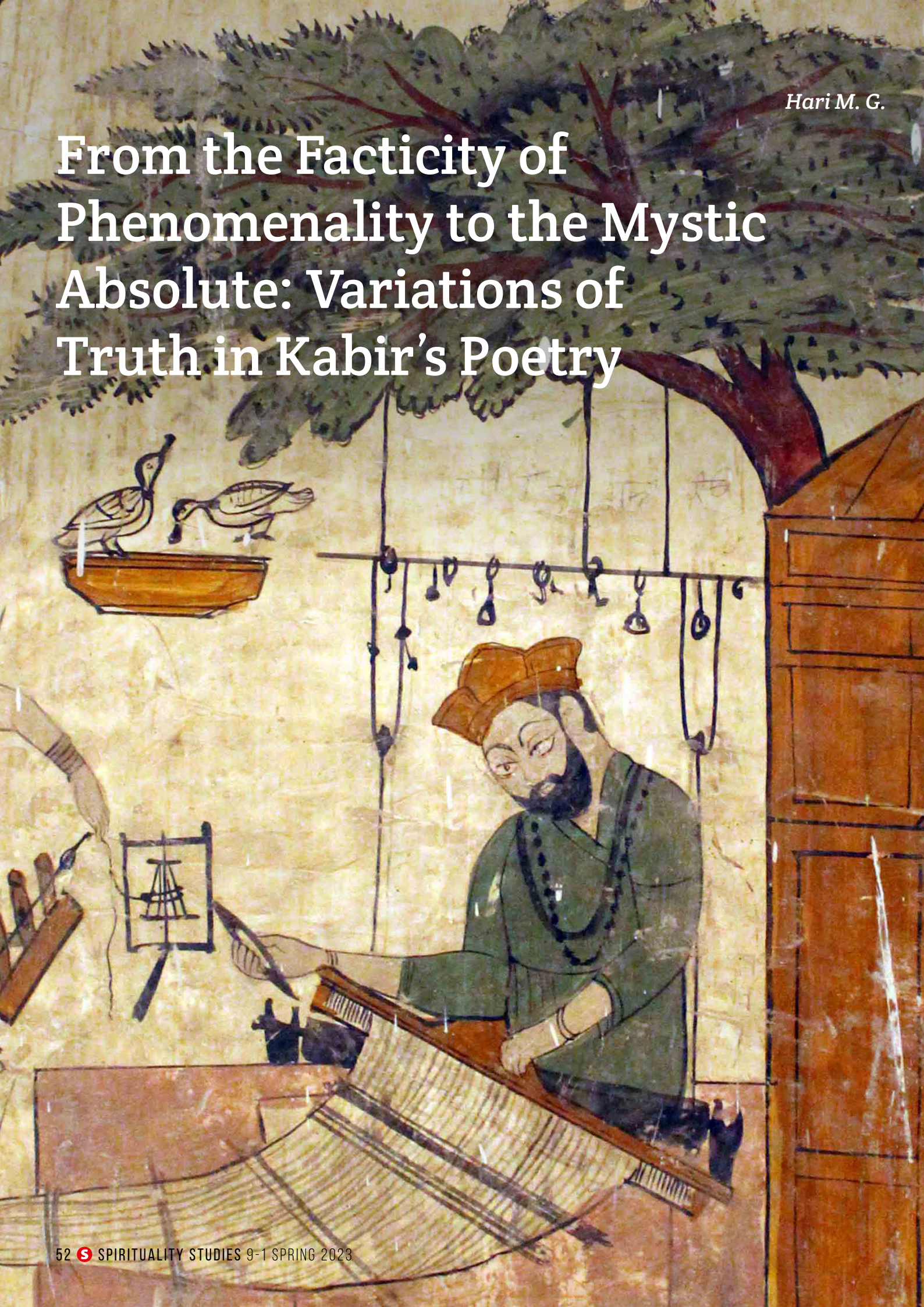


# From the Facticity of Phenomenality to the Mystic Absolute: Variations of Truth in Kabir's Poetry





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**Kabir is a sixteenth century mystic-poet whose words permeate the socio-cultural life of Indian subcontinent, bringing the dimension of the beyond to the everyday life of ordinary people. This study, through a close textual analysis of select poems of Kabir, seeks to map the variations of “truth” in his poetry and contends that there are three phases in the poet’s spiritual seeking – 1. the stage of complete negation of everything that one finds to be a lie and seeing the phenomenal world exactly the way it is without any distortions from the mind; 2. the pain of not experiencing the ultimate truth and the longing for it; 3. experience of the transcendent mystic truth. By juxtaposing an analysis of poems that illustrate these three variations of truth, this study argues that even as truth takes on different meanings in his poetry, there is a common factor to the “different truths” of Kabir – a close and intense attention to what one perceives to be true at a given moment.**

