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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

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Studies and Research acceptance of the thesis

IMAGES OF BRAHMAN IN THE POETRY OF KABIR

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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

तुम्ह जिनि जानहु गीत है,
यहु निज ब्रह्म विचार ।
केवल कहि समझाया,
आत्म साधन सार रे ॥
- 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 Śāṁskṛit 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 Āṁśa, I have chosen to write Ansha and Shankar instead of Śāṁkara.

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.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BP	Belvedere Press
BU	Bhihadaranyaka Upanishad
CU	Chandogya Upanishad
CV	Charlotte Vaudeville
HPD	Hazari Prasad Dwivedi
HPK	One Hundred Poems of Kabir
IP	Indian Philosophy
KF	Kabir and His Followers
KG	Kabir Granthavali
KSP	Kabir Sahitya Ki Parakha
Manas	Ram Charita Manas
MU	Mundaka Upanishada
NHSP	Nirguna School of Hindi Poetry
ORLI	An Outline of Religious Literature of India
PC	Parashuram Chaturvedi
PDB	Pitamber Dutt Barthwal
PNT	Paras Nath Tiwari
RK	Radhakrishnan
RKV	Ram Kumar Varma
SBS	Sant Bani Sangrah
SSD	Syam Sunder Das
SR	Sikh Religion, Vol. VI
SSI	Six Systems of Indian Philosophy
SU	Shvetashvatar Upanishad

C O N T E N T S

	***	***	***	Page
FOREWORD	***	***	***	V
EXPLANATORY NOTES				
a. Note on Transliteration	***	***	***	VII
b. Note on References	***	***	***	VIII
ABBREVIATION	***	***	***	IX
PREFACE	***	***	***	XIII-XVII
CHAPTER I				
	***	***	***	1-20
(A) <u>KABIR AND HIS TIMES</u> 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				
			***	21-58
(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 NATURE AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

*** 59-83

- (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, Bajigar, Musician, Diwan or Judge

CHAPTER IV

• IMAGES OF RELATIONSHIP AND DEVOTIONAL LOVE

*** 84-116

- (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

117-143

- (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

144-149

BIBLIOGRAPHY

150-153

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

154-160

ADDITIONAL NOTES

161-162

PREFACE

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 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

1	SSD	KG	161	380
			163	385

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 (chhanda), 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 Naths. 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.^{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 reactivated 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

1	SSD	KG	161	380
			163	385

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.²

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.^{3*} 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.^{4*} Ninety-six sects, which Kabir called pretentious, included twelve jogis, eighteen jangams, twenty-four sevras, ten sannyasis, fourteen derveshs and eighteen brahmins.⁵

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

3	SSD	KG	77	34
4	PC	KSP	43	
5	Ahmad Shah	Bijak	52	

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 disciple 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.⁶ 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 Meerabai, contemporary of Tulsidas.

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

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 literature initially adopted and later developed. The prototype of this form are to be found in Sabad and Jogeswari Bani of Nath Gurus. These probably 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 conscious of this and whatever he was doing was with purpose and intention. At a later date Tulsidas (16th A.D.) was to follow his

footsteps and to carry the language and ~~to~~ 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.^{7*} Tulsi Das has also said a very similar thing.^{8*} 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.⁹

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 Lalloo Lal.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ Vaudeville, in saying that

7	BP	SBS	68	
8	Tulsi	Manas	17	10
9	Keay	KF	52	
10	CV	Kabir	68	

Kabir was writing in some kind of lingua-franca of the Northern India, which she calls Hindi, 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.¹² 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. Sumit 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 Ramainis. 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 Sheikh 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.¹³

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.'¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ 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.

16	Ahmad Shah	Bijak	4
17	PDB	NSHP	71
18	RK	Brahma Sutra	127

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.¹⁹

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

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 King (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.²⁰ 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.²¹

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, ahinsa, 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.

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 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 or 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."²²

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".^{23*}

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".²⁴ 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-

22	Keay	KF	49	
23	Ahmad Shah	Bijak	202	188
24	Keay	KF		6

stan".²⁵ 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".²⁶ 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.'²⁷

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.²⁸

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

25	Farquhar	ORLI	338
26	Sen	Mediaeval Mysticism of India	87
27	Ahmad Shah	Bijak	34
28	Ahmad Shah	Bijak	35

poetry and that it could not have been possible for Sur and Tulsī 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 जंगम एक जगधार, एक अंगि बिभूति कैर अपार ॥
 एक आराधै सकति सोव, एक पड़ा दे दे बंधै जीव ।

एक पढ़ाई पाठ एक भ्रम उदास, एक नगन निरंतर रहै निवास ।
 एक जोग जुगति तन हूँ खीन, ऐसे राम नाम संग रहै न लोम ॥
 एक हूँ दीन एक होई दान, एक कैर कलापी सुराधौन ।
 एक तंत मंत्र औषध बौन, एक सकल सिध शरबै अपान ॥
 एक तीर्थ व्रत करि काया जीति, ऐसे राम नाम सुँ कैर न पीति ।

दास : क० ग्र० : 161 : 380.
 163 : 385.

3. आलम दुनीं सबै फिरि खोजी हरि बिन एकल अमाना ।
 दूर दरसन दियानेब पावैं, आकुल किन हूँ न जाना ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 77 : 34.

4. जोगी जंगम सेवड़े, बौध संन्यासी सेव ।
 परदर्शन दादू राम बिन, सबै कपट के भेष ॥

श्री दादू दयाल जी की बानी : पृ० 207.

7. संस्कीरत है कूप-जल, भाषा बहता नीर ।

संत बानी संग्रह I : पृ० 68.

8. स्थान सुरभि पय विसद अति, गुनद करहि खब पान ।
 गिरा ग्राम्य सिय राम जस, गावहि सुनहिं सुजान ॥

तुलसी : मानस : 17 : 10.

23. मसि कागद हूँ नही, कलम गही नही हाथ ।
 चारि जुग को महात्म, मुखहि जनाई बात ॥

अहमदशाह : बीजक : 202 : 100.

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"¹. "That being is far beyond this world is formless..."². Therefore, Brahman 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"³.

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 Brahman 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 Brahman 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.⁴

The Supreme Being is both transcendent and immanent.

Brahman, 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.⁵

1	SU	4	20,	5	8
2	MU	1	16		
	SU	3	10		
3	BU	2	3	6	1
4	RK	IP		178	
5	Deussen	The Philosophy of the Upnishads			39

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.⁶ 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

The saints, men of wisdom, Purans 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
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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 limitation, 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.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ 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".¹⁷

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

Dwyer - 'Kabir Ki Bhakti Bhavana'

50

Dwyer has given list of 86 names containing 25 non-sectarian 9 non-vaisnavaite, 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, Raghurai Prahbu, 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.

