

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS INSTITUTE
DEPARTMENT OF CIVILIZATION STUDIES**

MASTER'S THESIS

**THE QUEST OF KABIR: CONSCIENCE AS POETRY IN
PRE-MODERN INDIA**

RAJEEV KUMAR

THESIS SUPERVISOR: ASST. PROF. DR. ERCÜMENT ASİL

ISTANBUL, 2021

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by

RAJEEV KUMAR

**A thesis submitted to the Alliance of Civilizations Institute in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Civilization Studies**

THESIS SUPERVISOR: ASST. PROF. DR. ERCÜMENT ASİL

ISTANBUL, 2021

ACADEMIC HONESTY ATTESTATION

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name Surname: RAJEEV KUMAR

Signature:

“World read many books, none became a scholar,
One who read a word of “love” becomes a scholar”

-Kabir

पोथी पढ़ि पढ़ि जग मुआ, पंडित भया न कोय,
ढाई आखर प्रेम का, पढ़े सो पंडित होय।



ÖZ

KABİR'İ ARAYIŞ: MODERN ÖNCESİ HİNDİSTAN'DA ŞİİR OLARAK
VİCDAN

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Bakti ismiyle de bilinen modern öncesi devir, Hindistan tarihinde çok mühim bir yere sahiptir. Kabir bir ozan olarak bu devrin en göze çarpan simalarındandır. Birçok bilgin, özellikle tarihçiler, Kabir'i daha geniş bir tarihsel bağlam içinde değerlendirirken birbirinden farklılaşmıştır. Ancak henüz hiçbir bilgin Kabir'i medeniyet perspektifinden incelememiştir. Benim bu tezden murâdım hem Kabir'i medeniyet perspektifinden ele almak hem *Muhabbeti'l-Kül* konseptinin onda tecessüm ettiğini ve modern öncesi Hindistan'da ulaşılmış olan seviyeyi temsil eden bir medeniyet metaforu veya vicdanı olduğunu iddia etmektir. Bu iddiamı desteklemek içinse Marshall G. S. Hodgson'ın *Islamicate* projeksiyonuna atıfla Hindistan alt kıtasından üç figüre başvuruyorum: Kabir, Babür İmparatoru Ekber Şah ile onun, *Sulhü'l-Kül* mefhumuyla tanınan danışman ve vakanüvisi Ebu'l-Fazl ibn Mübarek. Hem Ekber Şah hem de Ebu'l-Fazl, Kabir'den ilhamla *Muhabbeti'l-Kül* konseptini kurmak için azmettiler ki bu esasında Hodgson'un *Islamicate* medeniyeti icadını doğrular niteliktedir.

Bu tez, Bakti devrinin mirası üstünde bulunan analitik boşluğu aşmak suretiyle dünya tarihini yeniden okumaya yönelik benim mütevazı bir teşebbüsüdür. Kayıp bir anlatı olarak Kabir'in şiirine odaklanarak, Bruce B Lawrence'ın da *berzah* konseptiyle destek olduğu Hodgson'ın *Islamicate* yörüngesinin izini sürüyorum. Bu yaklaşımla, Kabir'in şiirine ilişkin analizimin, Güney Asya'nın uygarlık mirası için çok büyük öneriler sunduğuna inanıyorum.

Anhatar kelimeler: *Asabiye*, *berzah*, Bakti-Sufi ağı, *Islamicate* medeniyet, Kabir, *Muhabbeti'l-Kül*

ABSTRACT

THE QUEST OF KABIR: CONSCIENCE AS POETRY IN PRE-MODERN INDIA

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Pre-modern India, also known as the Bhakti period, is a crucial period in Indian history. Kabir, as an oral poet, is the most remarkable figure of this period. Many scholars, particularly historians, have differed in assessing Kabir within a broader historical context. However, no scholar has tried yet to study Kabir from the civilization perspective. That is what I intend to do in this thesis and while doing so, I argue that Kabir's poetry embodies *muhabbate-e kul* and represents a civilizational metaphor or conscience that was achieved in pre modern India. To support my argument, I invoke Marshall G S Hodgson's projection of Islamicate highlighting three figures in unity in the Indian subcontinent: Kabir, Akbar, and Abu'l Fazl. Akbar, the Mughal Emperor, and his advisor-cum-historian Abu'l Fazl developed *sulh-e kul* (universal peace). Both intended to establish *muhabbate-e kul* (universal love) that was based on the conscience developed by Kabir. Thus, *muhabbate-e kul* embodies and justifies Hodgson's neologism of Islamicate civilization.

This thesis is my humble attempt to reread world history by overcoming the crucial analytical gap that omits the Bhakti legacy. By focusing on Kabir's poetry as a missing narrative, I trace the trajectory of Hodgson's Islamicate civilization, complimented by Bruce B Lawrence's *barzakh* logic. With this approach, my analysis of Kabir's poetry offers new and vast implications for the civilizational and cosmopolitan legacy of South Asia.

Keywords: *Asabiyya*, *barzakh*, Bhakti-Sufi network, Islamicate civilization, Kabir, *muhabbat-e kul*

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to everyone I met, consciously or subconsciously, to people and places, who are al-mawjud, and to my Lord, who is both al-mawjud and al-ghaib. These all are my experiences or conscience to be able to compose this thesis. Hence, if I begin by thanking everyone, I must begin as I have written this thesis, with *ishq*, or love, and its longing, which is both al- mawjud and al-ghaib. In any instance, the *ishq* or love is the reference point. Therefore, I am grateful for the love and for its longing.



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Rajeev Kumar
Prisoner of Love & Hope
ISTANBUL, 2021

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PREFACE

This study, *The Quest of Kabir: Conscience as Poetry in Pre-Modern India*, is my projection of love as the telos of human civilization. I employ Ibn Khaldun's word *asabiyya* to express my hypothesis that human civilization starts with *asabiyya* (a sense of belonging), followed by *umran bedawi* and then *umran hadhari*, as envisioned by Ibn Khaldun, to attain *ilm al-umran* (oceanic feeling or bigger feeling of belonging or love). This telos of human civilisation, in my opinion, was dubbed *muhabbat-e kul* by Abu'l Fazl (love with all or universal love). Thus, utilizing Professor Bruce Bennet Lawrence's *barzakh* logic and Marshall Goodwin Simms Hodgson's Islamicate idea, whose telos is love. I attempt to study the Bhakti era as a civilizational process. It is what I refer to as civilization's pinnacle. In the 16th century, Abu'l Fazl and Akbar coined the term *muhabbat-e kul* to see the height of the civilization, which was inspired by Kabir.

This study is a venture that begins with the longing of *ishq* or love or it mirrors love. The love is *al-ghaib* (unseen) and *al-mawjud* (seen) or between *al-ghaib* and *al-mawjud* or beyond *al-ghaib* and *al-mawjud*. It does not matter whether it is *al-ghaib* or *al-mawjud* or it is neither *al-ghaib* nor *al-mawjud*; what matters is the longing or effort to achieve it. The beauty of it is that it connects/binds or unites both *al-ghaib* and *al-mawjud*. This longing is *barzakh*, if I call it in the language of Professor Bruce.

It is metaphorical if I call myself the *barzakh* exemplar. I need to tell a story to express it. I begin my trip from a tiny town to a large metropolis—from Akaunha to Istanbul—from *umran-badawi* (village life) to *umran-hadari* (city life), as Ibn Haldun would have put it. I find it difficult to maintain a balance between rural and city life, or between *umran-hadari* and *umarn-bedawi*. It is not that I am afraid of losing my identity coming from a Hindu family and from a tiny town who has moved to Istanbul to live in a major metropolis and among Muslims. But, I struggle to bring two identities in communication or to connect both *umran-badawi* and *umran-hadari*. Professor Bruce express that that this yearning is the *barzakh*, is a continual strive. I call it love.

