water mingles with water. The poet wants to say that this water, is the Universal Soul, all around, within and without. Water is a recurring image of Brahman in Kabir. In a very popular and beautiful piece translated by Macauliffe water stands for Brahman, water lily for man and sunlight for worldly prosperity. Here is the passage:

Why do you fade, O water lily,
The water of the pond is within your veins,
In water were you born, in water you live,
In water is your abode,
No heat underneath, no fire above.
Who do you cherish in your heart?
Kabir says, who are immersed in water,
To my mind they do not die.
In the final analysis, there is no denying the fact that passages are found in Kabir's poetry which may enable us to draw divergent conclusions with respect to the question of whether the soul is ultimately identical with Brahman. It is true that Kabir was not a poet who could have followed a systematic philosophical school and laid down straight philosophical propositions. Kabir was speaking to his disciples on the basis of his personal experience. Kabir's position appears to be that there exists an essential unity or oneness between the Atman and the Brahman. Both terms are interchangeable and synonyms in his vocabulary. Since there is no separate existence from the beginning, there does not arise any question of separate identity in the end. When realization comes, the released finds that in reality there was no separation, no bondage, he was simply ignorant of the fact that Brahman and Atman are identical. It has been said most clearly in Kabir's own words "as long as essence is not known, so long only are the emancipator and emancipated talked about."
7. सूर शरीर पिओ महि निज बौई निज मादि बसै न कि पीय । 
जीव यी बुझे नसै, घट मदि जीव बि ची यी ।।

8. हैरत हैरत है सिरो रथया कबीर दिराइ ।
समद समानी समद भी कर हेरी जाए ।।
दास : को गं : 13 : 3.

9. हैरत हैरत है सिरो रथया कबीर देनाइ ।
समद खमाना बूढ़ें में सी कर हेरया जाई ।।

10. दुखासिंहि भवाणि शंगलघार ।
हंस घारि अश्र भाँत तोम भरहार ।।
कहि कबीर हंस व्याधित्सलि हें टुरियं सुध जानिंसं ।
विवेरि : को गं ।

12. बहुल दिनम में शीतल आए ।
भाग बूढ़े घारि बूढ़े पार ।।

13. मेरा मन सुमिरे राम कि मेरा मन रामदि आदि ।
अब मन रामदि स्वी रहया । बिरा नचावीं कहि ।।
दास : को गं : 4 : 8.

14. बंडु बंडु लिखु भणि की बंदु बली सदु ।
जिम्मेदार हैं बसैं यहं जारं जानिं लसदु ।।
पुनिरमालक गुप्ता जोना, कारंजा जैन सी०, बोध 51, ज० 15.
15. जा कारा सं आश्वा शीरे चाया। और।

शीरे मिरी आपन भया, अलैं कधि और।


17. ताज हरू तबे बोग कहि जग लगी तन न आना।

एक रूप दिखा सबकिसीने कहीं कबीर मन मानो।

लिखिता: का ग्रंथ: 31: 54.

18. मे ये तबे जब का मे कोटी, तब लगी मेरा भाना मे नहीं होती।

कहीं कबीर सुनह नयान, ना धम आयत न मुक्त माह।


19. मनु बा भा मन अहि ले भागा,

सहज सूप हरि खेलवा खागा।

बहि मे: बहि मे स बहि नहीं, आपे अकब मासह चात मानो।

दास: का ग्रंथ: 147: 203.

20. तूं ले कर्म दे भागा, सभू की रही न है।

बारी हरे नादे परि, जिस दैली हित है।


21. जब मे पा तब तारह नचे, कब तारह न नौरी

सब अधिकार मिटेगा, जब दीपबु दिखा मानी।

लिखिता: का ग्रंथ: 166: 1.