# 1 Introduction

Mysticism is, essentially, *“the expression of the innate tendency of human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendent order”* (Underhill 1911, 8) and hence, its reach is beyond the realm of language and logic. A sense of wonder and awe is at the very heart of any religious experience and as Rudolph Otto (1923, 14) notes, we can attribute the origin of religion to this universal human experience of mystery: *“the feeling of ‘something uncanny,’ ‘eerie,’ or ‘weird’... the feeling which, emerging in the mind of the primeval man, forms the starting-point for the entire religious development in history.”* A mystic embraces this uncanny feeling of mystery and dissolves the certainties of his/her limited individual identity, at the risk of being irrational for the general public. This is the reason why mystics across traditions and geographies tend to come across as illogical even as the theological discourse of the traditions they are part of sound logical enough. While theology deals with logic of metaphysics, mysticism is the discourse of one who is completely taken in by the other-worldly dimension of human experience. However, it is also significant that many mystics have used language and logic to reach out to people who are outside the ambit of their range of experience. Hence, mysticism can be discussed in an academic space with regard to the engagement of the saints in the public sphere, though such deliberations cannot bring out the metaphysical reality that they allude to. As Ralph Barton Perry (1904, 82) notes, *“there is a place in religion for that which is not directly answerable to philosophical or scientific standards. But there is always, on the other hand, an element of hope which conceives the nature of the world, and means to be grounded in reality.”* It seems the sheer intensity of mystic experience overflowed in a language that is logical enough to ridicule the way of life of the general public, but illogical to the core when pointing to the hinterlands of the saints’ inner world. This conflict between the mystics’ lived reality and the reality that they temporarily step in to engage with the public, opens up a nebulous space where seemingly clear conceptualisations are problematised. Hence, research on mysticism, in this context, becomes an attempt to closely look at some of the most common notions that human beings have taken for granted for ages and to expose the unreflective mentality that has gone into the making of them. It is in this context that this paper discusses the poetry of the sixteenth century Indian saint-poet Kabir.

Kabir is one of the most important, arguably the most influential, among a group of poets in medieval India known as the Bhakti poets. His poetry has seeped into the literary sensibility of Indian subcontinent and has been a remarkable

poetic validation for the power of words rooted in deep experience in the way it unsettled social stereotypes and platitudes and for its uncanny potency to conduit the illogical mystic dimension in language. More than anything else, his poetry offers a variety of experience that a mystic traverses in his spiritual seeking. Or rather, it accurately lays out the different flavours that the subjective notion of truth takes upon in the path to the realisation of one’s own Self.

Kabir’s poetry has inspired people for its spiritual exuberance as well as its daring social critique. The image of Kabir as an iconoclastic rebel has resonated with socio-political movements outside the ambit of religion. On a closer look, these two aspects of vociferous protest against social evils and the outpouring of spiritual experiences are organically connected. The zeal of social reformation that is usually attributed to Kabir is nothing but the first step that he vouches for as the most significant quality that is required if one fancy any progress in spiritual path – that is, the need to be absolutely honest about the basic facts about one’s life. The spiritual exuberance, as we see in Kabir’s poetry, is the ultimate flowering of a life founded on an unflinching ability to be honest.

However, the truth that Kabir extols in his poetry takes on many hues. We can conceive them as different stages of spiritual unfoldment in the life of a seeker. Through a close textual analysis of select poems of Kabir, this study seeks to bring out co-existence of “different truths” in Kabir’s poetry. For this purpose, the poems which present the notion of truth in varying contexts have been selected and they are studied with an emphasis on the implications and ambiguities with regard to truth that one can discern in them. This study discusses three different phases in Kabir’s elucidation of truth – 1. the stage of complete negation of everything that one finds to be a lie and seeing the phenomenal world exactly the way it is without any distortions from the mind; 2. the pain of not experiencing the ultimate truth and the longing for it; 3. experience of the transcendent mystic truth. While making the distinction of three different phases in Kabir’s conception of truth, this study also ventures to identify the common thread running through these different strands.