In this quest, I discover another Kabir. He is none other than Professor Bruce, who has been teaching us at Ibn Haldun University. Professor Lawrence calls me Kabir's friend, and sometimes he calls me Kabir because of his humorous nature, but I know when he calls me Kabir or a friend of Kabir, he means it. That is why I call him Kabir because I can identify myself with him because of his *barzakh logic*, and maybe he can identify himself with me because he calls me Kabir.

What makes me refer to him as Kabir is his knowledge and services to humanity via his unique teaching and academic understanding for the purpose of Self and Wholeness. His lectures and scholarships are intriguing because his teaching projects hope for humanity, based on moral and metaphysical, or concentric knowledge rather than instrumental or political conformity, or diametric understanding. He never speaks in binary terms, such as East versus West, but rather in terms of one within another. In this setting, his *barzakh* journey reflects a larger identity while also tracing an individual identity. Therefore, teaching of Professor Bruce justifies the vision of Kabir.

Hence, Kabir is more than a person who inspires humanity. He never dies. He is the conscience. That can be found in Buddha's *karuna* (compassion), Shankara's *advaitva*, Hallaj's *ana'l-haqq*, Ibn Arabia's *wahdat al-wujud*, Kabir's *poetry*, Ibn Khaldun's *ilm al-umran*, Abu'l Fazl's *muhabbat-e kul*, Marshall Hodgson's *Islamicate*, and Professor Bruce's *barzakh logic*. In this sense, my projection of *ishq* or love is a humble attempt to continue the legacy of that conceince as highest level of civilization.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, Hodgson's neologism 'Islamicate civilization' has prompted renewed interest in the discussion of world history and civilizational studies. The notion of Islamicate offers a new perspective to look at the history and scope of humanity by understanding the unification of social, political, juridical, moral, spiritual, and religious development in human history. With the birth of Islam, Hodgson sees the Islamicate civilisation as a transition from the Axial Age that arose in the Irano-Semitic region.

By Islamicate civilization, he means the unification of social and cultural development in Afro-Eurasia that unified the Persian cosmopolis and the Sanskrit cosmopolis in the context of the Indian subcontinent. Thus, his notion of Islamicate civilization stems from the religion of Islam as the high culture that gives coherence to the new phase of the Nile-to-Oxus civilizations but also goes beyond its strictly religious characteristics and demands.

Accordingly, we must see Islamicate contractualism not as the result of Islam but as largely a tendency parallel to that of Islamic moralism itself, though perhaps unrealizable without the support of Islam.¹

Hodgson is seen as a philosopher of history by Benjamin Schewel.² After World War II, Schewel claims, the philosophical historical dispute began to take shape. It was because philosophers, historians, and academics realized that contemporary Western culture had failed to create an era of global enlightenment, and that the nationalistic approach to mankind had also failed. The global ideologies of American liberalism and Soviet communism did not generate peace; instead, they sparked global conflict. As a result, humanity's linear growth came to an end.³ This is why a debate emerged

¹ Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam. 1: The Classical Age of Islam*, Paperback ed. (Chicago, Ill: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1977), 340.

² McGill School of Religious Studies, *Imagining the Islamic Ecumene: Marshall Hodgson as Philosopher of History* by Dr. Benjamin Schewel, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_BcZFB0eZw.

³ McGill School of Religious Studies.

over how to re-conceptualize world history from a non-western or non-eastern viewpoint in order to present a more spiritual and compassionate narrative and usher in a new era of egalitarian, peaceful, and prosperous global civilisation.⁴

In 1949, Karl Jaspers, a German philosopher, gave a direction to this discussion by introducing the period from 800 BCE to 200 BCE as an *Achsenzeit* (Axial Age) in his book *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (*The Origin and Goal of History*).⁵ This time-period, he marked as humanity's spiritual and cultural basis. China, India, Persia, Judea, and Greece established parallel but independent civilizations that produced letter, language, literature, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and other disciplines that mankind still relies on today.⁶

As a result, Jasper concentrated on breaking the Eurocentric or nativist historiographic pattern, and he aspired to a global awareness that would bring mankind to global integration. Arnold Joseph Toynbee, Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, Armando Salvatore, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, Robert N. Bellah, Sheldon Pollock, Richard Eaton, and Bruce B. Lawrence have all been influenced by him. Marshall Hodgson based his study of Islamicate civilisation on the notion of the Axial Age. He observed that the concept of a "civilizational pattern that helped to unify the region also showed a trans-regional expanding and integrative drive that had no precedent in pre-modern history."⁷

Therefore, in my study, I follow Hodgson's lead, supplemented by Lawrence's "barzakh logic". I want to promote love (*muhabbat-e kul*, introduced by Abu'l Fazl) as the greatest degree of civilization using *barzakh logic* theory. For this purpose, I develop Ibn Khaldun's idea of *asabiyya* (a sense of belonging) into an oceanic sensation that I name love. My interpretation of 'asabiyya' differs from how it has been used by scholars to explain political occurrences from a sociological standpoint. *Asabiyya*, in my opinion, is a development of mankind living together, which has to be enlarged as an oceanic emotion in the context of society and civilization. As the ultimate objective of humanity should strive for this oceanic sensation. I would like to

⁴ McGill School of Religious Studies.

⁵ Richard Ferguson, *The Story of Human Spiritual Evolution* (Xlibris Corporation, 2012), 150.

⁶ Ferguson, 150.

⁷ Jóhann Páll Árnason, Armando Salvatore, and Georg Stauth, eds., *Islam in Process: Historical and Civilizational Perspectives*, Yearbook of the Sociology of Islam 7 (Bielefeld: Transcript Verl, 2006), 30.

relate it with *nirvana* as well that I will do in my further study. Thus, in this research, *asabiyya* is the consciousness formed in people to live together throughout history, which is the beginning of cultural unification growing as an oceanic sensation. The Bhakti period is an expression of oceanic sentiment that created society's conscience, allowing Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews, and others to coexist.

1.1. Bhakti Movement and Islamicate Civilization

The Bhakti period, often known as Bhakti Movement in pre-modern India, is an important time in Indian history. Many researchers, notably historians, have varied in their assessments of the Bhakti Period in the context of history. Some claim that the Bhakti period originated in the 8th century as a growth of the Vedic tradition or literature known as the *Bhagavata Purana*. Sheldon Pollock, projecting this time in a worldwide perspective, sees it as a literary trend from the 11th century onwards, which he dubs as vernacular millennium. Others see the Bhakti era, which lasted from the 11th to the 16th centuries, as a social and political movement in India. Still other argue that the Bhakti Movement arose in response to Islam's advent on the Indian subcontinent in the 12th century. However, no researcher has attempted to examine the Bhakti Movement from the standpoint of civilization or to situate the Bhakti Movement as a fundamental transition in Indic culture within Islamicate civilisation. Marshall Hodgson launched this last project, and I would term it the transformation or metamorphosis of Indic culture into Islamicate civilisation, following Hodgson's lead.

Kabir is a crucial reference point for understanding the Bhakti Movement from a civilizational viewpoint and situating it within Islamicate civilisation. Kabir has been recognized as the most important character in the Bhakti Period. He is considered a Bhakti saint and, according to many, the most notable Indian oral poet of the 15th and 16th centuries. Kabir, rather than being a poet, a social reformer, or a Bhakti Saint, represents a civilizational project in my opinion. As a result, I prefer to refer to him as a *barzakh* exemplar. *Barzakh* is a Quranic term that signifies "divider" or "barrier." Bruce B. Lawrence, on the other hand, sees *barzakh* as a civilizational and cosmopolitan force. He sees *barzakh*, the crucial word, as a bridge rather than a barrier. As a result, Kabir, as a *barzakh* exemplar, represents a link between the Indic and

Islamic worlds, emphasizing the transformation of Indic culture into its Islamicate counterpart.