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 Shvetashvatar (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 tama guna are Your maya shakti (power). One has to go beyond these three to reach the Highest."19*

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
SSD

Bijak
KG

104 18
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 this, 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 'kufra' punished by death. Hallaj Mansur (922 A.D.) died on stake for having declared himself to be one with God (An'l 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 Brahman)³³ and it is the truth of truths (Satasya Satayam) and that the Atman and the Brahman are One (Ayam Atma Brahman)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

32	CU	6	8	7
33	Ibid.	3	4	1
34	BU	4	4	5
35	Deussen	Philosophy of Upanishada		
				37

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 Yogis.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,

36	Dwyer	Kabir Ki Bhakti Bhavana	4
37	Dwyer	Kabir Ki Bhakti Bhavana	178

reads as follows:

Some contemplate the Formless,
and others meditate on form,
but the wise man knows that the
Brahma is beyond both.^{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.^{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 virtues.^{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.^{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

38.	Tagore	HPK	54	XLIX
	HPD	Kabir	269	49
39	SSD	KG	48	1 2
40	SSD	KG	48	5
41	PNT	KG	149	44

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.^{42*} 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.'^{43*}

42 Bhagwadgita

2 45

43 SSD KG

111 180

In the Shvetashvatar Upanishad, the Soul is neither male nor female nor neuter in gender. It assumes its form according to the embodiment it seeks.^{44*} 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.^{45*}

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		5	10
45	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 mixup 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 Dwivedi, 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

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."⁴⁸ 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 effluence 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 effluence 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 persuade 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 alternation, 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	HPK	23	4
50	Ibid.	HPK	41	27
51	Tagore	HPK	23	4
52	Underhill	HPK	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, nonsuccessional, 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 Brahman or Paramatma. This takes us to Kabir's position vis-a-vis Shankar's Advaitavad. 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 Tagore	HPK HPK	24	7, 54	xxiv 49
54	Dwyer	Kabir Ki Bhakti Bhavana			23

Barthwal 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 Trigunayat⁵⁵ 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 casual 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	Trigunayat	Kabir Ki Vichardhara	202
56	Keay	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.⁵⁷

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."⁵⁸ Kabir was also

57	Underhill	HPK	viii
58	RK	An idealist view of life	70

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.⁵⁹ The works of great Sufis and, amongst Christians, of Jacopone da Todí, Ruysbroeck and Boehme abound in illustrations of this. This law operates in Kabir's songs also in his efforts to communicate 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 independent style in this regard.⁶⁰

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.

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		2	5	5, 7
63	PC	KSP	25		
64	SSD	KG	1	7	

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 Bhusukapa⁶⁷ 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

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Meanings</u>
Tree	Body
Town	Body
Chadar	Body
Husband's sister	Desire
Cow	Senses
Deer	Mind

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 Gorakhnath in a number of places and in all probability Kabir was familiar with the sayings of Gorakhnath.⁷⁰ Some of the Sakhis of Kabir appear to have been inspired by what Gorakhnath 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 Gorakhnath and Kabir would substantiate this point. Kabir has also liberally borrowed metaphors and images from Nath poetry in general and from Gorakhnath in particular.⁷¹

In such cases of the similarity between the images and metaphors of the two poets, the underlying difference is that Gorakhnath, 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 may outwardly sound simple and yet are deeply charged with metaphorical meaningfulness."⁷³ 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.⁷⁴

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	Kabir	35
74	Tagore	HPK	15

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 mediaeval Christian myths called union with God as spiritual marriage. The whole

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.⁷⁶

Kabir has also written some poetry of paradoxes. These have been called Ulatbansis. 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.^{77*} Then the Jivatma or individual soul becomes a fulfilled bride without the groom that is the Universal soul.^{78*} 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.^{79*} In yet another place the individual self swears by the sister-in-law's brother.^{80*} Brahman has been referred to in the image of husband or Man in several other places.^{81*} Brahman is father also or father-in-law in some paradoxes.^{82*} "Niranjan", (without blemish) that intriguing image or name has also been employed in reference to God in some places.^{83*}

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77	SSD	KG	88	811
78	SSD	KG	122	226
79	SSD	KG	73	14
80	SSD	KG	72	13
81	SSD	KG	47	3
82	SSD	KG	123	230
83	SSD	KG	151	336

19. रजगुन तमगुन सलगुन कहिऔ, यह सभ तेरी माया ।

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 19 : 32.

31. मुसलमान का रुक खुदाई / कबीर का स्वामी रह्या समझि ।

दास : क० ग्र० : 253 : 213.

38. कैरे दयावै निराकार को, कोई दयावै आकारा ।

या विधि उन दोनों तें न्यारा, जानै जाननहारा ॥

द्विवेदी : कबीर : 269 : 49.

39. जे कहु किया सु हरि किया ।

x x x

जे किया कहु होत है, तौ करता औरै कोइ ।

दास : क० : ग्र० : 40 : 1, 2.

40. सात समंद की मसि करौं, लेखनि सब बनराइ ।

धरती सब कागद करौं, तऊ हरि गुण लिख्या न जाइ ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 40 : 5.

41. साई कैरे बहुत गुन, लिखै जौ द्रिई मांहिं ।

पांनों पिऊं न उरपता, मति वै छोरे जाहिं ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 144 : 44.

42. त्रैगुण्य विख्या वेदाः निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवजुनि ।

गीता : अध्याय 2 : श्लोक 45.

43. सतौ घोखा कासू कहिए ।

गुण मैं निगुण निगुण मैं गुण है, बार दौड़ि क्यूँ बहिए ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 111 : 100.

44. नैव स्त्री न पुमानेष न चैवायं नपुंसकः ।

यद् यच्छरीरमादत्ते तेन तेन स पुज्यते ॥

श्वेताश्वत्थ उपनिषद् : अध्याय 5 : श्लोक 10 .

45. कहै कबीर सो पाया, प्रभु भेंटत आप गैवाथा ।

आप पिछनै आपहि आप..... ।

दास : क० ग्र० : 243 : 170 .

46. भगतिहि ज्ञानहिं नहिं कहुं भैया, उभय हरहिं भव सम्भव खेदा ॥

तुलसी : मानस : ॥ 54 : ॥ 4 .

61. अधिगत अकल अनूपम देख्या, कह्यो कथा न जाई ।

सैन कैरे मन ही मन रहसे, गुंगे जानि मिठाई ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 71 : 6 .

77. खसम निपूतौ आंगणि सूलौ ।

दास : क० ग्र० : 88 : 81 .

78. पूरि सुहाग भयो बिन दुलह ,

दास : क० ग्र० : 122 : 226 .

79. अब मोहिं ले चल नगद के बीर अपनै देसा ।

दास : क० ग्र० : 73 : 14 .

80. कालौंगी हजरी का खू, नगद जी के भैया की सौं ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 72 : 13 .

81. खरगुद गुरु बगइथा, पूरिवला भरलार ।

दास : क० ग्र० : 47 : 3 .

82. साखु की दुखी ससुर की प्यारी ।

दास : क० ग्र० : 123 : 230.

83. अजन अल्प मिशन सार ,

दास : क० ग्र० : 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 says 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	SR	162	XLIII
	PNT	KG	30	52
2	SSD	KG	9	1
3	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

4	SSD	KG	10	3
5	RKV	Sant Kabir	161	10
6	SSD	KG	29	16
7	PNT	KG	168	12
8	HPD	Kabir	255	21

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 Badarayan 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	Badrayan	Brahmsutra	13	22	

whole Universe is illumined by that. In yet another sutra Badrayan mentioned "Jyoti (light) as Brahman."¹¹

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.¹² 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.^{13*}

11	Badrayan	Brahma Sutra	1	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

14	SSD	KG	86	72
15	SSD	KG	207	29

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.^{16*} The raindrop of Swati-nakshatra has been a recurring subject matter of Hindu lore and legend.