## 2 An Unflinching Look at the Facticity of Life

The first step that Kabir vouches for in the quest for the absolute is an unflinching loyalty to truth. As Andrew Schelling (2011, xi) notes, Bhakti poets have always stood for a rigorous enquiry into the nature of truth: *"Bhakti is salted with an integrity that requires intellectual effort and a great deal of honest probing to get close to."* Though the idea of truth keeps changing as one progresses in one's seeking, Kabir exhorts his fellow beings to begin this journey to the realization of Self by ceasing to consciously get involved in lies. He even says that those who willingly live in falsehood are despicable (Kabir 2020,161):

*One who loves falsehood  
And gives up truth willingly  
Even in my dreams, oh God,  
Don't let him come near me.*

The poet's abomination for a life founded on lies emanates from his conviction that it is only an intense and sincere search for truth that would lead to the realization of one's ultimate Self. For a mystic like Kabir the ontological certitude of the realization of one's true being is the only sensible goal worth having. Spewing lies in the inner world consciously would deny a human being the possibility of accessing the divinity within. He is quite affirmative when he says it is truth alone that can bring the dimension of the sacred alive in one's "heart" (Kabir 2020, 160):

*There is no penance like truth  
No sin as great as a lie;  
The heart in which truth exists –  
That's where You abide.*

These lines exemplify the depth that Kabir brings to seemingly simple poetic expression. The first two lines sound like a simple morality lesson given to children – being truthful is the greatest virtue and lying the greatest sin. But, what "truth" is he talking about? Is it the ultimate truth of spiritual Oneness that Kabir as a mystic realizes or is it the truth of ordinary human beings which is usually construed as an absence of a conscious attempt at deception? It seems the poet is alluding to both these dimensions of truth – truth of the material world of human transactions and the metaphysical absolute of divinity. It can be read as an attitude which would involve these two aspects of truth – an earnest heart that does not attempt consciously to deceive oneself and others, would eventually be able to move to the absolute and immutable truth of existence. The next two lines add more

depth to the complexity of ideation happening here. It is said that the heart in which truth exists is where "You" abide. Like the notion of "truth", "You" also does have an ambiguous signification. The obvious reference of "You" would be the divine; but it can also mean the seeker of the divine. Taken together, these lines make a very profound statement – the seeker who makes an earnest effort to know oneself, without any conscious intention to take the easy road of falsehood, would finally reach a space within oneself that is usually called "God". As Linda Hess (1983, 30) notes, in Kabir's poetry, it is the persistent commitment to truth that finally empowers a human being to perceive the unmediated infinitude of existence: *"The essence of Kabir's effort as a teacher may be stated plainly: he wants people to be honest. He believes that complete honesty (and nothing else) provides a realization of complete truth – understanding of the nature of consciousness, the relation of individual and the universe, inside and outside, life and death."*

In some verses, the poet makes his logic as simple as it could be stated (Kabir 2020, 148):

*Shun hypocrisy and pride  
Be like a pebble on a road  
Only one who be like this  
Can behold the Lord.*

Logic here is quite simple. As a mystic and a guru, Kabir makes just one demand – to shun hypocrisy and pride; and the one who could do that is worthy enough to be touched by the divine. As simple as it seems, there is an entire world implicit in these words. *"To be like a pebble on the road"* one has to abnegate and dismantle the mental structure itself. To be ordinary and honest, in this context, would amount to going beyond the mind. The spiritual reality that the mystic cryptically alludes to, in many of his other poems, is accessible only when the seeker could transplant his being beyond the chaos of the mind. In Kabir's poetic world, simplicity of ideas and expression, often, have this quaint resonance of deeper subtext of meaning. As the topic of his musings is the subjectivity of a seeker of truth, simple words and images are contextualized within a dense range of deep experiences of the beyond. Kabir's basic outlook towards religion is that of an inner exploration wherein the seemingly simple thoughts and emotions lead to uncharted terrains of a baffling metaphysical reality. The poet seems quite certain about the basic nature of this exploration of interiority which is quite evident in the way he dismisses the charades of the external world.