In this research, I emphasize a few terms to understand the Bhakti Period as an expression of Islamicate civilization in the Indian subcontinent. I see it differently from other researchers who have not considered the Bhakti movement in the context of civilisation. The following are the terms:

(1) Bhakti Movement: As a cultural unification movement that resulted in the development of monotheistic and egalitarian tendencies on the Indian subcontinent, two major traditions developed at its inception: Shaivism and Vaishnavism.

(2) Kabir: Kabir is a remarkable India oral poet whose poetry depicts the development of Islamicate civilisation in the Indian subcontinent, which is regarded as a significant shift in Indian culture. His poetry also exemplifies the emergence of a moral consciousness that features two civilizations: Islamic and Indic.

(3) Vernacular millennium: This is the period when the Axial Age's knowledge was communicated and dispersed via vernacular languages. I would like to call this process the 'vernacularization of knowledge'. Kabir may be seen as an exemplar of the vernacular millennium because of his distinctive poetry style that communicated the knowledge in vernacular language. It helped to establish vernacular as a literary language and a high culture.

(4) The Post-Axial Age: This is the transitional period as cultural unity in the Irano-Semitic region and communication among independent cultures, the birth of Islam as a new socio-political order, Islam as a worldwide phenomenon, and the development of Islamicate civilization.

(5) Islamicate civilization: Hodgson's definition of Islamicate civilization goes beyond religion to include the creative, moral, ethical, aesthetical, and spiritual growth that he refers to as "cultural glamour" or "brilliance" in the human history. Hodgson combines this evolution with Islam, which integrates many cultures into a multi-civilization framework.

(6) *Barzakh* Logic: *Barzakh* is a Quranic term that refers to the separation of salt and fresh water.⁸ As a result, it is a significant barrier. Bruce Lawrence, on the other hand, views *barzakh* to be a civilizational and cosmopolitan force. Rather than a barrier, he perceives this word as a bridge. According to him, *barzakh* is a thin line that links two zones without allowing one to be diluted by the other. He refers to it as *barzakh* logic. In academics, the *barzakh* logic may be extremely useful in overcoming the ongoing binary Hindu-Muslim or East-West conflict in contemporary culture, as well as in civilization studies, which will offer mankind a better opportunity. In the third chapter, Kabir as a *barzakh* exemplar, I will go into further detail regarding this result.

(7) Civilisation: According to Hodgson, civilization is defined by cultural brilliance. Building on Hodgson's work, Salvatore defines civilization as the growth of a feeling of civility, the interplay between nomadic (umran bedawi) and urban (umran hadari) existence, which necessitates and stresses networks. Bruce B Lawrence interprets it as *adab*.

(8) Cosmopolitan: According to Lawrence, cosmopolitanism is a trans-territorial and trans-temporal ethos that has strong origins in the creation and reception of Islam as an ethical as well as artistic sensibility presented via didactic literature.⁹ Muslim cosmopolitanism includes three important elements: affirmation of life, appreciation of knowledge and openness to change. According to Lawrence, these components can be best understood through the Arabic word '*adab*,' which pervaded the networks of trade, languages, Sufism, and scholarship through which Muslims engaged with people both at home and abroad.¹⁰

⁸ Bruce B. Lawrence, *Who Is Allah?* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 41. For detailed information, readers may visit the book *Who is Allah*. I quote one sura of Quran, which translated by Lawrence, in this book:

Allah is the One
who released the two waters
one fresh and sweet,
one salty and bitter,
and put a gap between them,
and a forbidden barrier [barzakh]. (Q 25:53)

⁹ Bruce B. Lawrence, *The Bruce B. Lawrence Reader: Islam beyond Borders* (Duke University Press, 2020), 5.

¹⁰ Lawrence, 5.

(9) Islam: According to Hodgson, Axial-Age Transmutation as cultural unity produced by Islam, while Lawrence has conceptualized Islam in both historical and metahistorical terms, seeing it as both a civilizational and cosmopolitan force.

(10) Axial Age (800 BC to 200 BC): Hodgson discusses the term 'Axial Age,' which was coined by philosopher Karl Jaspers, because of its historical significance.¹¹

The Place of Islam in the Chronology of World History

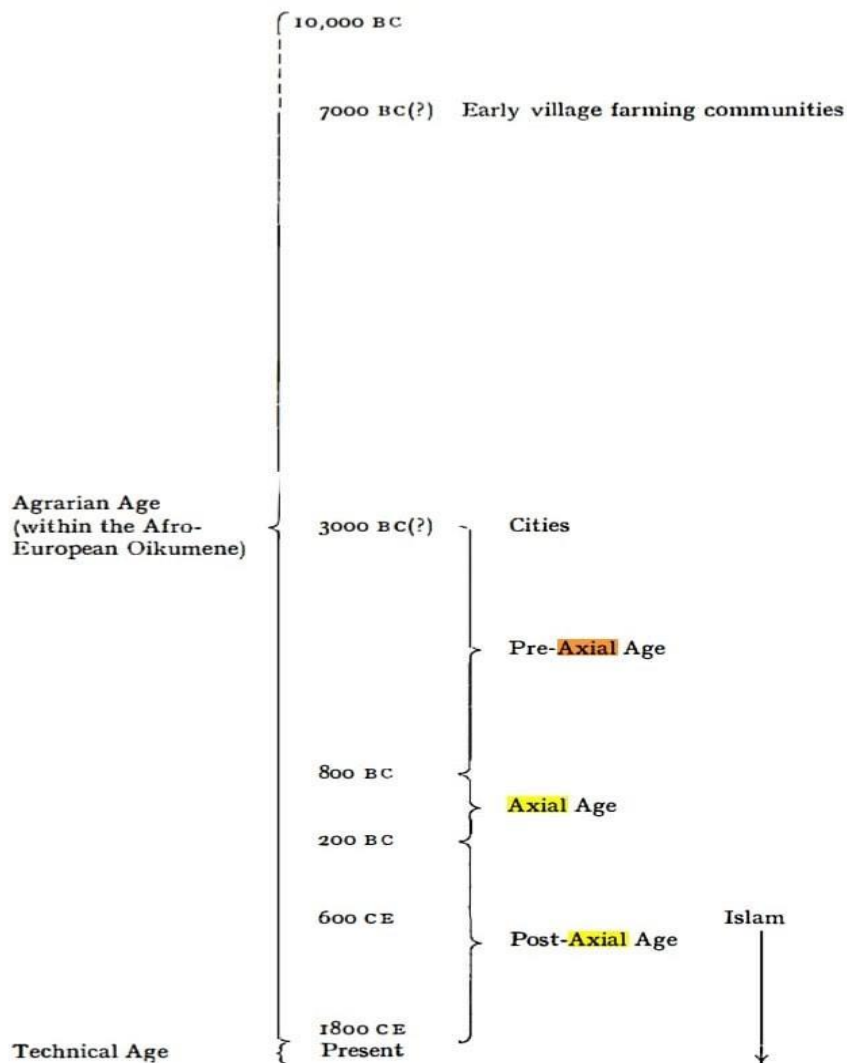


Figure 1: Chronology of World History

(Source: Hodgson, 1974)

¹¹ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam. 1*, 112.

Hodgson used a new periodization based on Jaspers' Axial-Age projecting new narration of Islamic history (Please see above figure). In this periodization, unlike the other historians, Hodgson attaches particular importance to the Middle Period or Post-Axial Age – from 200 BC to 1800 CE within which he locates the period from 200 BCE to 600 CE as pre-Islamic or formative period of the Islamicate Civilization, which spans from 600 CE to 1800 CE. In my view, his periodization that was based on the transformation of socio-economic, cultural brilliance and spiritual development marks his significant contribution in the field of History, Sociology, History of Religions and Philosophy of History in its broadest arc.

