

A Study on Ideals of Kabir Das and His Contribution in Human Unity

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Abstract:

Famous as a pioneer of the liberal social system, Saint Kabir Das was one of the major indices of the medieval Bhakti movement. Although permanent evidence is not available, according to most beliefs, the poet Kabir Das was born in Kashi (Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh) in the mid-15th century. The details of Kabir's life is still unknown till date. As far as recorded, there are stories of Kabir's birth mystery has a similar trail found in Biblical texts. Among his most famous writings are his *Doha* or couplets and poems that sometimes refer the Sikh scripture Guru Granth Sahib. Kabir was deeply focused on his spiritual knowledge. In Davistan in Mosinfani and Aineakbari in Abu'l-Fazur, he is called "Muwahid" or "Believer of God." He criticized both Hinduism and Islam, the former as per him being misinterpretation of the Vedas. He frequently questioned meaningless rituals such as sacred threads and circumcision. Kabir is a brave pioneer, a great pioneer in the unification of the Hindu and Muslim communities of India, an apostle of human faith, and taught that God has been revealed to all of humanity. Although his life is a mystery and lesser known, his contribution as a social and religious reformer has become a promoter of social progress and laid a solid foundation for modern society. However, the implementation of Kabir's philosophy is still incomplete and uninterpreted. With the inspiration of this gap, the current review of Kabir Das's ideals and contributions to human unity takes into account the legendary saint's theory and view of human unity as an important element of a stable and constructive society.

Keywords:

Ideals of Kabir Das, Kabir's Ideals on Human Unity, 15th Century Bhakti Movement, Kabir's Philosophies

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I. Introduction

The current society where we all are living these days is considered to have progressed and has abundant space of inclusion and liberalism. Yet, we find facts still now that reveals abundant instances of discriminations, injustice, and lack of morality among people to erupt violence and severe conflicts. This context certainly makes us look back to the historic personalities and reforms that took place to uplift people and the society from their downtrodden state. One such personality is Kabir Das, known to be the central figure of 15th century Bhakti Movement, where he along with many other profound progressive philosophers, Tulsidas, Surdas, Meera bai and others protested on society's backwardness and rigidity in the name of caste differences, belief in God and moral values. Even today, although not as consistent as the days of Kabir Das, these problems exist. Therefore, this review attempts to rejuvenate Kabir's ideals of Human Unity that he considered as the bedrock of peaceful and constructive society. At the beginning, the primary areas should be described as background to bring better understandability to the review discussed later in this paper.

1.1 Life of Kabir Das and His Evolution as a Saint Poet

Kabir, a 15th-century identity, belonged to the *Julaha* society, who led his life on hard work to sustain himself and his family. He was not a traditional saint who were away from social liabilities [12]. Theories about his birth are contradictory, making it difficult to draw any conclusions. Saint Kabir Das was the son of a Brahmin woman, according to popular belief. His mother abandoned him as a baby leaving him near a water reservoir. A Muslim weaver named Niru from Banaras discovered him and took him home. His wife raised the youngster as if he were her own son. Kabir was the name given to the child.

He had gone to Meghar near the end of his life, despite the fact that he lived in Kashi, to dispute the traditional notion that "to die in Kashi would deserve admittance to heaven and to die in Meghar would lead to hell."

Kabir lacked a scientific education but was a revolutionary with wise ideas. He aspired to become a chela (disciple) of Ramananda, a well-known saint in Varanasi, to satisfy his spiritual thirst. According to Khajinat al-Asafiya, Kabir was taught by a Sufi pir named Shaikh Taqqi. Kabir's teaching and philosophy are heavily influenced by Sufism. In Varanasi, there is a neighbourhood called Kabir Chaura that is thought to be where he grew up [15].

His ideas were both practical and unconventional. He was a saint, poet, mystic, profound thinker, social reformer, and other things all rolled into one [12]. He was a common man who spoke the common man's dialect, walked with them, taught them, and lived like them. His occupation was weaving, and his life aim was to weave the human civilization into a "well-knit human network" in all of its dimensions.

