



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

“The Contemporary Relevance Of Socio-Religious Themes In Kabir’s Songs”

Amity Institute of English Studies and Research

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honors) English.
Submitted By: SAUMYA PANDEY 2020-2023 Supervised By: Ms Aayushee Garg (Assistant Professor)

ABSTRACT

The Summer Project is titled The Contemporary Relevance of Socio-religious Themes in Kabir’s Songs. The project is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a degree in English. Instead of dogmatic religious doctrine, he encouraged individuals to focus on inner reflection and self-realisation. Kabir Das addressed societal issues like as casteism, gender inequity, and religious conflict in addition to his spiritual teachings. His poems frequently challenged traditional societal standards as he fought for equality and spoke out against prejudice and persecution. Kabir Das' poetry and teachings had a great impact on Indian culture, inspiring generations of individuals to challenge conventional standards and embrace spirituality. Some of the key implications include: Kabir's emphasis on inner introspection and self-realisation can motivate people to focus on their spiritual progress, leading to a deeper feeling of purpose, tranquilly, and fulfilment in life. Combating discrimination: Kabir's lessons on equality and social justice can encourage people to fight discrimination and prejudice in all of its forms, thereby building a more inclusive and equitable society. Inspiring creativity: Kabir's poetry is well-known for its lyrical quality and metaphoric use, which can inspire people to explore their own creativity and express themselves through art, music, or writing.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND ON KABIR AND HIS WORKS Kabir Das, an Indian mystic poet and saint who lived in the 15th century, is revered by both Hindus and Muslims in India. Although it is unknown when he was born, he was born in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, in the city of Varanasi. Although Kabir was born and raised in a Muslim family, he was influenced by both Hindu and Islamic traditions. He rejected both Islam's religious intolerance and Hinduism's ritualism in favour of promoting a message of love, tolerance, and harmony. Even now, Kabir's poetry, written in Hindi as a vernacular language, is frequently read and repeated in India. His poetry is known for being straightforward and simple, and it frequently makes use of common language and images. Kabir's works are collected in several volumes, including the Bijak, the Kabir Granthawali, and the Anurag Sagar. His most well-known poetry, Dohe, Sakhis, and Bhajans, are sung and chanted by people all over India, regardless of religious allegiance. Kabir is widely considered as one of India's greatest spiritual gurus and poets, and his message of love and harmony has had a profound impact on Indian culture and society.

STUDYING THE SOCIO RELIGIOUS THEMES OF KABIR'S SONGS UNDERSTANDING INDIAN CULTURE: Understanding Indian Culture: Kabir's songs are an important part of Indian heritage. By examining his socioreligious topics, one might gain a greater understanding of the religious and social norms that prevailed in India throughout the 15th century.

PROMOTING UNITY AND TOLERANCE: Kabir's songs transmit the message of tolerance and unity, which is especially important in today's world, when there is a growing need to bridge religious and cultural divides. By listening to and studying his music, people can learn to understand and value diversity, as well as encourage interfaith collaboration.

INSPIRING SOCIAL CHANGE: In an effort to encourage social change, Kabir's songs usually address societal issues such as caste injustice, gender inequity, and poverty. Individuals can comprehend the fundamental causes of these problems and take action by studying his socioreligious topics.

LITERARY IMPORTANCE: In addition to its socioreligious significance, Kabir's songs have literary significance. His works are considered literary classics in Hindi, and they are studied for their lyrical structure, vocabulary, and language.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT: Kabir's songs provide wise counsel on religion, ethics, and morals. By studying his socio-religious issues, people can learn about the deeper realities of life and work towards personal growth and development.

RELATED WORK: SPIRITUAL LIBERATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

"Jaise til mein tel hai, jyon chakmak mein aag Tera sai tujh mein hai, tu jaag sake to jaag"
TRANSLATION: Your God is within you, just as oil is in a sesame seed and fire is in flint.