In this thesis, I use Islam in a broader civilizational sense and not within the constraint of a simplified understanding of religion. First, Islam emerged in the Post Axial Age whose foundation is the Axial Age. This means that Islam is an advanced version from a civilizational perspective as it brought new socio-political and religious order in human history supported by existing knowledge and idea of Axial-Age. Second, the first surah of the Quran is *Iqra*, which means to read. This implies that education or acquiring knowledge for all is the main concern of Islam. This was not in other cultures such as in Christianity and most of the Indic traditions with the exception of Buddhism. In Vedic tradition, listening to Veda was strictly prohibited for Shudras and untouchables. Thus, *Iqra* became the key in the civilizational process at a universal level– a projector for all humanity. Third, I look at Islam from the perspective of Lawrence. Lawrence analyzes Islam in both historical and metahistorical terms. This signifies that there is variation in the historical development of Islam in different periods. It has more of a civilizational aspiration than mere a religious trait. It is important to note that highlighting Islam is not the projection of Indic-Islamic binary. Rather, Hodgson's notion of the Islamicate is a civilizational one. That is to say, the rejection of all binaries including East and West and as in the case of Indic and Islamic –Hindus and Muslims, spheres of influence. Not restricted to the practice of Islam as a religion, the neologism Islamicate is the civilizational change in reference to the broad expanse of Africa and Asia that was influenced by Muslim rulers, Sufis, traders.¹² It is a projection of the change and the movement of humanity as a whole

¹² David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence, eds., *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000), 1.

due to interconnection. For this approach to history, sociology and literature, Lawrence would say, it is the *barzakh logic*.

In my view, Muslims played a significant role in diffusing and developing the knowledge of the Axial Age in vernacular language. They communicated the Indic knowledge, Buddhist philosophy through spirituality, art, architecture, music, crafts, civility, morality, ethics, aesthetics, *adab*, and so on to ordinary people. Because accessing Vedic knowledge or *Sanskrit* (civilization or culture) was restricted to particular communities or castes and such knowledge was only available in Sanskrit, which ordinary people could not comprehend.¹³ I call this diffusion and development of Indic knowledge into vernacular languages as the “vernacularization of the knowledge” of the Axial Age. I will talk about it in detail in the fourth chapter. I see Islam as a monotheistic religion that becomes hugely successful in developing morality, ethics, aesthetics, and *adab* in the second millennium in vernacular culture. Muslims, who follow Islam, developed a multiplex approach to islamize vernacular languages, cultures, ideas, administration, art, architecture, and become a significant vehicle for diffusing the knowledge of the Axial Age. Thus, Islam becomes more influential than any other religions in global history.

In my view, Hodgson projects Islamicate as a high civilization in the context of the development as mentioned above. In this development, he highlighted three figures in unity in the Indian subcontinent: Kabir, Akbar, and Abu'l Fazl. Akbar, the Mughal Emperor, and his advisor-cum-historian Abu'l Fazl developed *Sulh-e Kul* (Universal peace). Both intended to establish *Muhabbate-e Kul* (Universal love) that Kabir had inspired them.

1.1.1. Kabir and Islamicate

Kabir is a legendary figure. He is regarded as the most remarkable Indian oral poet of the 15th-16th centuries. Many facts related to his birth and life are beyond historical inquiry. However, we know him through his poetry, which ends or begins with "*kahat Kabir suno bhai sadho*" (Kabir says, listen, o saint). These poems circulated in large numbers in various dialects of the Indian subcontinent. However, hundred years after his death, a collection of his authentic poetry was compiled in only one book called

¹³ The word culture or *sanskriti* comes from *sanskrit*, (Linda Hess and Sukhdev Singh, *The Bijak of Kabir* (Motilal Banarsidass, 2015), 36.

Bijak (seed), which nowadays is a sacred book for Sikh and *Kabirpanthis*.¹⁴ The *Bijak* consists of three main sections called *Ramainī*, *Shabda* and *Sākhī*.¹⁵ The fourth section contains very diverse poems in the form of folk song.



Figure 2: Portrait of Kabir. In this portrait, Kabir depicts both Hindu and Muslim symbolism

Source: www.hindidesi.com/2021/07/2021-kabir-das-jayanti-2021-date.html, Accessed: 26 Sep 2021

Kabir becomes popular through the song forms known as *sabda* or *pada*, and through aphoristic *sākhī*. This section is also known as *Kabir-Vani*. The aphoristic two-line *sākhī* (*Doha*) or couplet serves as the vehicle for popular wisdom throughout north India.¹⁶ Today, *Kabir-Panth* is also considered as a religion for many people. Those who follow Kabir or *Kabir-Panth* are called Kabirpanthi.

Thus, his poetry has covered the most significant part of the Indian subcontinent. Scholars like Prushottam Agrawal, Harbans Mukhia, Linda Hess, Sukhdev, and David Lorenzen consider him one of the most outstanding poets of vernacular literature. His legends among diverse folks and his representation in Indian society make him one of the most talked-about figures in India on various aspects of life and academic disciplines, whether political studies, social studies, philosophy, history, or literature.

¹⁴ Sikhism is a religion in India and those who follow Sikhism are called Sikh. Sikh consider Kabir as one of their important gurus. His poems are found in the sacred book of Sikh *Granthawali*.

¹⁵ Hess and Singh, *The Bijak of Kabir*, xii.

¹⁶ If the reader is interested in more detailed information on textual matters, they may consult the work of Hess “*Searching for Kabir: The Textual Tradition*”, *Three Kabir Collections: A Comparative Study*; Charlotte Vaudeville’s *Kabir*.

His poetry is not only accessible to the Indian audience but also to a modern western audience. Today, he is a widely translated Hindi vernacular poet of the 20th century.¹⁷

It is widely accepted among scholars that Kabir was brought up by a newly converted Muslim family. Yet, Kabir rejected the exclusive allegiance of Muslim identity. He used both Muslim and Hindu symbolisms. In terms of religious identity, Hindus consider him Hindu, Muslims consider him Muslim, Sikhs, and the Kabirpanthis call him Guru. Kabir has also been used in the modern Indian nation-building.¹⁸ Therefore, Kabir as a concept or idea encompasses all castes, creeds, religions, and religious identities and becomes more than mere a person.

We know Kabir only through poetry, because his existence is beyond historical reality. Yet, people have shown great interest in Kabir. Over the past decades, many scholars of literature, history and political studies have discussed Kabir. These scholars are not only from India but also from other countries. Among prominent scholars on Kabir are Purushottam Agrawal, Hazariprasad Diwedi, Harbans Mukhia and Rabindranath Tagore who are from India, Linda Hess, Christian Lee Novetzke, and Sheldon Pollock who are from America, David N Lorenzen, and Charlotte Vaudeville who are from France. Kabir's poetry signifies the influence of Islam in India and underscores Islamicate culture in the Indian subcontinent as a significant change.

1.1.2. From Indic to Islamicate

The Indian subcontinent developed great literature in the first millennium BCE– the Axial Age, like Vedic texts, Buddhist texts, and others. One of the Vedic texts, Mahabharata, consists of over 100,000 *slokas* or over 200,000 individual verses. Bhagavad Gita, which is part of Mahabharata, consists of around 700 verses. In my view, these kinds of literature are the foundation for the Post-Axial Age. Richard Ferguson mentions in his book on understanding Karl Jasper's Axial Age that this period is the spiritual and cultural foundations for humanity in parallel with and independent of China, India, Persia, Judea, and Greece – Greek philosophy, Hebrew

¹⁷ Hess and Singh, *The Bijak of Kabir*, xi.