Brahman is like the ocean.^{17*} 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.^{18*} 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.^{19*}

16	SSD	KG	15	5
17	SSD	KG	6	30
18	SSD	KG	197	148
19	Macauliffe	SR	242	6
	RKV	Sant Kabir	181	6

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.^{20*} 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.^{21*} 'Buti' is a medical herb and alludes to the Sanjiwani, 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 Chakvi 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.^{22*}

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.

20	PNT	KG	203	3
21	PNT	KG	144	24
22	PNT	KG	141	4

Likewise Ram dwells in the bodies of all, yet the world perceives him not.^{23*} 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.^{24*} 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.^{25*} 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.^{26*} Then Hari or God is like sugar scattered in the sand. An elephant, howsoever 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.^{27*} The presence of God in the body is like the pupil within the eye. It is

23	PNT	KG	162	1
24	PNT	KG	163	6
25	PNT	KG	226	2
26	Mecauliffe	SR	281	XVII-XIX
27	Ibid	SR	315	CCXXXVIII

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*}

28	PNT	KG	163	2
29	PNT	KG	204	1
30	PNT	KG	204	2
31	PNT	KG	240	9

In another place, the Hansa or Swan is a symbol of the purified soul while bagula or the heron is its antithesis, a hypocrite.^{32*} 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.^{33*}

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.³⁴ 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 precious gem of

32	PNT	KG	205	5
33	SSD	KG	61	4
34	Dwyer	Kabir Ki Bhakti Bhavana	148	

Ram will be lost.^{35*} 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.^{36*}

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.

35	PNT	KG	227	5
	CV	Kabir	289	5
36	Mecauliffe	SR	212	31
	SSD	KG	255	221

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
	SSD	KG	162	382
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

39 SSD

KG

82

53

40 SSD

KG

73

17

tens of thousands of coins.^{41*} 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.^{42*}

41	PNT	KG	165	10
	PNT	KG	166	12
42	Mecauliffe	SR	254	II
	RKV	Sant Kabir	201	2

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 Madhave. 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 Gardu, a physician who cures snake-bite.^{45*}

43	SSD	KG	147	321
	SSD	KG	144	310
44	SSD	KG	139	287
	SSD	KG	60	1
45	SSD	KG	144	308

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".^{46*} He is the Musician too. Kabir advises us to allow the Musician to play and not to tease the kukuhi of the Kaliyug.^{47*} 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.^{48*} 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	SR	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.

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1. सँतों भाई आई ग्यांन को आँधी रे ।
 भ्रम की दाटी सँभै उड़नीं माया रहै न बाँधी रे ।
 दुचिते की दोड़ पुंनि गिरांनी मोह बलैडा दूरा ॥
 त्रिखनां झानि परी घर ऊपरि दुखसति भांजा फूरा ॥
 आँधी पादै जो जल बरसै तिहि तेरा जन भोनां ॥
 कहै कबीर मन भया सुगासा उदै भानु जब चीनां ॥
 तिवारी : क० ग० : 30 : 52.

2. कबीर तेज अनंत का मानौ अगो सूरज सैणि ।
 दास : क० ग० : 9 : 1.

3. कौलिंग दीठा देह बिन, रवि सखि बिना उजास ।
 दास : क० ग० : 10 : 2.

4. पारब्रह्म के तेज का, कैसा है उनमोन ।
 कहिबे की सोभा नहीं, देखें ही परवान ॥
 दास : क० ग० : 10 : 3.

5. सररि सरोवर भीतरै जाई कमल अनूप ।
 परम जाति पुरुखोतमो जाँके रेख न रूप ॥
 वर्मा : संत कबीर : 164 : 10.

6. उदै भया जब सूर का, सयँ तारँ धिये जाइ ।
 दास : क० ग० : 29 : 16.

7. कबीर देखा एक अगम महिमा कही न जाइ ।
 तेज पुंज पास धुनी, नैननि रह समाइ ॥
 तिवारी : क० ग० : 168 : 12.

8. घर घर दीपक बरै, लखै नहिं अन्ध है।
द्विवेदी : कबीर : 255 : 21.

13. दीपक पावक आनिया, तेल भी आनौ संग।
तेनो मिलि कै जोइया, तब उड़ि गड़ि परै परंग॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 145 : 30.

14. पूरा सिल्या तबै सुष उपज्यौ, तन की लपनि बुझानी।
कहै कबीर भवबंधन दूटै, जोरिहि जोरि समानी॥
दास : क० ग्र० : 86 : 72.

15. राम उदक जिह जन पिया, तिह बहुरि न भई पिथासा।
दास : क० ग्र० : 207 : 29.

16. कबीर सीप समंद की, रैते पिथास पिथास।
समदहि तिषका वरि गिणै, स्वाँरि बूँद की आस॥
दास : क० ग्र० : 15 : 5.

17. कबीर राम ध्याइ लै, जिभ्या सौं करि मंत।
हरि सागर जिनि बीसै, होलरि देखि अनंत॥
दास : क० ग्र० : 6 : 30.

18. कबीर समंद न होड़ियै, जौ लाति खारो होइ।
पोखरि पोखरि दूड़ते भलो न कहिये कोइ॥
दास : क० ग्र० : 197 : 148.

19. तरवर सखु अनंत उर खावा, पुहुप पत्र स भरीआ।
इह अंगिर की बड़ी हैरै, तिनि हरि परै बरीआ॥
वर्मा : संत कबीर : 181 : 6.

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20. तरवर हासु विषैविर, जौ बारह भास फलै ।

शोरस दाया गहिर फल, पंखी केलि करै ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 203 : 3.

21. परबति परबति मैं फिरा, नैन गँवाया रोइ ।

सो बूयो पाँउं नहीं, जातै जीवन होइ ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 144 : 24.

22. चकई बिदुरी रैन की, आइ मिलै परभाति ।

जे नर बिदुरे राम सौं, ते दिन मिले न राति ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 141 : 4.

23. कस्तुरी कुंजलि बसै, मिग डूँदै बन भाँहिं ।

जैसे छटि छटि राम है, दुनिया देखै नाँहिं ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 162 : 1.

24. सो सांई तन मैं बसै, मरम नु जँनै लस ।

कस्तुरी का मिरिग ज्यौं, फिरि फिरि डूँदै धास ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 163 : 6.

25. कबीर अवगुन नाँ गँहै, गुन ही कौं लै बीनि ।

छट छट महुँ के मधुप ज्यौं परमात्म लै चीन्हिं ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 226 : 2.

26. कबीर भाया डोलनी पवन भँकौलन दार ।

सँतहु मारवन खाइया, दाहि पियै संसार ॥

वर्मा : संत 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 sublimates 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. हरि मालिन की माल है, पोर कान्छे चागि ।
जलन करै भटका धनां, टूटैगी कहुं लागि ॥

हिवारी : क० ग० : २२७ : ५.

36. हरै हीरा बेधि पवन मन सहजे रह्या समारि ।
सकल जोति उन हरै बेधी साहिगुरु बचनी में पाई ॥
हरि की कथा अनाद बनी, हंस ह्वै हीरा लै पदानी ।
कह कबीर हीरा अस देख्यो जग महि रह्या समारि ।
गुपता हीरा प्रकट भयो जब गम दिया दिखारि ॥

दास : क० ग० : २२५ : २१.