1.2 Philosophies and Teachings of Kabir Das

Kabir's poetry reflects his personal philosophy on life. His writings were mostly concerned with reincarnation and karma ^[11]. He was a firm believer in living a simple life. He was a firm believer in the concept of God's oneness. He was a proponent of the '*Koi bole Ram Ram Koi Khudai*' concept. The primary goal was to transmit the word that there is only one God who created this beautiful universe, regardless of whether you shout the name of a Hindu God or a Muslim God. When it came to Kabir Das' views and principles, he was opposed to the caste structure imposed by the Hindu community, as well as the idea of worshipping divine idols. In against, he promoted *Vedantic Atman* notions. He was a supporter of the Sufi's simple lifestyle. Check out his poems and two-line lines known as *Dohas*, which speak to his mind and spirit, to get a good sense of sant Kabir's philosophy.

1.3 Bhakti Movement and Role played by Kabir Das

The Bhakti movement was where the vast Vedantic vision's full ramifications were clearly revealed. The basic message of this massive religious movement was twofold: first, caste (and group) issues are meaningless; whoever is devoted to God is God's blessed. Second, it was unanimously affirmed that pure selfless devotion (bhakti), not ceremonies or knowledge (jnana), is the true religion or path to God ^[13].

In his role in the Bhakti Movement of the 15th century, Kabir taught to follow the road of equality and harmony. Kabir raised awareness about the need to eliminate discrimination in society. Mahatma Gandhi, Deen Dayal Upadhyay, Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar, Ram Manohar Lohia are among others ^[11], all followed the same beliefs.

Kabir pushed for syncretism (the mixing of religions), which he believes will assist to alleviate societal inequity. Love, honesty, truth, faith in oneself, fostering reflection, and other simple characteristics were emphasised by Kabir. He campaigned against socio-economic injustice.

Kabir was an outspoken opponent of caste. He emphasised that everyone was created equal in God's creation. He counselled his followers to abandon unnatural habits such as untouchability, high and low sentiments, and so forth. He was also against idol prayers, as well as the worship of various gods and goddesses, as well as religious rituals and ceremonies. Kabir was a vehement opponent of hypocrisy and despised those who had two sets of norms.

He highlighted that love was the only means by which the entire human race could be united in an unbreakable bond of brotherhood. He urged everyone to let go of animosity and continue to love one another. He emphasised the importance of being in the company of decent people who uphold ideals and ethics.

Kabir Das' writings, which include titles like Kabir Granthawali, Bijak, Anurag Sagar, and Sakhi Granth, had a significant impact on the Bhakti movement. Guru Granth Sahib, the scripture of Sikhism, contains his verses. He was best known for his '*Kabir Ke Dohe*'^[11] two-line couplets.

1.4 Essence of Kabir Das's Teachings as a Channel of Social Reform

To everyone, Saint Kabir preached a simple message of love and tolerance. His teachings were based on the belief in a single God. God, he believed, was unlimited, unbounded, pure, omniscient, and all-powerful. Kabir was a devout atheist who despised idol worship and the caste system. According to studies of the Bhakti Movement's ambitions for a caste-free society, Kabir and Tulsidas — two of the movement's most prominent figures — wrote poetry about "caste problems"^[16].

Kabir's purpose was to preach a universal religion based on love. He felt it always that faith without devotion was no devotion at all, and that it should be joined by hymns glorifying the magic of Almighty God. Kabir was the first saint to unite Hinduism and Islam^[14]. "The Hindus pay regards to the temple, the Muslims visit the mosque," Yugalanand explains, "but Kabir visits the place where both gathered with no rages." These two religions resemble two branches meeting in the middle, from which a sprout arises.

He always urged people to be sympathetic to other living beings and to love unconditionally. Kabir had decried that unbearable state of injustice, as he stated^[15]

Karni karni sab kahe, karni maahe bibek Vaha karni bahe jaan dey, jo nahin parkhe ek

That is, justice entails treating everyone equally, as taught by Sant Kabir in his couplets.

Contribution of Kabir Das to the Nation

Saint Kabir Das, a mediaeval Indian saint associated with the Bhakti and Sufi movements, is well-known in North India for his Bhakti movement. In the Kashi area, his life cycle is concentrated (also known as the Banaras or Varanasi). He had a connection to Julaha's weaving cast and employment. Along with Farid, Ravidas, and Namdev, his significant contribution to the Bhakti Movement in India is regarded as a pioneering one. He was a saint of mixed mystical character (Nath tradition, Sufism, and bhakti), making him a unique religious figure in his own right. He said that true love and life are found on the path of pain.

Kabir Das's works

The books authored by Kabir Das are mostly dohas and songs compilations. There are 72 works in all, with Rekhtas, Kabir Bijak, the Suknidhan, Mangal,

Vasant, Sabdas, Sakhis, and Holy Agams being some of the most significant and well-known.