Internalized sense of truth that he upholds is contemptuous of the external parading of religiosity and as Satchidanandan (1999, 194) says it has not lost its mordant effect on the world: “Religion to Kabir was a wholly inward experience; the imprecations he bestowed upon those who followed the externals have still lost nothing of their mordant effect.”

Kabir’s scathing attack on falsehood and unreflective ways of life is, in fact, the most articulate and logical sections in his oeuvre. A life of material pleasures and social platitudes is spurned for its complete neglect of the fundamental facticity of human condition – death and transience. The constant change that the physical world which include human body undergoes and the certitude of death, for him, should deeply disturb a human being. A philosophy that does not factor in, these fundamental realities, is seen as just vacuous verbiage. The constant reminder of death and precarity of life abounds in his poetry (Kabir 1991, 55):

*Ten are the doors to the cage  
There the life-bird stays  
That it stays so long is strange  
Its flight should not amaze.*

Death, in Kabir’s poetic world, is an event that nullifies all human attempts to camouflage the hollow nature of all social facades. The Universal energy that the poet exhorts each human being to get to experience, is the ultimate dictator when it comes to life and death (Kabir 2003, 117):

*Hari has sent His summons –  
COME INSTANTLY  
Your time to act is up.*

Death, unlike other events, is non-negotiable and is, ultimately, a test of the authenticity of life. The mystic experience that the poet considers to be the only sensible state of existence is available to those who go in earnest seeking of it, realizing the fragility of all that constitute one’s world. An experience beyond the physical is, for the mystic, the only eternal experience and hence, the only goal worthy of seeking. Kabir is elusive and illogical when he talks about the mysteries of the mystic realm, but he is absolutely rational and logical when he explicates the facticity of life that leads a seeker to search for them. Even if his poetic outpourings of mystic visions be dismissed on the basis of a rational analysis, his arguments for leading such a life are on firm logical foundation. In fact, as a spiritual teacher, Kabir, as reflected in his poetry, does not ask for a blind belief in the certainty of the beyond. His appeal is solely based on the unreasonable stance that the general public takes in living as nothing

more than biological and social machines. In some of the poems, the mystic expresses his amazement at the ridiculous nature of such a life (Kabir 2003, 61):

*I see the world  
is crazy.  
When I tell the truth,  
People run  
to beat me up –  
When I tell lies,  
they believe me.*

Even religion, as it is practiced in the world, becomes one more attempt at making life more predictable and safer. To look into the profound questions that religion raises, takes at most honesty and courage which, usually, gives way to meek dogmatization. Gertrude C. Bussey (1932, 92), makes an insightful observation in this regard: “From the philosophical point of view one can only reiterate the uncertainty of religious positions and scrupulously avoid the temptation to dogmatize. Yet this does not really meet the situation fully. Even though people crave truth, many are not yet ready to prefer truth to apparent certainty.” It is quite interesting that Kabir, a saint, has the same critical approach to a religion based on faith (Kabir 1983, 93):

*Everyone says words, words,  
That word is bodyless.  
It won’t come  
On the tongue.  
See it, test it, take it.*

Kabir, like other Bhakti saints, has been very categorical about what constitutes a real spiritual experience. The rigid dogmatic charades of institutionalised religion and its egoistic practice at the individual level were ridiculed by him. The hollow verbiage that is philosophised and spiritualised cannot make one available to the grace of “that word”. Kabir says that it is bodyless and it will not come on the tongue. But it can be seen and once seen it should be tested and then, it becomes one with the seeker. This is, in fact, a clear statement of the saint-poet’s basic approach to religion. He locates the first spiritual stirrings in “seeing” that there is a dimension beyond physicality. This sight or rather, glimpse, is followed by an intense and rigorous scrutiny of this otherworldly feel. It is only after the seeker goes through the pain of doubt and insecurity that the “bodyless word” becomes part of the seeker’s conscious being. This is a spiritual path completely founded on true experience, contrary to the dogmatic and scriptural spirituality of religion as institution.