¹⁸ Milind Wakankar, *Subalternity and Religion: The Prehistory of Dalit Empowerment in South Asia* (Routledge, 2010), 49.

prophecy, classical Zoroastrianism, Upanishadic Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and classical Chinese school of thoughts, upon which humanity still subsists today.¹⁹

Hodgson views religion as a source of civilization's motivation. He claims that an individual conscience or the teachings of a great person such as Buddha or Isaiah inspired humanity and provided a comprehensive way of life. ²⁰ People took heed of religious luminaries' teachings and founded their governments and religion on them. By the 4th and 5th centuries CE, religious allegiances had established themselves as political power players. As Hodgson highlights in his work,

An official form of Christianity achieved exclusive status in the Roman Empire; Zoroastrian Mazdeism gained a comparable status in the Sasanian (Persian) empire, though had it to tolerate stronger rivals. Vaishnavism and Shaivism (which together issued in modern Hinduism) vied for royal favours in the Indic lands and southeast overseas. Buddhism vied with a Buddhist-influenced neo-Taoism for power in China. Even allegiances with fewer adherents could dominate a court (like Jainism) or even control a kingdom now and then, as did Rabbinical Judaism (at this time a proselytizing body like the others) and Manicheanism.²¹

Hodgson compares and contrasts the Irano-Semitic and Indic traditions. He says that the Irano-Semitic tradition established interpersonal justice based on the Last Judgment, which implies that each person would be eternally rewarded in Paradise or condemned in Hell depending on their acts throughout their lifetime. ²² In contrast to the Indic traditions of Vaishnavism and Shaivism, which believed in the birth cycle till *moksha* or *nirvana*, individuals in the Irano-Semitic area had just one life to choose their everlasting fate via moral decision. ²³ As a result, Hodgson's view of history was quite optimistic.

God, according to Hodgson, is the heart of all tradition, and God as the supreme is the protagonist in a cosmic narrative having a beginning and a conclusion, in which the righteous cause will ultimately prevail. ²⁴ It's a monotheistic tradition, according to Hodgson, in which a single dominating figure is worshipped. Monotheism is defined

¹⁹ Ferguson, *The Story of Human Spiritual Evolution*, 150.

²⁰ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam. 1*, 340.

²¹ Hodgson, 125.

²² Hodgson, 131.

²³ Hodgson, 132.

²⁴ Hodgson, 132.

by the worship of one God, which became successful in history when the worshippers united as one nation.²⁵

My concern in this thesis is not theological analysis but rather how humanity reaches the highest level of civilization and how this understanding develops in vernacular languages as conscience that lead to the cultural unification in the Indian subcontinent. Thus, I would depict this cultural unification within Indic culture through Sankara who unites both Shaivism and Vaishnavism, which are loosely understood as Hinduism. Then, I would proceed with the consolidation of Indic and Islamic through Kabir. Furthermore, analyzing Sankara and Kabir, I will reflect on the tendency towards reducing the number of supreme gods in India even before the arrival of Islam. This helped the cultural unification in the Indian subcontinent that today we call Hinduism, and how this tendency paves ways for Islam in the Indian subcontinent.

1.1.3. Understanding of God: *Barzakh*

Kabir is a thoughtful person and a self-learner. He says “Brother, where did your two Gods come from? Tell me, who made you mad?”²⁶ Kabir’s God is the God of everyone and not solely restricted to Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Brahmins and Dalits. His Nirgun God is everywhere, in every moment, and just a single call away. God is the higher concept in Kabir’s poetry, not only metaphysically but also historically. He frees God from the conviction of Brahminical conscience. For thousands of years, God was not entirely accessed by the lower castes like Kabir. Kabir has the audacity and courage to free God from the Brahmanical conviction in a historical context. He is the rebel who claims that God is for all. He uses the same terminology for God as Hindus and Muslims use such as Ram, Hari and Rahamana. Thus, Kabir’s understanding of God is the *barzakh*.

In my view, Kabir’s understanding of God, Brahman or Allah is the conscience or *barzakh*; a self-experienced understanding of God between *al-mawjud* (the seen) and *al-ghaib* (the unseen). This could also imply perceiving God as both *al-mawjud* and *al-ghaib* or beyond *al-mawjud* and *al-ghaib*. This conscience is the projection of the long journey of entire human history, which connects, binds and unites them in the 15th and

²⁵ Hodgson, 132.

²⁶ Hess and Singh, *The Bijak of Kabir*, 50.

16th centuries. Cultural unification or sense of belonging (*assabiya*) in a broader context is the focus of my thesis.

1.1.4. Sufi-Bhakti in Indian Islamicate Civilization

Ravi M Gupta says that Bhakti throughout the centuries, particularly Bhagavata, has been expressed through multiple ways; through the service to the divine, service to other human beings, as well as through dance, music, drama, culture and literature. All of these become expressions of Bhakti. It is a combination of the idea of devotion, a state of feeling, and service as an activity.²⁷

Sufism, on the other hand, promoted morals, ethics, aesthetics, and cosmopolitanism in pre-modern India while maintaining prophetic vision and mystical liberty.²⁸ Sufis emphasize heart (*qalb*) cultivation by chanting or remembering God (*dhikr*), hearing God through poetry and music (*sama*), and breathing and meditation methods. Indic culture had previously used these techniques.²⁹ That is why Sufi and Bhakti were able to coexist in such a way that they created a new type of devotion on the Indian subcontinent. They played an important part in the vernacularization of Axial Age knowledge.

Hodgson promotes Kabir as Islamicate by emphasizing Islamicate as a noble civilization. He claims that Kabir openly rejects Muslim identification, but that he made a point of employing both Muslim and Hindu symbolisms, and that he emphasized on the spiritual reality underlying the two faiths being the same.³⁰ Kabir and other like-minded Bhakti saints or gurus stressed on the spiritual oneness of Islam's

²⁷ Bhagavata Purana Research Project, *India's Book of Wisdom; The Bhagavata Purana | Full Documentary*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=331al7pWsJ8>.

²⁸ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam. 1*, p. 345. Hodgson here contrasts Islamdom with Christendom that I would like to quote here; "That is, they were limited both in any direct confrontation with the old prophetic themes, for the prophets were largely reinterpreted as mere harbingers of Christ, and in an independent growth of mystical experience, which had to be restrained within the sacramental discipline of Christ's church. In contrast, Muslims had no single organizational authority over even particular sectors or local groupings of the Islamic religious establishments, unless by arbitrary and temporary superimposition."

²⁹ Armando Salvatore, "Sufi Articulations of Civility, Globality, and Sovereignty," *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 4, no. 2 (May 4, 2018): 158, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20566093.2018.1439808>.

³⁰ Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times*, His *The Venture of Islam*; v. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 68.

and Hinduism's principles, which are based on rigorous monotheism.³¹ They helped pave the path for universal peace and love, which was mirrored in Akbar's court.

Hodgson brings together three key figures: Kabir, Akbar, and Abu'l Fazl, to highlight distinct characteristics of the Sufi and Bhakti saints. In the framework of civilisation, he stresses moral and spiritual enlightenment. Hodgson claims that Akbar and Abu'l Fazl sought to bring *sulh-e kul*, or universal peace, to the Mughal Empire, and that they were also working to bring *muhabbat-e kul*, or universal love, to the Mughal Empire. He portrays Akbar as a moral figure, claiming that "Akbar's spiritual function as a 'perfect man' is largely as a widely visible model and promoter of civilization."³²

The figure Rama of *Ramcharitmanas* may have influenced Akbar and his advisor and historian Abu'l Fazl as well. The epic poem *Ramcharitmanas* was written in Awadhi by Tulsidas (vernacular language). Tulsidas was a poet, writer, and contemporary of Akbar who was a Vaishnava Bhakti. Rama, Ayodhya's ruler, is portrayed by him as a virtuous man in this epic. Ram is revered in India as the avatar of Lord Vishnu. In current times, Rama is also a symbol of Indian civilisation that it has become point of conflict in India today.