37. कबीर प्रेम कूल डै, हमारे राम बिना न सै ।
बांधि लै धौरा, सीचि लै कयारी ब्यौ हूँ पेड़ भै ।
काया बड़ी मोहै माली, टहल करै दिन शरी ।

भाग हमारे हरि रखाले, कोइ उजाड़ नहीं रे ॥

दास : क० ग० : १२० : २१६.

वनमाली जानै वन की आदि ।

दास : क० ग० : १६२ : ३४१.

38. कैरी की काहु मरम न जाना । सब जग आन बनायो राना ॥
धरनि अकाल की करगह बनाई । चंद सुरज दुह साप चलाई ॥
पाई जोरि बात उख कीनी यह लली मन माना ।
जोलाहे घर अपना पीना घट ही राम पदना ॥
कहल कबीर कारगाह लेरी, सूतै सूत मिलाये कैरी ॥

दास : क० ग० : २१२ : ५९.

39. कुंभरा एक कमाई मारी बहुविधि जुगारि बगारि ।
एकनि मैं मुकराहल भोगे, एकनि व्याधि लगारि ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 93 : 105.

मारी एक सकल संसार, बहुविधि भाँटै घड़े कुंभारा ।

दास : क० ग्र० : 82 : 53.

40. जब घरि प्रगट भये राम राई, साधि सरिर कनक की नाई ।
कनक कसौटी जैसे कसि लेश सुनार, सोधि सरिर भयो न सारा ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 73 : 17.

रवरी कसौटी राम की, रवेरा टिकै न कोर ।
राम कसौटी सो टिकै, जो जीवत मृतक होइ ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 51 : 9.

41. साँई मेरा बांनिथा, सहजि करै व्योपार ।
बिन जंजी बिन पालै, लोले सब संसार ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 165 : 10.

साँई मैं लुभ बांहिरा, कौड़ी हू न लहउं ।
जौ सिर ऊपरि लुभ धनी, लौ लारवौं मोल कराउँ ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 166 : 12.

42. किनही बनाजियां कांसी तांबा, किन हो लग्न सुपारी ।
संतुह बनाजिया नामु गोविंद का औसी खेप हमारी ॥

हरि के नाम के बिआपारी,

हीरा हाथि चड़िआ निरमोलकु, दारि गई संसारी ॥

साँचे लार तउ साँचे लागे, साँचे के बिउहारी ।

साँची बसतु के भार चलाए, पहुँचे जाइ भंडारी ॥

आपदि रहन जवाहर मानिक, आपै है पासारी ।
 आपै दह दिस आप-चलौवै, निहचलु है बिआपारी ॥
 वमी : संत कबीर : 201 : 2 :

43. बोधि दीड़ि बौसि कारि डुंडै, बहुतक दुख सहै रे ।
 दास : क० ग्र० : 144 : 310 :

त्रिसनां नैं लोभ लहरि, कौम क्रोध नीरा ।
 मद मदर कदु मद, हरषि शोक तोरा ॥
 कौमिनी जरु कनक भवर, बोये बहु बीरा ।
 जब कबीर नवका हरि, खेवर गुरु कोरा ॥
 दास : क० ग्र० : 147 : 321 :

44. तुम्ह से बैदन हमसे रोगी, उपजो बिधा कैसे जीवै बियोगी ॥
 निस बाधुर मोहि चितवत जाई, अजहँ न आर मिले शम्भर ॥
 कहत कबीर हमकोँ दुख भारी, बिन दासन क्यूँ जीवहि मुरारी ॥
 दास : क० ग्र० : 139 : 287 :

जहौं जुरा मरण व्यापै नही, मुवा न सुणिये कोई ।
 चलौ कबीर तिहि देखउँ, जहौं वैद विधाता होई ॥
 दास : क० ग्र० : 60 : 1 :

45. तन मन उस्यो भुजंग भांमिनी, लहरी वार न पारा ।
 सो गारडू मिल्यो नही कबहुँ, पसर्यो विष विकरला ॥
 दास : क० ग्र० : 144 : 308 :

46. कजीगर इंकु कजाई, खम खलक लमासे आई ॥
 बाजीगर स्वांगु सेकला, आपनै रंग रवै अकेला ॥
 वमी : संत कबीर : 133 : 4 :

47 बाजन दे बाजंतरी, कलि कुकुही मत देड़ि /
तुम्हें बिरानी क्या परी, हूं अपनी आप निबेरि ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 187 : 13.

48 लेना देना सोहरा जौ दिल सूची होइ /
उस सौंचे दीवान भैं, पला न पकड़े कोइ ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 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".^{1*} He repeats the theme and Vaudevillè 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.^{2*}

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.^{3*} Kabir, in great detail, describes the omnipotence of Brahman:

1	CV	Kabir	194	9
	PNT	KG	163	9
2	CV	Kabir	194	10
	PNT	KG	164	10
3	CV	Kabir	193	7
	PNT	KG	163	7

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.^{5*}

Kabir's Brahman is all powerful and, as shown earlier, whatever happens, happens because of that omnipotent Lord and not because of the servant.^{6*} 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.^{7*} The poet advises his listeners to be carefree and leave everything to the Lord, as He is fully capable of doing everything and anything.^{8*} He is the Lord of the three worlds and is capable of delivering or fulfilling all desires of men.^{9*} 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.^{10*} Kabir's

5	CV	Kabir	169	44
	PNT	KG	147	44
6	SSD	KG	49	12
7	PNT	KG	166	13
	PNT	KG	176	12
8	PNT	KG	239	5
9	PNT	KG	27	47
	PNT	KG	26	45
10	PNT	KG	23	39
	PNT	KG	26	45

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.^{11*} 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.^{12*}

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.^{13*} This deep and profound emotion has been expressed by Kabir in extremely simple language and in an effective

11	PNT	KG	166	17
	PNT	KG	223	17
	PNT	KG	179	2
12	PNT	KG	165	9
13	SSD	KG	66	1

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."^{14*} 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.^{15*} 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."^{16*} 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.^{17*} He further elaborates and says that God can make the mustard seed a mountain and the mountain a mustard seed.^{18*} 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 *caurie*.^{19*} The devotee or the servant is longing for continuing

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.^{20*} 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.^{21*}

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.^{22*} When Guru and Govind both appeared before Kabir, he was in a

19	PNT	KG	166	12
20	SSD	KG	122	224
21	PNT	KG	166	13
22	Macauliffe	SR	144	11
	PNT	KG	139	28

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.^{23*} 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.^{24*}

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.^{25*} In another Sakhi 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.^{26*} 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

23	BP	SBS I	2, 4	
24	PNT	KG	3	1
25	PNT	KG	137	9
26	PNT	KG	139	30

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

27	PNT	KG	4	3
28*	CV	Kabir	160	34
	PNT	KG	140	34

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 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.^{29*}

In another Sakhi the poet compares man with a child and God is presented as a father. The child is the beloved baby 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:

29	Macauliffe	SR	197	III
	SSD	KG	236	150

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 conclusions 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 interpretation 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.^{31*} 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.^{32*}

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,

31 SSD
32 Macauliffe
SSD

KG
SR
KG

94 111
202 XII
251-52 209

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

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.^{34*} With his body he wants to make a lamp and with his life a wick and he resolves to fill 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.^{35*} 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 cohabit 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 (Sansar).^{38*} In another place Kabir says that a