### 3 The Desperate Seeker

The poet hopes his words would make at least a few open and sensitive, though he is convinced they cannot break through the rock like rigidity of the minds of the vast majority. Therein, lies the intimacy of Kabir's poetry. It is not addressed to the entire world, but to those few who are willing to surrender at least a part of their sense of being – an invitation to those who have a little empty space within to accommodate the divine. Intimate space that his poetry is positioned, is not only one where he appeals to others to be attentive and but also a space where he chooses to pour out his own struggles in experiencing the bliss of the absolute. In some poems, the poet brutally subjects himself to an ethical scrutiny, to the extent of calling himself the “*worst human being*” (Kabir 2020, 149):

*Kabir, I am the worst of all,  
Everyone else is great;  
The one who understands this –  
He is my mate.*

These words emanate from a deep engagement with one's own subjectivity. When attention is directed to the hidden recesses of the mind, the poet feels the even the slightest meanness of thought as the greatest of sins. The line “*The one who understands this / He is my mate*”, implies that it is not a mere confession of an inner turmoil, but an intimate advice to look deep within oneself for even the tiniest of faults. Absolute integrity is what Kabir expects in those who are touched by Him, and He is laying his interiority bare as an instance of such unabashed encounter with hitherto unconscious mental spaces. Such an intimate and honest dissection of oneself leads to utter insecurity and helplessness as well. But the poet is not ashamed to cry for God's help when he is left with nothing to cling on to (Kabir 1993, 157):

*I have come to seek refuge in You –  
but nowhere do I see Hari's feet!  
I have come to seek your presence:  
Your servant Kabir is in despair!*

These are not the words of a believer, but of one who will not settle for anything less than an experience that is truly cosmic. In fact, Bhakti poetry abounds in utter insecurity of the inner world, and it was natural for the saints to experience being caught up in a no man's land as they shed their social investments without any surety of Self-realization. Walking the spiritual path in its initial stage was fraught with a deep sense of insecurity and anxiety, for many of the saints. Arundhati Subramaniam (2014, xxvi) quite insightfully and

succinctly comments on the utter vulnerability of the saints in the Introduction to her book *Eating God: A Book of Bhakti Poetry*: “*she was an insurgent who knew the perils of the border game she was playing, and the yawning chasm that lay just beyond the horizon of her insatiable yearning.*” The poems which delve into the utter insecurity of being human constitutes the most fascinating sections of Kabir's poetry. When the seeker is sincerely honest about the everyday world of ordinary reality, he finds what people usually call as “life” quite tragic and doomed. Without an illusion of fantasy, life appears a precarious chance happening that is bound to end with death. This basic facticity does not bother an unreflective human being, thanks to an obsessive clinging to fantasies rooted in lies. The true seeker who has seen the reality of such fantasies gets inevitably embroiled in an intensely unsettling insecurity, which in turn propels his/her spiritual seeking. The poetry of such states of pain and hopelessness is also one that reflects a profound honesty – bearing testimony to a desperate need to find fulfilment (Kabir 1993, 269):

*You are my Mother  
And I am your child:  
Why couldn't You forget  
All my faults?*

The insecurity and vulnerability expressed here is absolute, in the sense that it comes from a space devoid of all the mental constructs that human beings resort to in a desperate search for security and stability. On the one hand, the poet is in deep pain as he is unable to experience the bliss of cosmic oneness; on the other, he is equally distant from the comforts and pleasures of the normative social life. Caught up in the in-between space which neither has the absolute security of the mystic nor the deluded sense of security of the mundane life, he calls himself a fool while the entire world looks very self-assured (Kabir 2011, 53):

*The smart guys  
Aren't just the majority,  
They are everywhere,  
Everyone but me.  
I'm the only  
Dimwit in town.  
I wasn't born like this,  
With an extra chromosome,  
It's singing the Lord's name  
Made me so.*

## 4 Poetry of the Mystic Awe

The tone in these lines is very matter-of-fact. Although the poet feels that he is the only “dimwit”, there is no attempt to become like others who appear to be “smart”. Rather, he states that he was not born like this and it is the quaint path of “Bhakti” that made him so. The deep exploration of one’s own subjectivity that the poet sets out to, does not give any room for a reversal of path. Despite not knowing what lies ahead, the devotee has to tread the path even as others live their lives without even a thought about the dimension of the beyond. This nebulous stage where all the certainties about the truth gets unsettled is an inevitable phase in the spiritual journey of an ardent seeker. In the poems that questioned the falsehood of a socially conditioned quotidian life, the poetic voice is affirmative about what is not “true”. But Kabir’s poems that detail the pangs of seeking are about the pain of not realising the truth. Here, he is less concerned about the falsehood that vast majority of the society invests their lives in; on the contrary, the poet compares his plight with the seeming confidence of others and is perplexed by their casual attitude. The realisation of the truth about the facticity of phenomenality evolves into confusion about the ultimate certitude of being in these poems.