The battle between Hindus and Muslims in modern India, to build Rama temple and the Babur Mosque, is a matter of who was the moral man or an ideal person who may inspire humanity: Rama or Babur. Nonetheless, Tulsidas' epic poem *Ramcharitmanas* may have inspired Abu'l Fazl to compose the Akbarnama, in which he portrays Akbar as a '*qutb*,' or the highest level of a Sufi saint or a flawless moral man. As a result, Akbar was granted the title "*qutb*," which was comparable to Rama's title "*prajapati*."

1.1.5. Agriculture and Bhakti-Sufi

Agriculture as a source of wealth has played a key part in the overall development process.³³ One example is the development of Sikhism as a new religion and a powerful political force in the 16th and 17th centuries. Because of its agricultural earnings, the Sikh community was powerful and affluent. They are also wealthy in current times.

³¹ Hodgson, 69.

³² Hodgson, 89–90.

³³ Hodgson also highlight the development society due to agriculture and for that he uses a term Agrarianate culture. He argues that the interconfessional Islamicate culture of India developed in a setting of agrarianate prosperity at its fullest phase, when a bureaucratic absolutism, with the relative peacefulness and bureaucratic prudence it produced, was at its height.

Kabir, on the other hand, had no desire to form a separate religion, nor did he believe that he and his followers were economically or professionally important enough to create a new religion and political institution like Sikhism.

As a result, the Bhakti period was a time of widespread economic, political, social, moral, ethical, and spiritual progress. This time in history may be regarded a period of transition in which nearly all religions and cultures were active and in touch with one another. The good information produced in many faiths of diverse locations prior to the Axial-Age is transmitted in vernacular languages throughout this time. As a consequence of the dissemination and growth of knowledge in vernacular languages, this wisdom might reach ordinary people. As a consequence, ordinary people became spiritually and morally awakened, or at the very least, society's conscience grew to distinguish right from wrong, to patronize the good, and to oppose the bad.

The tremendous spiritual change in common people who typically spoke about cohabitation was the historical achievement of this age. Egalitarianism was their philosophy. They gained a feeling of cosmopolitanism, politeness, and a broader knowledge of mankind as a result of their experiences.

1.1.6. City, civility and Bhakti-Sufi

The city was crucial because it served as a hub for the exchange of products, ideas, cultures, and diversity. In this context, Kabir uses the term *bazaar* to refer to the exchange of information and wisdom. He adds, "*Kabirakhada bazaar me sabki mange khair*," which translates to "Kabir stands in the market for everyone's well-being." As a result, the bazaar reflects the city, which serves as a focal point for gatherings.

According to Salvatore, Sufi and Bhakti emerged as a result of urban living. Elitism was closely tied to them. They developed a sense of civility, cosmopolitanism, and the promise of mankind. As a result of urban elitism, Sufis developed as a richly cultured assemblage of such politeness practices.³⁴ In this environment, both Sufi and Bhakti saints, across my opinion, created a wider range of networks in the Indian subcontinent, ranging from urban to rural.³⁵ As a result, it might be claimed that Sufi

³⁴ Salvatore, "Sufi Articulations of Civility, Globality, and Sovereignty," 159.

³⁵ Salvatore, 159.

encouraged participation in urban life, government, and pleasures, and therefore Bhakti-Sufi movement was a civilizing process.

1.1.7. Scope of the study and conclusion

Hodgson's Islamicate arc offers a fresh take on history. Because it provides a more moral and fair story than the binary oriental-occidental historiography, Lawrence would term it *barzakh logic*. As a result, I follow Hodgson and Lawrence's guidance and place the Bhakti Period during the Axial-Age transformation, or Islamicate civilisation. This research will also extend the scope of studies on Islam, Indic traditions, and Kabir. This research opens the door for me to continue working on the cosmopolitan heritage of South Asia, with a focus on Buddhism, as an extension of my thesis. "*From Indic to Islamicate: The Cosmopolitan Legacy of South Asia with Special Reference to Buddhism*" is my potential topic for future research."

1.2. Structure of my research work and methodology

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Following the first chapter, which serves as an introduction to the research, the second chapter attempts to place Bhakti and the Bhakti movement in a larger Islamicate framework. In Chapter III, I look at Kabir as an exemplar of the vernacular millennium in pre-modern India, as well as *barzakh* and consciousness as poetry. *Muhabbat-e kul* is embodied by him as a civilizational metaphor. I illustrate the transformation of Indic culture into Islamicate Civilization in the fourth chapter, and then I conclude my research. My approach to the study is *barzakh logic*, which is a way of looking at history, literature, theology, social science, and other disciplines that provides mankind scope and hope in a balanced and less conflicting way.

The first chapter gives a general summary of the research. It covers the background of my research investigations, the issue statement, literature review, methodology, the introduction of *barzakh logic* and Islamicate in the Bhakti period, and the scope of study in the literature and history disciplines.

I divide Chapter II into two subsections, the first of which describes Bhakti in depth, including how it came into being and evolved as a mode of communication and network. By presenting an account of the time, I establish a foundation for understanding the Bhakti within the context of civilization; this paves the way for the

coming part to reimagine the Bhakti period based on orality in the context of geography and humanity's reach. The historical evolution of Bhakti and the Bhakti movement in the framework of Islamicate terminology is examined in this chapter.

The third chapter serves as a bridge between the second and fourth chapters. This chapter examines Kabir as a time of transition from Indic to Islamic rule. In this chapter, I consider Kabir to be a key figure of the vernacular millennium, which marks the transformation of Sanskrit and Persian cosmopolis into Vernacular culture. This chapter examines the many forms of Kabir's poetry, which grew famous and provided the foundation for India's vernacular literary culture, often known as the vernacular millennium.

The fourth chapter highlights the social, linguistic, literary, spiritual, and political transformations that occurred throughout the Bhakti period, as well as Kabir's influence on the Akbarian ideas of *sulh-e kul* and *muhabbat-e kul*.

To sum up, I agree with Hodgson's assessment of Islamic civilisation as a moral, ethical, and artistic triumph of humanity since Islam's emergence. The creation and acceptance of Islam as an ethical and artistic sensibility reached its apogee in the 15th and 16th centuries, having profound roots in the Axial-Age transformation. The Arabic word *adab* is a good way to describe this sensitivity. As a result, '*The Quest of Kabir: Conscience as Poetry in Pre-Modern India*' is an ethical approach to history and history writing, combining Hodgson's Islamicate with Lawrence's *barzakh* logic.

1.3. Literature Review

According to recent studies, between the 15th and 17th centuries, historians studying the Bhakti Period saw a significant shift. They have been trying to figure out why this change happened and what type of change it was. Is this a political, cultural, religious, social, or economic shift taking place? Who and what are the elements that have caused this shift? The majority of researchers focused on Islam as a religion; some underlined the caste system's issue while appreciating Islam, while others stressed the shift in philosophical, cultural, and theological dimensions.

The Bhakti Period has been represented in different fields, resulting in a multifaceted view of the period. Some academics tell the story of this time period in such a manner

that it bridges the gap between Hindus and Muslims, as well as divides among other cultures, in order to resolve past and contemporary conflicts in the Indian subcontinent. Scholars such as Krishan Sharma tell it in a very traditional way. However, those narratives do not provide enough room to comprehend the Bhakti period in general, particularly with regard to Kabir. The reason for this is that the majority of these academics have seen this epoch from theological, philosophical, social, political, and indigenous lenses. However, these narratives appear to overlook the importance of cultural exchange and migration in the larger framework of civilization.³⁶

Hiren Gohain, in one of his writings on the Bhakti movement's origins, *The Labyrinth of Bhakti On Some Questions of Medieval Indian History*, may have taken a Marxist approach to the movement. During a moment of considerable economic surplus, he said, Bhakti occurs to unite diverse religions and schools of thought among the ruling elite.³⁷ He further claims that, even in times of social crisis, the Bhakti remains intellectually subordinate to the interests of the dominant elite and ruling classes.³⁸ As a result, the Bhakti movement has yet to engage in a serious social protest against the repressive social system. According to Gohain, the revolutionary movement began in the South with Alvar saints, who were typically from lower social classes and whose songs express a deep feeling of worldly misery and ardent desire for God as companion and redeemer.³⁹ This movement made its way to India's northwestern region. Ramananda was the one who started it, and Kabir propagated it afterwards.