36	CV	Kabir	165	20
	PNT	KG	143	20
37	RKV	Sant Kabir	125	35
38	Macauliffe	SR	212	XXX
	PNT	KG	8	11

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.^{39*} Kabir, therefore, advises the wife to relinquish egoism and meet her husband in humility and love, and not waste her life wandering in wilderness.^{40*}

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.^{41*} 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 awaiteth her Lord;
Her heart is not happy; she retraceth 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?⁴²

39	Macauliffe	SR	153	XXIII
	SSD	KG	100	139
40	SSD	KG	146	316
41	SSD	KG	8	46
42	Macauliffe	SR	176	LXV

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.^{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."^{44*} The remarks of Vaudeville in her footnote on this sakhi 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

43	CV	Kabir	324	134
	SSD	KG	174	96
44	CV	Kabir	169	45
	PNT	KG	147	45

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.^{45*} 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

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*}

46	Tagore	HPK	/ 45	XXXV
	HPD	Kabir	262	34
47	SSD	KG	143	306
48	Macauliffe	SR	166	LX
	PNT	KG	177	15

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.⁴⁹ 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.^{50*}

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.^{51*}

Almost the same idea and a similar sentiment had been expressed earlier, before Kabir, by Muni Ram Singh, a poet in the Jain tradition.^{52*} Upon comparing, one finds the superior skill and deeper under-

49	PNT	KG	177	15
50	PNT	KG	176	14
51	PNT	KG	9	29
52	PC	HSP	34	

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 Gouri 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*}

53	PNT	KG	175	6
54	Macauliffe	SR	209	XXIV
	PNT	KG	5	5

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

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 sublimates 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."⁵⁶ 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.

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56	Macauliffe	SR	210	XXV
	SSD	KG	143	304
	SSD	KG	123	230

1. भारी कहूँ तो बहु डरूँ, हरवा कहूँ तो भूठ ।
मैं क्या जानूँ राम की, नैनो कबहुँ न दीठ ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 163 : 9.

2. दीठा है तो कस कहूँ, कहें न कोई परिआइ ।
हरि जैसा वैसा रहे, हं हरखि हरखि गुन गाइ ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 164 : 10.

3. जावै मुंह माया नहीं, नाहीं रूप कुरूप ।
पुहुप बास वै पातरा, औसा वत्त अनूप ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 163 : 7.

4. राजासम भिति नहीं जानी वैरी ।

जल है घल करि घल है कूआ, कूप है मेरु करावै ।
धरती है आकास चढ़ावै, चढ़े आकास गिरावै ॥
भैरवारी है राहु करावै, राजा है भैरवारी ।
खल है मूरख पंडित करिबो, पंडित है मुगधारी ॥
नारी है जो पुरुख करावै, पुरुखन है जो नारी ।
कहु कबीर साधू को प्रीतम, तिसु मूरत बलिहारी ॥

वर्मा : संत कबीर : 240 : 2.

5. साईं कैरे बहुत गुन, लिखे जु हिरदय मांहि ।
पांनी पिऊं न डरपला, मति वै धोरि जाहि ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 147 : 44.

6. सारि सँ सब होत हैं, बंदै यै कहु नाहि ।
रहि यै परबत करे, परबत सारि मोहिं ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 49 : 12.

7. समरथ मेरा साइयां, सुतां देख जागाइ ।

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 166 : 13.

उस संमय का दास हूँ, कबहुँ न होइ अकाज ।

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 176 : 8.

8. चिंता दौड़ि अचिंत रहु, सारि है समरथ ।

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 239 : 5.

9. तुम कहियत त्रिभुवनपाति राजा ।

मनबोदित सब पून काजा ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 27 : 47

कह कबीर तुम समरथ दाता, चारि पदार्थ दैत न बार ।

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 26 : 95.

10. तुम समसारि नाहीं दयालु, मोहिं समसारि पायो ।

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 23 : 39.

तुम सन धनी उदार न कोऊ, खवनन सुनियत खुजस गुम्हार ।

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 26 : 45.

11. कबीर सिरजनहार बिन मेरा हितु न कोइ ।
 तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 166 : 17.
 निरप्रेही निरधार का गाहक दीनां नाथ ।
 तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 223 : 17.
 कब मारिहौ कब भेटहौ , पूरन परमानंद ।
 तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 179 : 2.
12. सबल सनेही हरि मिला तब उतरा पारि कबीर ।
 तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 165 : 9.
13. कबीर सारि लौ भिलहिंगै , पंडहिंगै कुसलात ।
 आदि अंत की कहंगा , उर अंतर की बात ॥
 दास : क० ग्र० : 66 : 1.
14. भुगरा एक नवरो राम ,
 जे तुम्ह अपने जन सँ काम ॥
 ब्रह्म बड़ा कि जिनि रूपाया , बेद बड़ा कि जहाँ ये आया ॥
 * * * * *
 * राम बड़ा कि रामहिं जानै ॥
 दास : क० ग्र० : 76 : 27.
15. कबीर कृता राम का , मुतिया मेरा नाउं ।
 गले राम की जेवड़ी , जित रवैचे तित जाउं ॥
 दास : क० ग्र० : 15 : 14.
16. मैं गुलाम मोहि बेचि गुहारि ।
 दास : क० ग्र० : 95 : 113.

17. उस संग्रम का दास हूं, कबहुं न होइ अकाज ।
पतिबला नांगी रहै, तौ उस ही पुरख कौ लाज ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 176 : 8.

18. साईं सौं सब होत है, बंदे सौं कहु नाहिं ।
राई तैं परबत करै, परबत राई मांहिं ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 165 : 11.

19. साईं मैं तुम बाधिरा, कौड़ी हूं न लहाउं ।
जौ खिर ऊपरि तुम धनीं, तौ लाखों मोल कराउं ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 166 : 12.

20. कब देखूं मेरे राम सनेही, जा बिन दुख पावै मेरी देखी ।
हूं तेरा पंथ निहाइं खौमी, कब राम लहुगे अंतरजायी ।
जैसे जल बिन मीन तलपै, ऐसे हरि बिन मेरा जिघा कलपै ।
निस दिन हरि बिन नोदन आवै, दरस पिथासी राम कपू खु पावै ।
कहै कबीर अब विवर्ष न कीजै, अपनौ जानि मोहिं दखन दीजै ।
दास : क० ग्र० : 122 : 224.

21. एक खड़ा हो नां लहै, एक खड़ा बिललाई ।
समरप मेरा साइभं, सुतों देख जगाइ ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 163 : 13.

22. गुरु गोविंद तौ एक है, दूजा सब आकार ।
आधा मैंटे हरि भजै, तब पावै दीदर ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 139 : 28.

23. गुरु गोविंद दौऊ खड़े, कौके लागू पाँथ ।
बलिहारे गुरु आपणें गोविंद दियो बताय ॥
खंर बानो संग्रह : 1 : 2, 4.

24. हमारै गुरु बड़े भिंगी ।
आनि कीटक करत भिंग सो आपणें रंगी ॥
पाइ औरै पंख औरै और रंग रंगी ।
जाति पाति न लखै कौई भगत भौ भंगी ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 3 : 1.