In Kabir’s poetry, extreme vulnerability is a phase that the saint goes through before settling into the boundless experience of spiritual oneness. In the poems that describe the clarity of anchoring one’s being in the spaciousness of the divine dimension; we find the poet much more affirmative about his perception of truth. There is a clinical precision about these poems in the way they state the suchness of existence. They are the words emanating from a human consciousness that has seen the vacuity of the phenomenal world and has gone through the turmoil of a mind troubled by the ignorance of the transcendent Absolute. After going through these stages, the poetic voice in these poems is affirmatively stating the ultimate truth of life (Kabir 1983, 125):

*If you are true, a curse can't reach you  
And death can't eat you;  
Walking from truth to truth,  
What can destroy you?*

“Truth” referred to in this poem, is not the relative truth of the moment, but the metaphysical truth which Kabir considers to be the foundation for the phenomenal world. It is described as beyond transience and death, and one who is constantly in touch with this dimension transcends the relativity of phenomenal existence. The relative world of phenomenality as a whole is dismissed by the poet as “monstrous lie”, leaving the metaphysical oneness of life as the only truth (Kabir 2011,105).

*Can't you see that  
Rama is the only truth, says Kabir  
Everything else a monstrous lie?*

This dismissal of the phenomenal world is the ultimate stage in a gradual evolution of truth. When the mystic calls the entire reality of the physical phenomenon a mirage, he does so, after going through a wide range of experiences that are part of the physical reality. It is the intensity of a life in the most ordinary and profane circumstances that brings out the dimension of the sacred in Kabir’s poetry. What we find here is a spiritual journey that is driven by intensity of life in a given moment which Robert Bly (2004, xvii) identifies as the very basis of Kabir’s spiritual method: “*Kabir says when you do interior work, the work is not done by the method, but by intensity.*” The intense attention to the vast saga of life that is played out in space and time, takes the mystic to an altogether different reality that is beyond the spatiotemporal limitations. Even after reaching the sublimity of the transcendent truth, he does not get completely withdrawn from the play of en-

ergies in the physical world. Settling into the certitude of the fundamental truth of life – the metaphysical oneness of life according to Kabir – enables the poet to see the reality of life as a dynamic process. Roland Stahl (1954,152) makes an interesting observation in this regard: “*God is the ground of all being and the creator and sustainer of all finite existence, not only in idea, but in actuality... This conception of reality, with its view of life and activity within the absolute, committed Kabir to the doctrine of reality as dynamic process.*”

Another connection that Kabir makes with the transcendent ultimate and the physical here-now is that he posits the former as the only solution to the suffering that integral to the latter. He sees grounding oneself firmly in the certainty and security of the being of the universe as the only way to settle the chaos of relative existence (Kabir 2003, 187):

*Without the song of testimony,  
the quarrels of the world don't end.*

Once again, the thrust here is on interiorisation – the subjective experience of divinity, not on an uncritical adherence to belief systems. It entails, as Charlotte Vaudeville and Harry B. Partin (1964, 196) note, “*withdrawing to the innermost depths of one's interiority*”. Such a withdrawal is presented in Kabir's poetic world, as a flight beyond the reach of mental chaos (Kabir 1993, 246):

*If you but remain quiet for an instant,  
God, the Lord, will be present.*

Again, Kabir's use of pronoun implies a much deeper perception than the seemingly simple surface meaning indicates, like in some of the other poems discussed in this paper. It is said if “you” remained quiet for a moment, God would be present. By the words, “Lord” and “God”, Kabir always talks about a divine dimension that is beyond the constant traffic of the mind. “You” can only mean the mind, in this context and hence divinity is presented, here, as a dimension that is accessible when we develop the necessary discipline to keep the mind aside. Quietening the mind, as always in Kabir's mystic world entails an unwavering commitment to truth because, for him, the constant traffic of thoughts in the mind is a result of the identification with the world of phenomenality. This stance with regard to the mental structure of a human being is, in fact, quite radical. Kabir sees all identification that a human being passionately invests in, as consequences of a fundamental lack – the lack of basic understanding regarding the true nature of one's being. His perspective is

not limited to one identification or the other; rather it posits all identities as mental constructs to camouflage this lack. Hence, it is quite natural that he sees the ultimate truth as beyond the mind as mind itself is a ploy. The mystic wisdom of the mind being a conditioned mechanism that is repetitive in nature, is illustrated here with sharp precision.