22. सहित नहीं सहज सब गये, फूल बिंद फूल किमिनि काम।

सहित भैं ले मिलि रहा दास कबीर राम।

लिखिता: का ग्रंथ: 242: 3.
23. केहँ कबीर की पाया, नभु भेंट और गंवाया।

24. बहुर हम कोई आवश्यक।
आबथ आना हूकु लिखा का हुकूक़ बुधि समाविष्ट।
जब घुड़े पंच चाल की रचना दिये भंगु चक्राविष्ट।
दरसन दौड़ि भर सन्मदेशिण देखो नाम धर्माविष्ट।
जित हड़ लाप लिंग ही साते हैं हैं जय कल्याविष्ट।
हरि जो क्षिपा कीरे जा अपने ही गुरु के सबरे श्राविष्ट।
जीवन मरः मर फिर जोकु अनगिर जनन न हैं।
कु छ कबीर जो नारि तामें स्वन रहिंग लिख लें।

25. हारे मरीज़े तो हमूँ मरीज़े, हरि न मेरी हम कोई छुँ मरीज़े।
कपिये कबीर ननवे मनि मिलवाया, अभम भरे तुब कारा पाया।
दास: का ग्रा: 80: 43.

26. कबीर जपने रचने भी पाल लिख भी हैं।
जो जोड़े हो रोड़ जना, जै आये हो रुढ़।
दास: का ग्रा: 10: 23.

27. पूरा मिलवा तबी तुब उज्जवलत तन की तपनि भुमानौ।
कहँ कबीर भवब्रह्म हैठे जलिनि जोते समानौ।
दास: का ग्रा: 06: 72.

28. सैंस तुस्म चिन नम, टक कहियें, जब आपा पर नाहे जन।
अम जाल में जाल पेसि न निकाये, कहँ कबीर भन मौना।
दास: का ग्रा: 140: 292.
आमें हम सैंस तम हो भी में, नीं भवि जाल छुड़ा।
29. उस्ने विवाहित प्रतिकूल समझा, उटकुं खुभ सिंगारा।
कहे कबीर जानि अभ भागा, आपरि जीव समझा।

दास: का ग्रां: 111:179.

30. बहुरि हम कोहं से आवाहनी।
बिहरि पंचारि की रचना, तब हम रंगहि पावाही।
प्रदोष को गृह पाणी दीँ श्रावा, पांली देज मिलवाहे।
मयान पवन गिले पवन सबंद मिलि, सखा समाधि लगवाहि।
भाव: बहुरि हम नाक देश के बिहरि, लैसे त्रिगोषि सुमावाहि।
जैसे उलाह तरंग तरंगिनि, हैसैं हम तिखलावाहिनी।
कहे कबीर तस्मान सुख सागर, हैसारि हैस मिलावाहि।

दास: का ग्रां: 102:150.

31. जुराति समान निरीहि भी, अजगर भी आपि।
लक्ष समान असकि भी, धी आपि माहि आपि।

दिविंदे: का ग्रां: 166:10.

32. दरियाव फी लाहर दरियाव हैं भी,
दरियाव और लाहर मैं भिन्न कीयन्।
उहे हो मोर हे, बीई हो मोर हे,
बीई हो दुई चहिसे तर दिये।
भैरे का खेर हेैं नाम, लाहर फेरा,
उहे भी कहे कमा नीर राङाम।


33. भली भई जो भीं परा, गरे दसा सब भूल।
पालो गलि पानी भया, दुरे मिलिया उस भूल।

खिंचार: का ग्रां: 167:3.
35. पानी की है तिम भया, तिम ही गया बिलास। / जो कुछ भी लाई भया, अब कुछ कहा न आए। //
तिवारी : को प्रार्थणा 165: 7.

35. हैरत हैरत है एकी, रहा कबीर दिराद। / बूंद समीका सुन्दर मैं, ही कह कहरी जाए। //
तिवारी : को प्रार्थणा 165: 6.
हैरत हैरत है एकी, रहा कबीर दिराद। / समीका समाना बूंद मैं, कह कहरी जाए। //
तिवारी : को प्रार्थणा 165: 7.