Kabir Das' style of writing & language are both simple and elegant. His dohas, which are rich of meaning and importance, were written confidently and spontaneously by him. He penned his words from the depths of his soul. In his modest dohas and couplets, he has condensed the essence of the entire world. His words are both enlightening and encouraging.

2. Objective

The review article on Kabir's ideal on Human Unity is conceived and worked out accordingly to provide sufficient insight on the relevance and validity of his guidelines when judged with current day's societal conditions. The author expects the review to support for the necessary societal development programs that incorporate/correct the existing difficulties, such as, poverty, racial/gender/religious discrimination, injustice, etc.

3. Methodology

The present review article on Ideals of Kabir Das and His Contribution in Human Unity is entirely composed based on the existing authentic management and industrial governance updates and articles that are published in acknowledged online portals/publications. Genuine facts and information's are gathered from trusted web libraries and institute portals are thoroughly studied, sorted and selected based on their relevance.

4. Literature Review

Suneet Varma (2014) ^[1] composed a Case Study on the influence of the Sant Kabir Das who played a distinct role in 15th century Bhakti Movement of India. The author stated the life and teachings of Kabir to follow liberal ideals beyond the boundaries between various religious and caste groups. He was a sharp protestant of sectarianism. Kabir, according to the author helped us realize the fissures in our own mind, the violence (gross or subtle) and the dishonesties that we commit and defend our ego. In his article he included the Kabir's principles of unity to be the constructive base of the society eliminating conflicts or unrest. The great Bhakti saint identified discrimination as the key factor of weak violent society. Alternately, Kabir taught love, integrity and equality of every mankind as the true spirit of stable human community.

Rajnandini Das (2016) ^[2] made a comparative study of Sankaradeva and Kabir Das, the two the greatest reformers of India. His research analysed the context of the Bhakti movement in terms of the ideals preached by Sankara Deva and Kabir

Das. The study's main focus was their core outlook of India's social life during the era, which had clearly taken on a new dimension. Both of these great personalities, according to the author, produced a steady idealism in society by erasing caste, religion, and community divides and creating a united society. In Assam, Sankara Deva preached the Bhakti ideology to the people, teaching them the principles of 'Love,' 'Tolerance,' and eventually Bhakti or 'devotion' towards the Almighty God, according to the academics. Sankara Deva wished to transform the Assamese society at the time in the spirit of Vaishnava Dharma, with Bhakti as the central preoccupation. Kabir Das, like many other Vaishnavites, was a Vaishnavite. Nirguna Bhakti had a profound influence on him, and he had a great faith and reverence for the truth beyond worldly affairs. Kabir Das defined his God as Nirguna, according to the author. He attempted to prove Bhakti's superiority as the road to attaining Supreme Being.

In his paper, K. Shah (2017) ^[3] identified Saint (Sant) Kabir Das as the most important and notable poet of the Bhakti and Sufi movements in North India. According to the study, he was the first Indian saint to bring Hinduism and Islam together by providing a global way that was acceptable to both religions. The author mentions Kabir as a reformer and critic who passionately opposes ritualistic and austere approaches of redemption. With his straightforward approach to all facets of human existence, he publicly questioned all faiths and gave Indian philosophy a new path.

Prabira Sethy (2017) ^[4] attempted to recreate Kabir's story by looking at where he was born, who his family were, and other unknown information about his early life and development. This article covered Kabir's main philosophies about syncretism by melding the disparity of wealth, higher and lower castes, Hindus and Muslims, and Hindus and Muslims by his statement to maintain equality, love, compassion, and coexistence to one another in place of enmity, jealousy, egotism, fragmentation, and has shown the way for human beings to appreciate for one another.

K. C. Sharma et al. (2017) ^[5] presented a summarized comparison of Kabir, the eminent saint and contributor of North India's Bhakti Movement with the influence of Sufi Movement, Nanak's teachings (Founder of Sikhism) and life and philosophy of Shaikh Noor-ud Din – the introducer of Rishi Movement. Referring to the contemporary historic backdrop where all these religious philosophies sprouted and spread in various parts of India the authors inferred that the sole concept of each of these ideals indicate towards integrated humanity, God as an unipotent entity and the vitality of love as a founding element of a constructive society. Further, the article described the philosophies as inspired from their master that the disciples of Kabir Das had developed and spread afterwards.