The most striking and fascinating poetic expression of the mystic reality in Kabir's poetry, is in the poems which are usually called “*ulatbaasi*” poems or “*upside-down*” poems. These poems are an attempt to put into words an experience and a dimension that are beyond language and logic. Since, the experience itself entails an “*anti-language*” quality, the poet uses weird imagination to represent the illogical nature of the mystic dimension (Kabir 2011, 5):

*Is there a man so clever  
Who'll explain this  
Topsy-turvy Veda?  
Water catches fire;  
The blind can see.  
A frog swallows five cobras.  
A buffalo carries off a tiger;  
A goat eats a wolf;  
A deer kills a cheetah.  
A quail gets the better of a falcon;  
A mouse of a cat;  
A Jackal of a farrier.  
Respectfully,  
With palms folded,  
I offer this song  
To the Lord, says Kabir.*

It is quite evident that the poet, through a juxtaposition of illogical imagery, is striving to drive home the point that it is impossible to put into words the mystic oneness that he experiences in the deepest spaces of his subjectivity. The last four lines of the poem indicate the attitude that the poet has towards such an experience – “*with palms folded*” he offers his song about the profound mystery of one's being to the “*Lord*”. This marks the ultimate realization of the truth that the seeker in Kabir always longed for. The break in language and logic that he calibrates to great poetic effect, becomes a representation of the absolute reality, which is transcendent and metaphysical. Like many other mystics, Kabir does not tell his readers what the transcendent reality is; rather, he tells us what it is not – he tells us that it is not the phenomenal world of logic and human transactions. The silence he keeps with regard to the nature of the ultimate truth itself



## 5 Conclusion

is the most apt representation of it possible in language; it is to create this silence that the poet becomes vocal about negation of everything else.

Kabir's poetry expresses not only the wonder and magic of being in touch with a dimension that is beyond physicality, but also the ease of transiting into such a state (Kabir 2003, 121):

*Kabir says, brother,  
I have gone crazy –  
quietly, quietly, like a thief,  
my mind has slipped into the simple state.*

Kabir settles into the simplicity of being one with the existence after going through trials and tribulations of a desperate search for truth. The wonder and ecstasy that such an expanse of being bring is the ultimate reward for a life lived with dedicated attention to what one perceives as the truth and a vigilant mental process of weeding out all kinds of lies

Religion as a cultural practice can often be quite conservative and dogmatic. As Otto Pflieger (1983, 2) notes, “it entails the presupposition... that the transmitted dogmas contain infallible, divinely revealed truth, to which man should readily and unquestioningly submit.” The most regressive aspect about such a practice of religion is that it is belief oriented. Kabir's poetry, especially those poems which delve into the nature of phenomenal and metaphysical truth, stand in contrast to the rigid conception of the divine in institutionalised religion. Though Kabir's poems that are about the transcendent Absolute dismiss the phenomenality of the material world, we have seen that the spiritual seeker in Kabir is equally interested in the relative truth of the phenomenal world. Most importantly, Kabir's poetry calls for an earnest attention to the phenomenon of life, without any deceptive mental distortions. This profound quality to be attentive to the “truth” one perceives, even when it is the relative truth of phenomenality, is alone sufficient for his poetry to stay relevant beyond time and geography. Absolute commitment to know what can be known in a temporal and situational context is what the mystic considers as the most valued quality in a spiritual seeker, and his poetry inspires many, even in our times, to make that quality a living reality in their lives. Kabir's is a legacy that should be embraced and celebrated as his words are even more relevant in our times than his.

Kabir's notion of “truth” that this study sought to illustrate in its varying shades, despite its contextual differences, has been invariably rooted in a profound sense of honesty within the limits of one's perception. The three phases of “truth” in Kabir's poetry that this study discussed – being objectively factual about the phenomenal reality, being in a constant longing for the ultimate realisation of truth, and a celebration of the mystic bliss – are connected with the common thread of utmost honesty possible in a given instant. Or rather, the element of being truthful to one's subjective reality and its longings is one constant factor we find in Kabir's poems even as the seeker's perception of truth changes. The poems discussed in this study stylistically and thematically point towards such an intense and unwavering honesty and its alchemic power for transforming human consciousness.

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