25. सतगुरु सांचा सूरिवां, सबद जु बाहा एक ।
लागत हो भुइं मिल गया, परा करेजै देख ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 137 : 9.

26. सतगुरु मेरा सूरिवां, ज्यौं तहैं लोहि लुहार ।
कखनी दै कंचन किया, ताइ लिया ततसार ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 139 : 30.

27. गुरु बिन दाता कौइ नहीं जग माँगनहार ।
तेनि लोक ब्रह्मंड में सब के भरतार ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 4 : 3.

28. सतगुरु हमसों शीभि करि, कहा एक परसंग ।
बरसा बादल प्रेम का, भोजि गया सब अंग ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 140 : 34.

29. पिता हमारे बड़ गौराई / तिसु पिता पहिं हौं क्यैं की जाई ॥
सतिगुरु मिले ता माग दिखाया / जगत पिता मेरे मन भाया ॥
हौं पूरे लेखी तू बाप मेरा / रखे बाहर दुहा बसरा ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 236 : 150.

30. पूत पिघारे पिता कौं, गौहंनि लाग़ा धाई /
लोभ मिठाई हाथि दै, आपुन गया भुलाई ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 238 : 24.

31. हेरि जननी मै बालिक तेरा,

कोहे न औगुण बकसु मेरा ॥

सुत अपराध करै दिन केरे, जननी कै चित रहै न तेरे ॥

कर गहि केसि करै जो धारा, तऊ न हेत उलारे माता ॥

कहे कबीर एक बुधि बिचारी, बालक दुखी दुखी महतारी ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 94 : 111.

32. सुत अपराध करल है जैसे / जननी चोखि न राखसि तेरे ॥

रामज्या हौं बारिक तेरा / कोहे न खंडसि अकगुन मेरा ॥

जै आहि कोप, करै करि धाया / तभी चोखि न राखसि माया ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 251-52 : 209.

34. यह तन जारौं मरि करौं, लिखौं राम का नाउं /

लेखनि करौं करंठ की, लिखि लिखि राम पठाउं ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 144 : 21.

35. इस तन का दीवा करौं, बारी मैलौं जीव /

लोही सीधौं तेस ज्यौं, तब मुरख देखौं पीव ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 144 : 22.

36. यह तन जारी मसि करौं, ज्युं धूषां जाइ सरगि ।
मति वै रंम दया करै, बरसि बुझावै अगि ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 143 : 20.

37. हम तुम बीच भरओ नहीं कोई ।
तुमहिं सुकंठ नारि हम सोई ॥

वर्मा : संत कबीर : 125 : 35.

38. हरि मोरा पिउ मैं हरि की बहुरिया ।
रंम बड़े मैं तनक लहुरिया ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 8 : 11.

39. जौ पै पिय के भनि नाहीं भाये ।
तौ का परोखनि कै हुलसाये ॥

तन मन जीवन सौंपि सरिरा, लाहि सुहागिन कहै कबीरा ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 100 : 139.

40. नारी पुरिष बसै इक संग, दिन दिन जाइ अबोलै ।
तुजि अभिमान मिलै नहीं पीव कै, दुदत बन बन जौलै ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 146 : 316.

41. बिरह जलाइ मैं जलौं, मैं बिरहिन कै दुख ।
झाँट न बैसों डरपता, मति जलि उड़ै सुख ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 8 : 46.

43. कबीर फल लागे फलानि, पाकन लागी आँव ।
जाइ पड़्यै खसम कौ, जौ बीधि न खरि कौव ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 194/96.

44. कबीर सुंदरि यों कहै सुनि हो केत सुजांन ।
बेगि मिलौ तुम आईकै, नहिं तर तजौ परान ॥

लिवारी : क० ग्र० : 147:45.

45. सो मेरा राम कबै छारि आवै,
ता देखे मेरा जिय सुख पावै ॥

निसि वासुर मन रहै उदासा जैसे चाहेगी नीर पिधासा ॥
कहै कबीर अति आतुरतारि, हमको बेगि मिलौ राम राई ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 122:225.

46. बालम आओ हमारे गेह रे ।

तुम बिन दुखिया देह रे ॥

सब कोइ कहै तुम्हरी नारी, मोकीं लागत लाज रे ।

दिल से नहीं दिल क्लि लगायो, सब लग कैसा खेहर रे ।

अन्न न भावै नींद न आवै, गृह बर धरे न धीर रे ।

काशनि को है बालम प्यारा, क्यों प्यारे को नीर रे ।

है कोइ ऐसा पर उधकरी, पिय सों कहै सुनाय रे ।

अब तो बिहाल कबीर भयो है, बिन देखे जिय जाय रे ॥

टिबेदी : कबीर : 262:35.

47. वै दिन कब आवैगै भाइ ।

जा कारनि हम देह धरी है, मिलिबो अंग लगाइ ।

दास : क० ग्र० : 143:306.

48. पैवकू दै दिन चारि है सादुरण जाणा ।
जँधा लोक न जाणई भूरखु सघाणा ॥
कहु उठिया बँधै धनि खड़ी । याहँ घर आयै मुकलाउ आयै ॥

49. साहिब होइ दयाल कृपा करै अपना करल सवोर ।
ता सोहागणि जानिए, गुरु सबद बिचोरै ॥
दास : क० ग्र० : 233-34 : 141.

50. कबोर जे कोइ खुंदरी, जानि कै बिभिचार ।
ताहि न कबहुँ आदरै, पल पुरिख भरतार ॥
रिवारि : क० ग्र० : 177 : 15.

51. जो खुंदरि साँइ भजै, लजै आन की आस ।
ताहि न कबहुँ परिहरै, पलक न दौड़ै पास ॥
रिवारि : क० ग्र० : 176 : 14.

52. जा कारनि मै जाइया, सनमुख मिलिधा आर ।
धनि मैली पिउ ऊजला, लागि सके नहिं पाइ ॥
रिवारि : क० ग्र० : 170 : 29.

53. हुं सुगुणी पिउ गिगुणउ, पिल्लकरवणु गीसंगु ।
एकहि अंगि बसंत यहं, मिलिउठा अंगहि अंगु ॥
मुनिरामसिंह : पाहुण दोहः 30 : 100.

54. नारि कहाँ और की, रहै और सँग सोइ ।
जार भीत हृदया वसै, खसम खुसी क्यों होइ ॥
रिवारि : क० ग्र० : 175 : 5.

54. दुल्हाहिनीं गावहु मंगल-चार ।
 हंम धरि औधे राजा राम भरार ॥
 तन रति करि मै मन रति करिहौं पांचउ तत्त बराली ।
 रामदेव मोरै पाहुनै आए मै जोबन मैमाली ॥
 सरोर संरोवर बेरी करिहौं ब्रह्मा बेद बिचारा ।
 रामदेव संगि भांवरि लेहहौं धनि धनि भाग हमारा ॥
 सुर वैलसीं कौलिग (कौटिक ९) आये मुनिवर सहस्र अठाली ।
 कहै कबीर हंम ब्याहि चलेहैं पुरिख रुकु अबिनांसी ॥
 तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 5 : 5.

55. आज दिन के मै जाउं बलिहारी ।
 पीरम साहब ओहे मेरे पहुना, घर आंगन लगे खुसौना ॥
 द्विवेदी : कबीर : 286 : 88.