N. Dabhade (2018) ^[6] elaborated the significance of Kabir Das's philosophies in the era when he lived and the reforms achieved through his teachings in the religious views, social discriminations and belief in the existence of God as observed in current days. Foremost vital ideals that according to the author were most needed even in today's world were protest against caste system, sharing of love to every mankind and religious integrity.

Dr. R. Das (2018) [7] presented life, works and Saint Kabir Das's role in 15th century Bhakti Movement of India. The study mentioned Ramananda as the fore-figure who provided the doctrines of Bhakti. However, it was Kabir Das and his followers who enhanced the movement actually. The research discussed on Kabirdas's religious inclination as a prominent

Vaishnavite. Nirguna Bhakti had a profound influence on him, and he had a great faith and reverence for the truth beyond worldly affairs. Kabir Das was referred to as a Bhakti Dharma advocate. Pomposity and ego, he believed, were impediments on the way to union with the Divine Soul. His teachings influenced both the Haves and the Have-Nots in society.

Certainly, the traditional society of his time presented him with difficulties. Kabir Das' teachings, on the other hand, had a universal humanistic appeal, and he was able to bridge the Hindu-Muslim divide. His preachings and teachings brought a sense of peace to North India at a time when communities were furious over societal give-and-take. Kabir Sas was a devotee who regarded Rama' as a friend and promoted Bhakti and a secular religion throughout society. He wished to improve society through the Bhakti religion, which he believed could be agreeable to people of all faiths.

Himanshu Roy (2019) [8] gave an analysis of the political context around Kabir's beliefs, which was a rhetoric of an alternative society at the time. Kabir's critique of the state, particularly judicial and revenue administration, his utopia of Begumpura, an ideal village polity free of privately owned land, taxation, and unfairness, his secularism based on monotheism and syncretism with no critique of patriarchy, or his idea of gender parity were all discussed extensively. Along with his praxis in the private and public domains, which were integrated rather than separate, were covered.

N. Samadder (2019) [9] analysed the life, ideals, and guidelines of Bhakti period saint poet Kabir Das as a pioneer of social reforms whose essence is still effective in current society. Kabir's institutionalisation of the society as constructive, caste neutral, unified without any religious/social barriers was, according to the author was the base to develop social awareness. Samadder argued that Kabir's teachings of human morality, such as, good conduct, honesty, simplicity and love were support of mankind's integrity. Also, his ideals of peace, non-violence and determination to stand against corrupt social/ruling systems were as per the author the inspiration for the deciding on right and wrong of the contemporary world.

Divya Jyoti (2021) [10] discussed on Kabir's preachings of equality as found in his couplets. The research was expanded to include them in the setting of India. The second key point explored in this dissertation was Kabir's present relevance in his adamant defiance to the caste system's hierarchy. According to the report, Kabir had a significant influence on Ambedkar, as evidenced by recent research by scholars like as Kanwal Bharti. The explanation, according to the author, was that they were both victims of the same socio-religious background. The Maulvies and Pundits, who were not only the religious heads of their different religions but also responsible for enforcing the piety practices and the Varna system, were the acme of power hierarchies for Kabir. Through Kabir's rebellious voice and disregard for the Brahmins' intellectual authority and knowledge system, which

was exceedingly exclusive in character, the religious authorities were challenged to operationalize caste hierarchies. The author had linked Kanwal Bharti's remarks, which stated that religious authority, like Kabir, were an issue for Ambedkar.

5. Findings and Conclusions

The review as discussed above provides a strong testimony on Saint Kabir's influence on society in removing its barriers. The significant that the saint had experienced and protested were caste discrimination and religious divide. Kabir's philosophical ideals shaped up on the basis on his disagreement and practical suppressions that he actually faced. The review finds many contemporary scholars to adopt Kabir's theory as a base material to analyse on the current days' social/governance/religious/moral problems. Also, they have related the Saint's ideals with other significant reformers of his era (Shakara Deva, Shaikh Noor-ud Din, etc.) as well as recent social theorists, such as, B. R. Ambedkar. All these facts, altogether affirm the relevance and validity of Kabir Das's philosophy on human unity through liberal caste/religion neutral principles.

6. Recommendations and Suggestions

When viewed in terms of current day's need and progresses, Kabir's ideals are obviously logical and have modern aspects that should be studied and compared in depth to identify similar or authentic parameters to be incorporated/corrected in societal development programs. Particularly, the issues regarding gender/racial/caste discriminations, poverty, moral values, justice framework can be addressed with Kabir's ideals on human unity as a basic working.

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