

### On the book 'Relevance of Kabir':

I am an admirer of Saint Kabir, have read about his life and teachings which have played an important role in shaping my spiritual life. This book 'Relevance of Kabir' is the first one I have read on Kabir, his poems and his message. I have gone through the book just once and I find many more readings of it are required to digest all it has to say. I have felt greatly benefitted by the book which admirably puts across Kabir's message in the present context in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As the author says rightly, Kabir was a trenchant critic of the extant customs, superstitions and religious beliefs of the credulous and dared the open minded people often using a blunt provocative language to make them see the elusive yet plain facts in front of their faces. His lyrics are an invitation to silent self inquiry and at the same time they strip the credibility of religious texts (in particular the mythologies) and those individuals of avowed religious and spiritual authority enjoying reputation among the masses. Human beings unfortunately allow themselves to be led into error and falsehoods again and again whatever be the age, the medieval or the 21<sup>st</sup> century boasting tremendous advances in science and technology giving it a false aura of invincibility, the difference being only the way we label them. The author has succeeded eminently in establishing the relevance of Kabir's teachings in the modern context through the choice of the best poems (in his view) and by illuminating them by up-to- date observations and his own experience. It will not be an exaggeration to say that Kabir is alive and walking through the pages of the book especially for the first time reader of Kabir in the current times. The author does a lot of plain speaking in tune with the poems of Kabir in such a way that we do not know who it is talking the author or Kabir.

The conspicuous theme which plays throughout the book is the demonstration of the illusoriness of the sense of self symbolized by the 'I', in itself a complex thought construct composed of the bundle of ideas, feelings, sensations, imagination and experience more precisely the memory trace which it leaves.

The self-image of a person undergoes so many mutations through one's life influenced by the innate impressions, tastes, inclinations, ambitions, aspirations, fears and hopes compounded by the interactions the individual has in his social setting.

The Indian spiritual tradition recognizes four faculties of what we label as 'mind' namely manas(feelings), buddhi (cognitive and decision making), ahamkar (the 'I' sense, individual ego) and consciousness. There is also the concept of layers of being comprising physical biological, vital emotional, mental, the cognitive (knowledge) and cognitive-intuitive or bliss (ananda) which interpenetrate and make a person what he appears to himself and the others though there is always a gap in this perception between the two appearances causing conflicts in the various planes. The mental (cogitation or thinking) and intellectual (the higher cognitive concept forming functions) layers pose a formidable challenge to a seeker who has made the discovery of and living according to his real nature as the principal object of his life. Unless he is under the expert guidance of a teacher of caliber who has travelled the entire distance, the seeker remains deluded trapped by the 'I' and its baggage. Kabir has emphasized the indispensability of a true Guru for success in the seeker's spiritual life. The central and crucial realization for one on such a path is the realization that the sense of individuality, a separate self, is a myth, that ideas beliefs, thoughts and experiences arise and fall in the nameless indescribable awareness and the person ceases to identify with them as well as the physical in which life and mind are expressing themselves. The final and permanent dissolution of this myth heralds the realization of one's true nature. He is then truly liberated, he feels at one with all that exists, with nature; he becomes capable of truly motiveless love which knows no distinction or boundaries and works all the time for the amelioration of human misery, for the lifting up of the curtain which hides reality in fellow beings. They are the real masters who come into being but rarely for the upliftment of human consciousness.

The author has succeeded in conveying this crucial message and showed

that humanity has been and still is groaning undergoing needless misery caused by ignorance as to the true nature of self through the illustrations lyrics of Kabir. Kabir endeavored to dispel this ignorance through his plain speaking and pointing at the facts even at the risk of to his person welcoming the vilification and condemnation of the high and mighty while leading a life of poverty all out of loving concern for his fellow beings. He was aware that his teachings were mostly falling on deaf ears of the busy fools who passed by ignoring the diamond that fell on the ground. Kabir said that the true teacher teaches until he is blue even when it is patent that he may be blowing through the bamboo. Kabir taught that way till the end of his physical existence, the end itself becoming the final teaching.

I recommend the book to all serious seekers on the path of silent inquiry for the realization of their true nature and the real purpose of existence.

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