40. मनं लगा उनमन सैं, उनसनि मनदिं विकराणि। / तौंभ विलंभा वीरंनिया, पानी लीने विकराणि। //
तिवारी : को प्रार्थणा 172: 50.

41. कबीर, टरध गीरी सुना जाल आए। / राम सेवक हू मिली, दोनों बरत गैवार। //
तिवारी : को प्रार्थणा 209: 3.

42. कुच कबीर, बुढ़ राम की यौं, उस कारर पर सिट नरसू। / सिन : को प्रार्थणा 229: 126.

43. कबीर, गुरु गर्वा मिला, मिलि माया आईं लीन। / आलि पोलि कुस सब मीठे, नाई बच्चे बेदीशे लीन। //
तिवारी : को प्रार्थणा 139: 24.
44. करीर विग्रह राम दुःखो, तुम जिनि विग्रह मेरे माही।
'वैदन के तिथियाँ विरूप जु जेला, विग्रह विग्रह दी द्वारा हैला।'
'वारश का जो जी हैं, दुःखो तपों, विग्रह विग्रह जी हैं, द्वारा हैला।'
'भगवान जो मेरे नेर मिलगा, विग्रह विग्रह घागण्डु हैल।'
'कैसे विग्रह जी रम कहैला, विग्रह विग्रह सा समवह खैला।'
तिथारी : का ग्राम : 97 : 166।

46. वधवत अविगल थे उल्लभों, श्रद्धे दिया निवास।
'विदुरस कल पिरी सार्स्वत देवाताओं, रेख रही नहीं आस।'
'जल में कुंभ दुःख में जल है, कादरी भोली पानी।'
'फूट कुंभ जल जलिं सुमानो, मह एत कुंभो गिमानी।'
दास: का ग्राम : 80 : 44।

47. ग्रहे रे नलनी लैं, कुम्भलानी,
'हैर ही नाल खरोवर, पानी।'
'जल में उल्लभे जल में बाय, जल में नलनी गरे निवास।'
'ना बल्ला रथ पर अपरी भागा, गोरे हैं उठ कुंभ वासन भागा।'
'कैसे कबीर जी उदित समान, हे नहीं मूर धेरे आन।'
दास: का ग्राम : 95 : 64।
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

Kabir was a saint, poet and a religious teacher. He used his sayings (Sakhi) and songs (pada) as the medium to communicate his ideas to people. Through the various images and symbols, Kabir has given us his concept of Brahman. The present study concentrates on the text of Kabir and draws conclusions about his ideas of the Supreme God on the basis of images and symbols used by him.

The study of images of the Supreme God involves understanding the concept itself. That One Reality, towards whom Kabir's complete devotion and total surrender was dedicated, he proclaimed, was 'nirguna Brahman'. To understand clearly the significance of the word nirguna and to trace the concept of the nirguna Brahman, it is of much help and value to have a look in the Hindu religious tradition where the idea originated.

We started by surveying the general concept of God in Hindu thought and found that these thoughts, in general, provide a basic background to Kabirs' concept of Brahman. Because of this background, scholars and critics usually try to liken Kabir's thoughts to one or another of the systems of thought which are found in Hindu religious tradition. But as we have seen earlier by going through the images and symbols used by Kabir in an effort to describe his Brahman, and found
that in fact Kabir has a unique point of view which makes him distinct from others in this sphere. In the attempt to emphasize and bring out this uniqueness of Kabir, we are confronted with the problem of not finding his ideas stated clearly at any one place and presented in a systematic manner. Because his ideas are conveyed to us in the style of short didactic sayings and poems independent of each other, we can understand them only if we try to study each one of them not in isolation, but interpret them together, as a whole.

The variety of images used by Kabir indicate that neither the positive nor the negative method can describe Kabir's Brahman as He truly is. Truth lies beyond both the positive and negative spheres. The saguna idea of God presents the positive method and says what He is, and the nirguna, the negative -- what He is not. By the force of his deeper experience Kabir expresses this idea by placing the Truth or Satya beyond both, the saguna and the nirguna. The declarations that God is nirguna or saguna were, for Kabir, all vain. The All Merciful, All Great and All Beautiful without a face or a forehead, without any shape or of any size, whom Kabir has seen, He is seen by few indeed.