Krishana Sharma took a philosophical and indigenous approach to the Bhakti era in the 7th century, giving it a pan-Indian viewpoint. She envisioned Bhakti as a synthesis of a diverse range of devotional movements that are not limited to Hindus. She, on the other hand, was unable to discuss the Bhakti movement in terms of cultural unity or to connect it on a worldwide scale.

³⁶ I want to clarify the difference between religion and culture before going further that I have understood religion as one aspect of culture or civilization.. For example, when I am talking about Islam in India. Although some Indian societies follow Islam, they do not follow the culture of Arabia completely. The culture of Indian Muslims varies from Turkish, American, English, and so on. Thus religion does not restrict culture.

³⁷ Hiren Gohain, "The Labyrinth of Bhakti: On Some Questions of Medieval Indian History," *Economic and Political Weekly* 22, no. 46 (1987): 1970.

³⁸ Gohain, 1970.

³⁹ Gohain, 1970.

In contrast to Sharma, Tarachand, a prominent Indian historian, comments that the Bhakti movement's heterodox *bhaktas* (devotee or holy person) owed a lot from Muslim Sufis. They mixed with the downtrodden, illiterate people without pretense and presumption, and practiced the fellow-feeling for the sake of God.⁴⁰ With the help of Sufis, these *bhaktas* were able to release the individual from the constraints of conventional society. He says that the mission of Kabir was to preach a religion of love that could unite all castes and creeds. The first attempt of Kabir was to reconcile Hinduism and Islam.⁴¹ Thus, when Kabir invoked God, he identified God with Rama, Hari, Govind, Allah, Khuda, Sahib, etc. Kabir was the first who dared to come forward to proclaim a middle path.⁴² Therefore, Tarachand sees the Bhakti movement as a social movement.

Hazari Prasad Dwivedi projects an anthropological understanding of this period in his book, *Kabir*. He reminds us that Kabir was a weaver and belongs to *Julha* or *Kori* castes.⁴³ Their tribes were Dravidians from India's northwest and central regions. These castes were richer and had higher prestige in various regions of Bengal. They have married upper caste Brahmins in some circumstances. When Islam came in the region, several tribes accepted it. The majority of them have now become Kabirpanthi. Dwivedi remained a high Hindu brahminical scholar who wanted to integrate Dalit ideas into the Hindu fold, according to Milind Wakankar. Kabir is depicted by Dwivedi as *samanyavadi* (syncretic) or secular.⁴⁴ For me, Dwivedi's depiction of Kabir is crucial because it rejects the bad image of the Brahmin society as a result of Brahman caste customs in general. In terms of social standing, a person's economic situation was equally important. Wakankar therefore investigates the Bhakti Period and Kabir from a political and social standpoint. He portrays this time as one in which the condition of the oppressed group was improving. Kabir is portrayed as their savior, guru, or thinker in this setting.

He claims that Kabir not only established a religion for dalits, but also a new concept of religion.⁴⁵ He portrays Kabir as a subaltern society's memory or history. Kabir's

⁴⁰ Gohain, 1971.

⁴¹ Satish Chandra, *Historiography, Religion, and State in Medieval India* (Har-Anand Publications, 1996), 142.

⁴² Chandra, 142.

⁴³ Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, *Kabeer* (Rajkamal Prakashan, 2000), 18.

⁴⁴ Wakankar, *Subalternity and Religion*, 49.

⁴⁵ Wakankar, 9.

poetry, according to Wakankar, is Dalit history or memory that symbolizes miraculous and violence.⁴⁶

Linda Hess' work provides an interesting account of the time period. She highlighted this oral performative media in historical data, using the term orality, because there were so many things to communicate that had yet to be found. In contrast to Richard Eaton and Sheldon Pollock, who concentrated on the textual and literal, Linda Hess believes that orality is where real and deeper history may be found. In this context, she believes that a thorough grasp of oral tradition and oral expression is required if one wants to fully comprehend the text. She underlined Kabir as a notable and distinctive poet of the period due to his characteristic line "*kahat Kabir suno bhai sadhu* (Kabir says, listen, o saint)".⁴⁷ She claims that instead of *padho* (read), Kabir says *suno* (listen). As a result, body-to-body interaction is more prevalent than written engagement. What I liked about Kabir, as well as what Hess said, is that orality is a historical reality that challenges nationalistic, ethnic, and religious approaches to history writing. Furthermore, despite being such a great poet, Kabir has no written works. He didn't know how to read or write. His poetry was passed down from generation to generation and from one language to another in an oral-trans-linguistic process. Kabir's poetry creates a broad geographical past while also speaking to a new population. As a result, he offers a range of imagination that extends beyond the boundaries and concepts of modern nations.

Above all, academic studies and important observations have prompted me to consider the vernacularization of existing information and its dissemination to the public, which has assisted in the civilizational process. The missing narrative is about the evolution of civilizational characteristics and the involvement of Islam as a civilizational element. So far, an overview of key works in the extant literature has been provided, and the next section will identify and examine the missing narration in this literature.

1.4. Research Problem

Many researchers, notably historians, researched the Bhakti Period from various viewpoints, but ignored the civilizational dimension, as shown in the literature review.

⁴⁶ Wakankar, 5.

⁴⁷ Linda Hess, *Bodies of Song: Kabir Oral Traditions and Performative Worlds in North India* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 1.

None of the academics has examined the Bhakti Movement in the framework of civilisation, and none of them has identified love, which Abu'l Fazl defined as *muhabbat-e kul*, as the greatest degree of civilization.

1.5. Research Questions

As a result, the overarching goal of this research is to find answers to the following questions:

- How and why did the Bhakti movement become so popular in Northern India?
- Why did it assume a different shape in “pre-modern” India, and how did it do so?
- Who were the figures in the movement who may be mentioned in terms of civilization?
- What is the significance of the term "movement" in pre-modern India? What significance does the Bhakti movement have?
- What are the existing conversations on the Bhakti-movement, and what is the literature on this movement that is now unavailable?
- What role does Islam play in the Bhakti movement, and how important is it from a social, political, spiritual, intellectual, and civilizational standpoint? • What is the relationship between the Bhakti movement and other global events?
- What makes *barzakh* an appropriate metaphor for Kabir's mission?
- Why is it necessary to explore the Bhakti Movement in Islamicate civilisation, with a focus on Kabir?
- Why is it important to understand *barzakh logic*, and what does it mean and how does it affect Indian and South Asian history?
- What contribution can Hodgson's concept of Islamicate as a viewpoint make to Kabir scholarship?
- How can my study contribute to resolving the current dispute between the narrowness of nationalist historiographies based on Hinduism or Islam?
- What role does poetry play in pre-modern India in terms of reimagining history, geography, and identity?
- How can this thesis contribute to the resolution of issues such as nationalism and Islam as an ethnic identity, particularly in South Asia?
- How does this thesis project a new identity in order to reflect a new geography, with a focus on Kabir?

- What role does vernacular play in this global understanding process? What is the significance of Kabir as a vernacular millennium, and how can it be understood?
- How can Kabir be seen as a global actor or a model for muhabbat-e kul, resulting in the transformation of Indic tradition into Islamicate civilisation?