56. मेरी अखियाँ जान सुजाँन भई ।
 देवर भरम ससुर संग तजि करि, हरि पीव तहों गई ॥
 दास : क० ग्र० : 143 : 304.

मेरी मति बौरी राम बिसीरयो, किहि बिधि रहन रहूँ हो दयाल ।
 सेजै रहूँ नैन नहीं देखौं, यह दुख कासौ कहूँ ही दयाल ॥
 सासु की दुखी ससुर की प्यारी, जेठ के तरस उरौं रे ।
 नगद सहेली गरब गहेली, देवर के बिरह जरौं हो दयाल ॥
 दास : क० ग्र० : 123 : 230.

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: 'Prasthantrayee' 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 Vishishtadvaitin. The same inquiry leads Madhva to Dvaita, Nimbarka to Bhedabheda and finally Ballabha to Shuddhadvaita.

Ramanuja's system is called Vishista-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 (visheṣanas) 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 Viśiṣṭadvaita 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, Nimbarka takes Brahman to be saguna, transcendent yet immanent. The accepted interpretation of the saguna concept is that Brahman with prakṛiti 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 Taittiriya 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 'brih' '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	Brahma Sutra	3	2	15
2	Ken Upanishad		1	3	
3	Taittiriya Upanishad		2	4	
4	Mundak Upanishad		3	2	9

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.⁵ 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

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".⁶

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 Brahman, or whether her Beloved resides in her heart.^{7*} 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 sages	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*}

8	SSD	KG	13	3
9	SSD	KG	13	4
10	PNT	KG	5	5

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.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.^{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

11	Dwyer	Kabir Ki Bhakti Bhavna	19
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?^{13*} In that Sakhi 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.^{14*} 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.'^{15*}

Here the poet emphasises 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

13	SSD	KG	4	8
14	Ram Singh	Pahud Doha	14	41
15	PNT	KG	167	4

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."¹⁶ Kabir asserts with confidence that as long as the essence is not known, only so long are the emancipator and the emancipated talked about.^{17*} 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".^{18*} "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'".^{19*} 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.^{20*}

16	Macauliffe	SR	291	LXXXVII
	SSD	KG	12	37
17	PNT	KG	31	54
18	SSD	KG	84	65
19	SSD	KG	117	203
20	CV	Kabir	173	6
	PNT	KG	149	6

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.^{21*}

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.^{22*} And, according to Kabir, achieving Ram or Prabhu means losing oneself. "When you embrace Him you have already lost yourself."^{23*} 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.^{24*}

21	CV	Kabir	199	1
	PNT	KG	166	1
22	CV	Kabir	310	3
	PNT	KG	242	3
23	SSD	KG	137	282
24	Macauliffe	.SR	249	IV
	RKV	Sant Kabir	192	4

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."^{25*} 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.^{26*} According to Vedanta thought in general, life in sansar (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.^{27*} 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

24	Macauliffe	SR	249	IV
	RKV	Sant Kabir	192	4
25	SSD	KG	80	43
26	SSD	KG	18	23
27	SSD	KG	86	72

there is no consciousness of 'thou' and 'I'. This is the state of complete unity with God."^{28*} 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 Paramatman 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*}

28	SSD	KG	146	292
	SSD	KG	108	169
29	SSD	KG	111	179

Kabir uses 'jiva' for Brahman and Atman both. (see: c.v. Kabir p 148) He has word 'hansa' (swan) also in the same manner, i.e., 'jivah jiva samana' or 'hansahi hansa milavahige' to show the complete oneness of Brahman and Atman.

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 Brahman. 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.^{30*} 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 Smadhi

without attachment) and Japa in Ajapa, the visible into invisible and the self into the Self.^{31*}

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

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.^{32*}

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.^{33*} 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

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

water turned into ice, then the ice itself melted: all that was, has become Himself and there is nothing left to say.^{34*} 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 Annette 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 ghazals, 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 (vishistadvaita). 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

himself to that love by which tribe and caste and lineage are effaced.^{41*} 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.^{42*} 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?"^{43*} 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.^{44*}

42	SSD	KG	229	126
43	PNT	KG	139	24
44	PNT	KG	97	166

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 causes, for example, the clod of clay.⁴⁵ 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.^{46*} 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.^{47*}

45.	Vedanta Sutra	Introduction	XV	
46	SSD	KG	80	44
47	SSD	KG	84	64

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."

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7. सुनु सखी पिउं महि जिउं बसै जिउं महि बसै कि पीउं ।
जीव पीउं बूझै नद्ये घट महि जीव कि पीउं ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 200 : 189.

8. हेरत हेरत है सखी रह्या कबीर हिराइ ।
बूंद समानी समद में सो कर ही जाइ ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 13 : 3.

9. हेरत हेरत है सखी रह्या कबीर हिराइ ।
समद समाना बूंद में सो कर होया जाइ ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 13 : 4.

10. दुखहिनीं गावहु मैगलचार ।
हंम चारि आर राजा रंम भरतार ॥

कहै कबीर हंम व्याहि जलै हैं पुरिख रुक जाविनांसी ।

लिवारी : क० ग्र० :

12. बहुत दिनन में प्रीतम आए ।

भाग बड़े चारि बैठें पार ॥

लिवारी : क० ग्र० : 6 : 6.

13. मेरा मन सुमिरे राम कूं मेरा मन रामहिं आहि ।

अब मन रामहिं ह्वै रह्या, सीस नवाकीं काहि ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 4 : 8.

14. बंधु बंधु जिणु भणइ को बंधु हलि उत्पु ।

णियेदेहाई बसंत यहं जइ जाणिउ परमदु ॥

मुनिरामानंद : पाहुण दोहा, कारंजा जैन सीरीज, दोहा 41, पृ. 14.

15. जा कारन मैं जाइया सोरि पाया और ।

सोरि फिरि आपन भया, जासौं कहता और ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 167 : 4.

17. तारन तरुन तबै लीग कहिए, जब लीग तत्त न जानां ।

एक रीम देखा सबदिन मैं कहै कबीर मन मानां ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 31 : 54.

18. मैं मैं मैं जब लग मैं कीन्हां, तब लग मैं करता नहीं चीन्हां ।

कहै कबीर सुनहु नरनाह, नां हम जीवत न मंवाले मांछ ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 84 : 65.

19. मन का भ्रम मन ही मैं भागा,

सहज रूप हरि खेलन लागे ॥

मैं तैं तैं मैं ए द्वै नाहीं, आपै अकल सकल दृष्ट माहीं ।

दास : क० ग्र० : 117 : 203.

20. तूं तूं करता तूं भया, मुझ मैं रही न हूँ ।

वारी लै नाउं परि, जित देखौं तित तूं ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 149 : 6.

21. जब मैं चा तब हरि नहीं, अब हरि है मैं नाहिं ।

सब अंधियारा मिटि गया, जब दीपक देखा मांहिं ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 166 : 1.

22. सहजै सहजै सब गये, खुल वित कामिनि काम ।

एकमेक हवै मिलि रह्या दास कबीरा राम ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 242 : 3.

23. कहै कबीर सो पाया, प्रभु भेंट आप गंवाया ।

दास : क० ग्र० : 137 : 202.