In an effort to tell the truth about his ineffable apprehension, so great and so subtle, so vast and so near, he twines together contrasting symbols and ideas drawn from the conflicting philosophies and faiths. Therefore we see different terms of various faiths and sects as used by Kabir. This might be the reason while some see him as a
Buddhist, some find him closer to Siddhas and Naths, others to a yogi or a Sufi. Though Kabir did borrow the phrases and terms from different places he has certainly imbued them with new colour and it is very seldom that he used them exactly in their original sense. In fact, all those terms and phrases are needed if he is ever to suggest the character of the One whom he addresses as Ram, Allah, and by many other names. Kabir is at the same time, the child of Allah and Ram, but he is neither a Muslim nor a Hindu. Kabir's concern is with man as such and not with man cut up into caste, creed, sect or race.

Kabir's vision soars above the world of sense and change and he sought to rise above the successions of the time into the realm of the Eternal. Simple speech is unable to express that vision. Therefore, Kabir uses many beautiful symbols and images in his poetry. These images are of much help to give us an idea of his Brahman. The picture that emerges through the images is that of a Brahman, who is the Omnipresent Reality, the All Pervading, an Immanent Spirit. He is Ineffable Fact compared with which the distinction of the conditioned from the unconditioned is but a word. He is the One above all leaving behind different theories of existence, creation and relations with man. His God simply transcends the opposition between the personal and the impersonal, between the transcendent and the immanent. Although Kabir's God is invisible, He is not an abstraction but an actuality. He is the Truth, formless, nirguna, absolute, eternal, infinite beyond human comprehension. Yet he is revealed to anyone who seeks him through devotion. To
the true devotee he is the loving father and mother, and the true friend, the kind Master and Lord. So we see that all apparently paradoxical view of Reality are resolved in Kabir's Brahman.

We face the same kind of problem again when we come to Kabir's idea of salvation or release. Salvation may mean all kinds of relations with Brahman and Atman: identity, difference, identity with difference etc. Students and critics of Kabir see traces of different ideas in his poetry. Some find in him nondifference (advaita) idea, some see advaita with distinction (Vishistadvaita) while others see difference and non-difference (Bhedabhed). Though there are some passages which may give the ideas of these different kind of relationships but they are few and far between while the concept of essential identity of Brahman and Atman meets us at every step in the poetry of Kabir. It has been variously illustrated by Kabir with the help of many images. It is like the drop blending with the ocean, like salt dissolving in the water, or like the water in the jug, which is itself placed in the water. When the pot breaks, the water inside blends with the water outside and becomes one. Still we cannot say in certain terms that by identity and oneness he means loss of personal existence, as it does in full advaita system of thought as interpreted by some.

The terms used by Kabir as 'blending with', 'merging into' and 'become' etc., convey the idea of more than a state of likeness of Atman to Brahman. They point towards a state of oneness with God in
which no separation remains. According to Kabir the individual soul is perfectly identical with God, only man does not know it. He can know it only if he can look beyond the material world with a spiritual eye or by the experience of the Truth. From the point of view of the seeker or the yet unreleased, however, the release means blending together of the individual soul with God. But from the point of view of the seer or the released it is nothing of the sort. It is simply the realization of the identity which was ever there.

In his sayings and songs, Kabir is always trying to reveal the secret of his own deeper experience and wide vision and to help others to share it. What Evelyn Underhill calls a 'synthetic vision', indeed Kabir had achieved that. For him there was no more perpetual opposition between transcendent and immanent, impersonal and personal, saguna and nirguna, dvaita and advaita. His spiritual intuition of God ascends to such a height where all these contradictions are resolved. He looked upon the highest goal as union with Reality in which the distinction between subjects and objects fades away. If to some, Kabir appears like a Vedantist, Vaishnavite, Buddhist, Sufi or anyone else, he is all this not by turns. All that he is, he is all at once. His beliefs include the essence of all systems and transcend them at the same time.