Kabir promotes the importance of personal spiritual development and encourages people to find their own path to enlightenment. If you are capable of awakening to this truth, then do so.

"Jhini jhini bini chadari, kahe ka tana, and kahe bichona

"Jhini jhini bini chadari, kahe ka tana, and kahe bichona" TRANSLATION: Why break the lovely cloth into pieces after it was crocheted with such care? Why tear the beautiful fabric that has been skilfully woven?

Kabir extols nature's majesty and wonder while expressing concern about the negative impacts of human activity on the environment.

CULTURAL THEMES IN SONGS OF KABIR- BHAKTI TRADITION: Kabir emphasised love and devotion to God. His songs, which commonly use metaphors and images from Indian mythology to illustrate his spiritual message, bear witness to this lineage. Kabir, for example, asserts that God resides within the human body and compares it to a temple in his song "Bura Jo Dekhan Main Chala."

FOLK CULTURE: Kabir's songs are deeply rooted in Indian folklore and regularly include idioms, proverbs, and sayings common in rural India. In his song "Moko Kahan Dhunde Re Bande," for example, Kabir uses the metaphor of a deer longing for musk to convey the idea that people are constantly striving for happiness outside of themselves.

MYSTICISM: Kabir's songs are marked by their mysticism, and they usually reveal spiritual truths through paradoxical thoughts and complex language. For example, Kabir asserts in his song "Kabira Khada Bazar Mein" that he is not a Muslim or a Hindu and is not bound by any theological views.

SOCIAL CUSTOMS: Kabir's songs frequently attack Indian societal norms and conventions. In his song "Man Lago Mero Yaar Fakiri Mein," for example, Kabir criticises the dowry system and emphasises that love and dedication are more important than material wealth.

FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS: Kabir's songs highlight the importance of festivals and celebrations in Indian culture. Kabir, for example, recounts the Holi celebration and how people celebrate the triumph of good over evil by dousing each other in colour in his song "Kabir Ki Dohe."

LITERARY REVIEW- KABIR'S PHILOSOPHY: AN OVERVIEW- ONENESS OF GOD: Kabir rejected the concept of several gods and goddesses, instead believing in the oneness of God. He believed that God was present in all beings and that the ultimate goal of human existence was to realise this divine presence. In his song "Moko Kahan Dhunde Re Bande," for example, Kabir asserts that people's hearts hold God rather than temples or mosques.

INNER SPIRITUALITY: Kabir underlined the importance of inner spirituality while condemning outer expressions of religion. Only through reflection and meditation, he believed, could one achieve genuine devotion and love for God. In his song "Jhini Jhini Chadariya," for example, Kabir asserts that true devotion is about purifying one's heart rather than donning a holy robe or indulging in rituals.

NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUALITY: Kabir was a staunch supporter of non-discrimination and equality. He was opposed to the caste system and believed that in God's eyes, everyone was created equal. Kabir, for example, opposes caste in his song "Bura Jo Dekhan Main Chala" and claims that God is unconcerned about social standing.

UNIVERSAL LOVE: Kabir was opposed to religious bigotry and discrimination and believed in the power of unconditional love. He believed that love was the path to spiritual progress and that it could bring people from many cultures and religions together. In his song "Moko Kahan Dhunde Re Bande," for example, Kabir says that love and devotion to God are the same regardless of one's religious background.

NON-DUALISM: Non-dualism characterises Kabir's philosophy, which highlights the unity of all things. He believed that the individual self and ultimate reality were fundamentally the same and that neither existed apart from the other. Kabir, for example, compares the birth cycle to a grinding stone in his song "Chalti Chakki Dekh Kar."

SOCIO CULTURAL CONTEXT OF KABIR'S TIME

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY: During Kabir's time, India was a place of religious diversity, with people of various religions practising Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Jainism. This diversity resulted in a rich cultural inheritance, but it also resulted in disputes and tensions between various populations.