24. बहुरि हम कहि आवहिनि ।

आवन जाना हुकमु तिसै का हुकमै बूझि समावहिनि ॥

जब भूकै पंच धातु की रचना औसै भस्म चुकावहिनि ॥

दखनु दौड़ि भय समदरसी, स्को नाम धिजावहिनि ॥

जित एक लाख तित ही लागे तैसे कस कभावहिनि ॥

हरि जो कृपा करे जउ अपना तौ गुर के सबदि सभावहिनि ॥

जोवर मरद मरद फुनि जोवद पुनरपि जन्म न होई ।

कुहु कबीर जो नामि सामे सुन रहिया तिव सोई ॥

वर्मा : संत कबीर : 192 : 4.

25. हरि मरिहैं तौ हमहूँ मरिहैं, हरि न मरै हम कहै कूं मरिहैं ।

कहै कबीर मन मनहि मिलावा, अमर भये सुख सागर पावा ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 80 : 43.

26. कबीर सुपिनै रैन के पारस जिय मैं दिव ।

जे सोऊँ तो दोइ जमा, जे जागूँ तो रुक ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 10 : 23.

27. पूरा मिल्या तबै सुख उपज्यौ तन की तपनि बुझानी ।

कहै कबीर भवबंधन हूँ, जोलिहि जोहि समानी ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 86 : 72.

28. सेई तुम्ह, सेई हम, सेई कहियत, जब आपा पर नाहीं जाना ।

जु जल मैं जल पौंसि न निकसै, कहै कबीर मन मोनां ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 148 : 292.

जामैं हम सेई हम ही मैं, नीर मिले जल रुक हुआ ।

दास : क० ग्र० : 108 : 169.

29. ज्यू बिम्बहिं प्रतिबिम्ब समाना, उदिक कुम्भ बिगराना ।
कहै कबीर जानि भ्रम भागा, जीवहिं जीव समाना ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 111 : 179.

30. बहुरि हम कहैं कैं आवहिंगे ।
बिदुरे पंचतत्ता की रचना, तब हम रंमहि पाँवहिगे ॥
पृथी का गुण पाँगी सोख्या, पाँनी तेज मिलावहिगे ।
तेज पवन मिले पवन सबद मिलि, सहज समाधि लगौवहिगे ॥
जैसे बहु कंचन के भूषन, ये कहि गालि तवौवहिगे ।
ऐसैं हम लोक वैद के बिदुरे, सुनिहि मोहि समौवहिगे ॥
जैसे जलहि तरंग तरंगिनी, ऐसैं हम दिखलौवहिगे ।
कहै कबीर स्वामी सुखसागर, हंसहि हंस मिलौवहिगे ॥

दास : क० ग्र० : 102 : 150.

31. सुरति समानी निरति में, अजपा माँहै जाप ।
लेख समाना अलेख में, यौं आपा माँहै आप ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 168 : 10.

32. दरियाव की लहर दरियाव है जी,
दरियाव और लहर में भिन्न कैयम् ।
ठहे लो नीर है, बँठे लो नीर है,
कह्यो लो दूसरा किस तरह कैयम् ।
उसी का फेर के नाम लहर पश,
लहर के कहे क्या नीर स्वोधम ॥

दिवेदी : कबीर : 245 : 14.

33. भली भई जो मैं परा, गरि दसा सब भूलि ।
पालो गलि पानी भया, दुरि मिलिया उस भूलि ॥

तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 167 : 3.

34. पानी ही है हिम भया, हिम ही गया ढिलाइ ।
जो कुछ था सोई भया, अब कुछ कहा न जाइ ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 168 : 9.

35. हेरत हेरत है सखी, रहा कबीर दिशइ ।
बूंद समानो समुंद मैं, सो कत ढेरी जाइ ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 165 : 6.

हेरत हेरत है सखी, रहा कबीर दिशइ ।
समुंद समाना बूंद मैं, सो कत ढेरी जाइ ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 165 : 7.

40. मन लगा उनमन सौं, उनभुनि मनहिं विलंगि ।
लौन विलंगा पानिया, पानी लौन विलंगि ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 172 : 40.

41. कबीर हरदी पीयरी चूना ऊजल भाइ ।
राम सनेही यू मिलै, दोनउ बस गंवाइ ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 209 : 3.

42. कुछ कबीर उहु राम की अंसु, उस कागद पर मिटै न मूसु ॥
दास : क० ग्र० : 229 : 126.

43. कबीर गुरु गरवा मिला, मिलि गया औरै लौन ।
जाति पांति कुल सब मिटै, नाउं धरौंगे कौन ॥
तिवारी : क० ग्र० : 139 : 24.

44. कबीर बिग्या राम दुहाई, तुम जिनि बिगौ मेरे भाई ।
 भँदन के दिग विरु जु भैला, बिगारि बिगारि सो चंद हैला ॥
 पारस को जो लोह दुवैला, बिगारि बिगारि सो कंचन हैला ॥
 गंगा मै जे नीर मिलैगा, बिगारि बिगारि गंगोदक हैला ॥
 कहै कबीर जे राम कहैला, बिगारि बिगारि सो रामहि हैला ॥
 तिवारी : क० ग्र० : १७ : १६६ ।

46. पंचरत अविगर पै उतपनां, रखै किया निवासा ।
 बिहुरे तब फिरि सहज समानां, रख रही नही आसा ॥
 जल मै कुंभ कुंभ मै जल है, बाहरि भीतरि पानी ।
 फूटा कुंभ जल जलहि समानां, यह बर क्यौ गियानी ॥
 दास : क० ग्र० : ३० : ५५ ।

47. कहै रे नलिनी तू कुम्हिलौनी ।
 तेरे ही नाल खरोवर पौनी ॥
 जल मै उतपति जल मै बास, जल मै नलिनी लै निवास ॥
 ना तलि तपति न अपरि आग, लै हेतु कहु वासनि आगि ॥
 कहै कबीर जे उदिक समान, ते नही मूए हमरे जान ॥
 दास : क० ग्र० : ३५ : ६५ ।

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 Kabir's 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 twins 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 (advait) idea, some see advaita with distinction (Vishistadvaita) while others see difference and non-difference (Bhedabheda). 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, dvait 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.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Advaita	:	Non-dual. Denial of dualism of the self and world, spirit and matter, and assertion of oneness of Brahman and Atman, Vedanta concept.
Advaitavada	:	Non-dualism. Vedanta theology relating Shankar's philosophy of absolute monism.
Advaitin	:	Votary of the philosophy of Advaita.
Ajapajap	:	That stage of prayer in which all outer forms, words, rosary etc., are dispensed with being, an internal condition.
Anshanshi Bhava	:	A philosophical view holding that Atman, the individual self, is a part of Brahman the Universal soul.
Atman	:	Individual self, the spiritual reality in man.
Avatara	:	Descent or coming down, the human appearance of the unmanifested god such as Ram or Krishna.

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.
- Kukhi : 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 Sabd or by its colloquial name Sabad.
- Pandit : Learned person, a title for Brahmins.
- Paras : The philosophers stone; by its mere touch the iron turns into gold.
- Parmatma : The Universal Soul.
- Pir : A mohammadan 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.

Ramaini : 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 experineces 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 Brahman 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 utterance 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 (Chou~~h~~ashi Siddha) and nine Naths (Nava Nath), are famous and were very popular at the time of Kabir. Their 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.

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