The religion preached by Kabir and other Nirguna school poets is of universal nature. It is free from sectarianism and has wide human appeal. It is this which prompted Macauliffe to say that Kabir has
written works which all religious denominations can accept, and which if pursued without bigotry, are advantageous for the salvation of all persons. This is one of the reasons that many western critics and scholars have been attracted to the study of Kabir. It is also one of the reasons that various religious influences including that of Islam and Christianity have been traced in the ideas of Kabir.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


17. Machwe, P., Kabir, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1968.


29. Santbani Sangrah, Part I. (Author and publisher not known)


33. Shah, Ravindra Kumar, *Bijak of Kabir*, Published by the Author at Hamirpur, 1917.


DICTIONARIES AND ENCYCLOPAEDIAS


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advaita</td>
<td>Non-dual. Denial of dualism of the self and world, spirit and matter, and assertion of oneness of Brahman and Atman, Vedanta concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advaitin</td>
<td>Votary of the philosophy of Advaita.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajapajap</td>
<td>That stage of prayer in which all outer forms, words, rosary etc., are dispensed with being, an internal condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anshanshi Bhava</td>
<td>A philosophical view holding that Atman, the individual self, is a part of Brahman the Universal soul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atman</td>
<td>Individual self, the spiritual reality in man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avatara</td>
<td>Descent or coming down, the human appearance of the unmanifested god such as Ram or Krishna.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bhakta : One who practises Bhakti or a member of a bhakti sect.

Bhakti : Divine or devotional love. One of the three recognised ways of attaining Moksha or salvation in Hinduism.

Bhasha : Vernacular; language of the people or of masses, different from the classical language or the language of elite.

Bhedabheda : A philosophical term attributed to Bhaskara indicating both difference and non difference between God and Universe.

Brahman : Universal self, the supreme reality; One and undifferentiated being.

Brahmin : Member of the Hindu priestly caste.

Chatak : A bird of the cuckoo family also called papiha.

Doha : A couplet of a special metre.
Dvaita: Duality, a philosophical counterpart of advaita, signifying varying measures of differentiation between finite and infinite being.

Ganga: The sacred river known in English as the Ganges.

Gardu: Doctor who treats snake poison.

Guru: A teacher, either secular or spiritual.

Hans: Swan; a symbol of human soul; also credited by poets with the ability to separate water from milk and hence a symbol of spiritual discernment.

Ishvara: The divine being considered in his relationship to man or in his capacity to be manifested in man.

Jiva: Individual soul.

Kazi: A muhammadan religious functionary.

Khasam: Lord or husband, a term for God.

Kukuhi: An instrument like lute.
Mukti : Release, or salvation from rebirth or entry into the permanent state of bliss, synonymous with moksha.

Mullah : A muhammadan religious teacher.

Nyaya : One of the six systems of philosophy, a system of logical analysis of Reality.

Pada : A line or verse of poetry, a technical term for Kabir stanza form; also called Sadb or by its colloquial name Sadad.

Pandit : Learned person, a title for Brahmans.

Paras : The philosophers stone: by its mere touch the iron turns into gold.

Paramatma : The Universal Soul.

Pir : A muhammadan saint or religious teacher.

Prakriti : The passive material aspect of being. According to Sankhya dualism, primary and productive element of the Universe.
Purana : Any of many ancient collections of myths and legends, sacred and profane.

Purusha : A being, person; a term used as a title of Supreme Being.

Rajas : One of the three gunas of Sankhya; its characteristic is strength and activity.

Ramainsi : A verse form implied by Kabir.

Sabad : A word or saying, especially a Divine word; a term for Kabir's stanzas.

Sakhi : Witness; couplet containing some spiritual or moral point.

Sant : A generic term for holy men of the Nirguna schools, though even Vaishnavites are called sant, one who has attained bhakti.