The Bhakti movement was a spiritual and social movement that began in South India in the 7th century and extended throughout the country. It emphasised the value of devotion and love for God while rejecting the rigorous caste system and other social hierarchies.

ISLAMIC INFLUENCE: During Kabir's time, the Islamic influence on Indian culture and society was very considerable. The Mughal Empire had taken control of North India, and many Muslims had relocated there. As a result, Indian and Islamic cultures and traditions merged.

CASTE SYSTEM: During Kabir's time, the caste system was strongly embedded in Indian society and was a major source of social injustice and prejudice. Kabir fought for equality and social justice while criticising the caste system.

POLITICAL INFLUENCE: During Kabir's time, India was undergoing enormous political changes, with the decline of the Delhi Sultanate and the rise of regional powers. As a result, tensions and struggles for power and influence arose.

SCHOLARLY INTERPRETATIONS OF KABIR'S WORKS

RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM: Religious syncretism, or the mixing of diverse religious traditions, is a major theme in Kabir's songs. According to some experts, Kabir's songs indicate a blend of Hindu and Islamic concepts and practises. For example, Kabir frequently employs Islamic terminology to express Hindu principles and vice versa. He also emphasises God's unity, which is a frequent motif in Hinduism and Islam.

SOCIAL CRITICISM: Social critique and commentary are also prominent in Kabir's songs. He was an outspoken opponent of the caste system, religious prejudice, and other types of social inequality and discrimination. According to some researchers, his songs were a form of social protest the harsh social and political structures of his period.

MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE: Many people understand Kabir's songs as reflecting his own mystical experiences. Some experts claim that his songs depict the individual soul's spiritual path towards unity with God. He describes the nature of the divine and the human relationship with it using metaphors and allegories.

BHAKTI TRADITION: Kabir's songs are profoundly entrenched in the Bhakti tradition, which emphasises devotion and adoration for God. According to some researchers, his songs indicate a distinct strain of Bhakti that emphasises the value of inner spirituality while rejecting conventional forms of religious practise.

UNIVERSALISM: Kabir's songs are also characterized by universalism, which refers to the idea that all human beings are equal and that there is a common spiritual essence that unites all religions and cultures. Some scholars argue that his songs reflect a broader philosophical and spiritual worldview that emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things.

THEMES RELEVANT IN CONTEMPORARY WORLD

REJECTION OF CASTE SYSTEM: Kabir Das was a vocal opponent of the caste system, speaking out against it in his poetry and lyrics. He saw the caste system as a social evil that divided individuals based on birth, resulting in inequity and prejudice. True spirituality and devotion, according to Kabir Das, could not be attained through exterior rituals or adherence to social order, but rather through the cultivation of inner values such as love, compassion, and humility. The rejection of the caste system by Kabir Das was based on his conviction in the oneness of all humanity. Kabir Das' rejection of the caste system was both a philosophical and practical attitude. He was born into a lower caste and has endured discrimination and prejudice throughout his life. His lectures and poems frequently challenged the mainstream Brahmanical viewpoint, and he was viewed as a threat to his time's established order.

DEVOTION TO THE INNER SELF OF MANKIND: Kabir Das' commitment to humanity's inner self is a central topic in his poetry and teachings. He felt that true devotion could only be attained by forging a personal relationship with the divine within each human. External forms of worship, he believed, could only carry a person so far, and that true spiritual advancement could only be gained by searching within and nurturing inner characteristics such as love, compassion, and humility. Kabir Das' emphasis on humanity's inner self is timely in an age where there is a growing emphasis on financial prosperity and exterior achievements. Furthermore, Kabir Das' teachings on humanity's inner self have significant consequences for mental health and well-being. Inner qualities such as love, compassion, and humility have been found to have a favourable impact on mental health and can aid in the reduction of stress and anxiety.

UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD: The notion of universal brotherhood is important to Kabir Das' teachings and remains pertinent in modern times. Kabir Das held that all people are equal and that the fundamental goal of life is to love and serve others, regardless of caste, creed, or religion. Kabir Das' message of international brotherhood is more vital than ever in today's world, where there is increasing polarisation and strife between different cultures and nations. His teachings remind us that, despite our differences, we are all members of the same human family, and that love and compassion are essential in creating a peaceful and harmonious society. Kabir Das' teachings on global brotherhood have significant significance for the advancement of human rights and social justice.

FEMININITY: A RECURRING THEME Women are portrayed as powerful and divine entities in Kabir Das' poetry, and femininity is a frequent topic. He opposes patriarchal society's conventions in his poems and emphasises the need of recognising women's worth and contribution. Here are some poems by Kabir Das that feature femininity as a theme:

1. "Kyaar Kare Jori, Aapas Mein Prem Badaa Bhari" (Love is abounding when two hands come together) Kabir Das depicts women as the personification of love and compassion in this poetry. When two hands, representing a man and a woman, come together in harmony, he emphasises that love is abundant. This poem emphasises the significance of acknowledging women's contributions to relationships and society.
2. "Pothe Padh Padh Kar Jag Mua, Pandit Bhayo Na Koye, Dhai Aakhar Prem Ke, Jo Padhe So Pandit Hoye" (The world perished while reading books, but no one became learned. Only those who read the

two and a half love letters become truly wise.) Kabir Das emphasises in this poem that true knowledge and wisdom can only be obtained through love. The two and a half letters love are an abbreviation for the Hindi word "prem," which signifies "love." According to Kabir Das, only those who grasp the essence of love may get true knowledge and wisdom. This poetry emphasises the significance of acknowledging the power of love, which is frequently connected with femininity.

3. "Chalti Chakki Dekh Kar, Diya Kabira Roye, Do Paatan Ke Beech Mein, Sabut Bacha Na Koye" 3. (Kabir weeps as he watches the grinding stones. Nothing survives between the two stones) Kabir Das depicts women's societal hardships in this poetry. The grinding stones depict the oppressive and subjugating societal norms that women face. According to the poem, women are crushed between these societal constraints, and nothing survives. The poem emphasises the significance of recognising and combating gender injustice and oppression.

RELEVANCE OF BHAKTI-SUFI THEMES TODAY The Bhakti and Sufi themes of Kabir hold great relevance today. Kabir's message of universal love, harmony, and brotherhood is as pertinent today as it was in the past. To begin with, Kabir's teachings encourage religious tolerance and solidarity among people. In today's world, where religious conflicts and differences abound, his message of religious inclusivity and oneness is desperately needed. His concept of finding the divine in everyone promotes tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Second, Kabir's emphasis on the value of inner spiritual experience over ritualistic practises is still relevant today. In a culture where money and commercialization frequently trump spiritual development, Kabir's teachings encourage people to seek the divine inside themselves and find significance in life beyond earthly riches. Finally, Kabir's teachings advocate for social justice and equality. His poetry discusses societal concerns such as casteism, poverty, and gender inequality, and he encourages people to work together to build a more just and equitable society.

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF KABIR Kabir was an Indian mystic poet and saint born in Varanasi in the 15th century. He lived in India during a period of immense religious and social transition, when the country's political and cultural landscape underwent significant changes. Kabir was born into a Muslim weaving family but was subsequently adopted by a Hindu family. As a result, he grew up in a culturally diverse setting, learning about both Hindu and Muslim customs. This unusual upbringing had a significant impact on his poetry, which frequently mixed parts of both religions and emphasised the universal dimensions of spirituality. India was undergoing substantial religious upheavals during Kabir's time, with the growth of Bhakti and Sufi sects that emphasised devotion to a personal God rather than rigid theological theory. These movements had a strong influence on Kabir's poetry, which emphasised the value of personal experience and direct communion with the divine. Kabir was also an outspoken opponent of social injustices, particularly the caste system, which he saw as a hindrance to spiritual development. He spoke out against societal inequalities and fought for the equality of all people, regardless of caste or social standing. Kabir's social and religious upbringing had a significant influence on his poetry, which emphasised the universality of spirituality, the value of personal experience, and the necessity for social justice and equality. His teachings continue to inspire people from diverse backgrounds and religions to this day.

SIGNIFICANCE Kabir was an Indian mystic and poet who lived in the 15th century and is recognised for his powerful and perceptive writings on social and theological topics. For centuries, his work has been a vital element of Indian literature and culture, and it is still studied and admired by people all over the world. The importance of Kabir's findings in social and religious topics stems from the way he challenged existing religious and social standards and urged people to question their beliefs and practises. His writings frequently condemned caste injustice, religious intolerance, and slavish adherence to religious rituals and practises. He argued for a more personal and direct relationship with the divine, valuing human experience and intuition over external authority. Kabir's work has significant significance for current social and religious challenges. His focus on religious unity and the significance of treating all people with respect and dignity is especially pertinent in today's increasingly varied and globalised world. His poetry has the potential to inspire individuals from all walks of life to work towards a more inclusive and compassionate society, as well as to fight the preconceptions and biases that can divide us.

Overall, Kabir's discoveries in social and theological topics have had a tremendous impact on Indian and world culture, and he continues to be an inspiration and source of understanding for people of all ages and backgrounds. His work reminds us of the power of individual thought and expression, as well as the significance of questioning established standards and beliefs in the pursuit of a more just and equitable society.

CONCLUSION: CONTRIBUTION TO DISCOURSE Kabir Das was an Indian mystic poet and saint who lived in the 15th century and is noted for his spiritual teachings and poetry. His contribution to the larger socio-cultural debate was enormous, since he tackled social issues while emphasising the significance of spirituality and inward introspection. Kabir Das' teachings were based on the Bhakti movement, a Hindu movement that emphasised devotion to a particular God, and he felt that true devotion comes from within rather than through rituals or external practises. Instead of dogmatic religious doctrine, he encouraged individuals to focus on inner reflection and self-realisation. Kabir Das addressed societal issues like as casteism, gender inequity, and religious conflict in addition to his spiritual teachings. His poems frequently challenged traditional societal standards as he fought for equality and spoke out against prejudice and persecution. Kabir Das' poetry and teachings had a great impact on Indian culture, inspiring generations of individuals to challenge conventional standards and embrace spirituality. His work is still honoured and studied today, and his message of unity, equality, and self-actualization is still relevant and motivating.

IMPLICATIONS OF UNDERSTANDING KABIR'S WORK Understanding Kabir's work has several implications for individuals and society as a whole. Some of the key implications include: Kabir's emphasis on inner introspection and self-realization can motivate people to focus on their spiritual progress, leading to a deeper feeling of purpose, tranquilly, and fulfilment in life. Kabir's poetry frequently challenged established social standards and advocated for equality, which might motivate individuals to rethink societal systems and work towards constructing a more equitable and inclusive society. Encourage interfaith discussion: Kabir's teachings emphasised the unity of all religions and the need of appreciating variety, which can encourage people of other faiths to participate in dialogue and develop bridges of understanding. Combating discrimination: Kabir's lessons on equality and social justice can encourage people to fight discrimination and prejudice in all of its forms, thereby building a more inclusive and equitable society. Inspiring creativity: Kabir's poetry is well-known for its lyrical quality and metaphoric use, which can inspire people to explore their own creativity and express themselves through art, music, or writing.

REFERENCES Kabir, The Life and Work of the Early Modern Poet (Purushottam Agrawal) The Mystic Mind and Music of Kabir (Lakshmi Chandrashekar Subraman) Mystic Songs of Kabir (G N Das) The Life and Philosophy of Kabir (Abhilash Das) Kabir in Favour of Women (Anil Rai) Flow Free, Breathe Free (Dr Kum Kum Ray)