Satguru : The true guru, a divine title; a favourite name of God.
Sattva: One of the three gunas of Sankhya; its characteristic is purity of being realness, goodness.

Shakta: One who worships Shakti or engages in the rituals associated with this.

Sufi: Ascetics of a simple and pure devotional mind and have written poetry of a high order which is full of mystical meanings. Sufis generally wore woolen garments which was called 'Suf' thus Sufi.

Tamas: One of the three gunas of Sankhya; its characteristic is dullness, inactivity.

Tantra: A form of ritual or ascetical exercise based on magical or mystical formularies; connected with later Mahayana Buddhism and Shavism and popular among Siddhas and Naths.

Ulatbansi: A paradox.

Unman: The mind of light as opposed to the mind connected with the experiences on this side of existence.
Vaishnava: One who worships Vishnu.

Vedanta: A term used for the philosophical literature based on the Vedas.

Yoga: From the Sanskrit root Yuga meaning to join, a discipline of mind or body.

Yogi: A Hindu ascetic who seeks to attain spiritual enlightenment by the performance of certain ascetic exercises and postures.
ADDITIONAL NOTES

Dhwani -- According to Sanskrit and Hindi poetics, dhwani is one of the essentials that goes to make great poetry. In dhwani the word-meaning stands for some other meaning beyond itself. The real meaning transcends the word and yet is clearly suggested. The greatest thing about this is that it is not understood but suggested. Of the inarticulate mystic experience which has been characterised as a dumb man's relish by Kabir and other saints, but a suggestion can at best be given.

Jivan Mukti -- The term used varies from jivan mukti or release while still living, to jivan mritak or being dead while still living. The concept of somehow being able, as a result of having perfected one's devotion or knowledge, to live in a free, released state before the bodily death, is an old one in India. But it has been interpreted in different ways in different sects and schools of thought. Kabir sees it as a sort of a highest state, the realisation of God, in which the evils of the world are defeated by the certainty of the escape from the cycle of rebirth. He refers to this as a state of unutterable bliss.
Maya — In Rigveda, maya is used in the sense of supernatural power, Indra is styled as mayin. The term maya has been used in the Upanishads in the simple sense of ignorance or avidya, opposed to vidya — true knowledge. Badrayan calls maya the will of the Lord. Shankar maintained maya to be a form of avidya and made it consist of name and form. He holds that Brahma associated with maya is cause of the universe. With the doctrine of illusion or maya Shankar supplies the material cause of universe. It is in this illusion, or maya, that the soul is bound. Kabir attached this meaning to maya, but used maya in the other sense too. Attractions which keep man from devotion are maya, i.e., women, greed, etc. He uses three guna also as the form of maya which controls the world but is controlled by Brahman.

Sabad — Hindu theology had long evolved a conception of Sabad — 'sound' or utterence with the spiritual concept. Mysterious potencies are ascribed to certain words such as 'Om'. Guru can reveal the secret of the words. Sabad may unite the soul to God. The word Sabad has been used for Brahman also.

Sahaj Samadhi — Sahaj means spontaneous and samadhi is a state of meditation where there is only bliss and calm. Here all the contradictions appear to lose their contradictory nature. A state of intuitional union. Kabir has used it for both meanings.
Siddha and Nath -- Siddhas and Naths were the exponents and propagators of some forms of Hath-yoga which, through the more ancient Vajrayan sect found its origin in Mahayan Buddhism. The eighty-four Siddhas (Chotrashi Siddha) and nine Naths (Nava Nath), are famous and were very popular at the time of Kabir. There teachings are collected in Charyapada and Banis. Kabir has used the style of this poetry and meters. There is similarity of images and some ideas too.

Surati and Nirati -- Surati has been used, in the nirgun school, in the sense of divine memory which is a means to attain release. Nirati is the supraconscious stage with feeling of calm and bliss. Sometimes Surati is used in the sense of soul by some nirguna poets.