CHAPTER II

BHAKTI AND THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT IN A WIDER ISLAMICATE CONTEXT

Bhakti is a Sanskrit term that implies devotion or worship in English. It is a wide, perennial term that ultimately refers to love or *prema*.⁴⁸ According to R Raj Singh, studying the Indian worldview through the lens of Bhakti provides intriguing insights into human nature and potential.⁴⁹ According to him, the word Bhakti is commonly translated as devotion and is frequently interpreted as worship. However, this phrase is a synonym of *prema* (love), and its root *bhaj* signifies involvement, engagement, participation, pursuit, preference, service, adoration, devotion, and love, according to etymology and historical literary use.⁵⁰ Bhakti is a global phenomenon as a degree of love.⁵¹ Bhakti is therefore a worldview or a set of beliefs acquired via culture, philosophy, literature, art, knowledge, religions, and other means. I explore Bhakti as a philosophical dimension, a culture, and its keyword "love" in the context of civilization and in connection to the term "Islamicate" throughout this research.

In Bhakti, unity is a fundamental idea. It is a process in which one's self becomes one with *nirguna* (the undefinable or unseen God), or *saguna* (god which can be described). This might be translated as al-ghaib for nirguna, and al-mawjud for saguna (God in the form of idol worship), in Arabic. This oneness may be viewed in the perspective of Ibn Khaldun's notion of 'asabiyya,' or social cohesiveness, as a means of achieving ilm al-umran (societal growth).⁵² Kamal Mirawdeli says that Ibn Khaldun sees the formation of unity and emotion in the framework of historical change in this

⁴⁸ R. Raj Singh, *Bhakti and Philosophy* (Lexington Books, 2006), 7.

⁴⁹ Singh, 24.

⁵⁰ Singh, 1.

⁵¹ Singh, 3.

⁵² Ibn Haldun has conceived the term *umran* as a society or civilization in his masterpiece *Muqaddimah*. The book was translated from Arabic to English by Franz Rosenthal, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. in 1958. His significant contribution to civilization studies, in my view, is his theorization of civilization as the development of a sense of belonging that he termed *asabiyya*.

setting.⁵³ Thus, the shift from *umran badawi* (micro society) to *umran hadhari* (macro society) happens when the economic and political systems of *umran badawi* (micro society) grow.

Umran badawi's metamorphosis into *umran hadhari* also contributes to humanity's spiritual and moral advancement. Human beings grow from being to becoming as a result of their spiritual and moral evolution. The concept from being to becoming is my civilizational arc. That person is maturing as a person, gaining spirituality, politeness, morals, ethics, society, laws, and so on. Linda Hess, in her book *The Bijak of Kabir*, beautifully expresses the concept "from being to becoming." She mentions that there are four levels of this procedure: *vikar*, *sanskar*, *subhav* and *swabhav*.

Vikar is the level of gross sense, where we are no more than animals. We sleep, eat, have sex, crave, try to grab things from each other, get angry. *Sanskar* is civilization, courtesy, bowing, saluting, saying "sir"- from which symbolizes something. The word for culture (*sanskrti*) comes from the same root. *Subhav* is goodwill, kindness, compassion. *Swabhav* is samadhi (mediation), beyond talking, literally "own-nature".⁵⁴

As a result, I realize that becoming Buddha or reaching *al-iman* is humanity's greatest level. As a result, I see Bhakti as *ilm al-umran*. Then I envision Bhakti as a journey from *umran badawi* to *umran hadhari*, or from tribes to civilization or village to city. Bhakti, to me, is *ilm al-umran* that includes both *umran badawi* and *umran hadhari*, as well as moral, political, and other aspects that go beyond the metaphysical conception. In this sense, a tribe is an individual or micro element, according to my understanding, whereas civilization is a larger, macro element that incorporates numerous tribes. Bhakti is a macro factor or civilizational process that unites all of mankind.

Marshall Hodgson observes that the monotheistic inclination of the Irano-Semitic area leads to the unity of various cultures. In this process, he discovers Islam as the common thread that binds all Irano-Semitic traditions into a single civilisation, which he refers to as Islamicate civilization in a larger sense. Lawrence expands on the scope of Islamicate civilisation by arguing that the main location for Islamicate civilization is

⁵³ Kamal Mirawdeli, *Asabiyya and State: A Reconstruction of Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History* (AuthorHouse, 2015), Fifth Chapter, 5.2. The Historicization of The World of Existence. (Google book, page number not mentioned).

⁵⁴ Hess and Singh, *The Bijak of Kabir*, 36.

the Indian Ocean, not the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). He claims that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has given Islam a civilizational form.⁵⁵ However, it thrived as an important, crucial category for historical and current study in the Indian Ocean as Islamicate.

In the setting of the Indian subcontinent, Vedic tradition was undergoing significant upheaval with the development of Buddhism and Jainism. This led to rise of unification of tribes to compromise. As a result, monotheistic and egalitarian conscience developed in the setting of the Indian subcontinent. Sankara pioneered a revolution in the Indic traditions, pushing non-dualism or *Advaita* philosophy, in the early 8th century. Sankara introduced the notion of Bhakti, or devotion to God. However, Sankara was unable to bring the caste system into question. In the 15th century, Kabir, on the other hand, questioned the Brahminical (caste) framework and synthesised Islamic and Indic cultures as well.

2.1. Religion and Pre-Islamic Monotheism in Pre-Modern India

Is it true that pre-Islamic India had monotheism or *tawhid*? In the Indian subcontinent, there was no idea of *tawhid* or monotheism similar to Islam. The backgrounds of monotheism and *tawhid* are distinct *Begriffsgeschichte* (conceptual history). *Tawhid* refers to a prophetic tradition, and monotheism is a colloquial word for *tawhid*. Nonetheless, Western tradition is referred to as monotheistic. When it comes to the question of whether Indic civilization had a notion of one God, the answer is yes. The notion of One God is found in the Bhagavad Gita, a pre-Islamic corpus.

Krishna as the avatar of Vishnu is projected as one God idea in the Bhagavad Gita. The Bhagavad Gita is Krishna's discussion with Pandavas prince Arjuna on the battlefield when Arjuna is faced with a moral dilemma. Krishna reveals himself to be the All-Powerful. He tells Arjuna the truth and adds,

I am the father of this universe, the mother, the support and the grandsire. I am the object of knowledge, the purifier and the syllable OM. I am also the Rg, the Sama and the Yajur Vedas.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Lawrence, *The Bruce B. Lawrence Reader*, (Google book, page number is not mentioned).

⁵⁶ His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is* (The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, n.d.) Chapter 9, verse 17

The Supreme Lord said: My dear friend, mighty-armed Arjuna, listen again to My supreme word, which I shall impart to you for your benefit and which will give you great joy.⁵⁷

Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know My origin, for, in every respect, I am the source of the demigods and the sages.⁵⁸

He who knows Me as the unborn, as the beginningless, as the Supreme Lord of all the worlds-he, undeluded among men, is freed from all sins.⁵⁹

Intelligence, knowledge, freedom from doubt and delusion, forgiveness, truthfulness, self-control and calmness, pleasure and pain, birth, death, fear, fearlessness, nonviolence, equanimity, satisfaction, austerity, charity, fame and infamy are created by Me alone.⁶⁰

The seven great sages and before them the four other great sages and the Manus [progenitors of mankind] are born out of My mind, and all creatures in these planets descend from them.⁶¹

He who knows in truth this glory and power of Mine engages in unalloyed devotional service; of this there is no doubt.⁶²

I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who know this perfectly engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts.⁶³

Despite rejecting many aspects of Vedic ceremonies and customs, the literature and information generated during the Vedic period served as a basis for Buddha and even Kabir. Buddha in ancient times and Kabir in Medieval India, for example, both rejected sacrifices and caste customs, yet they also had something to reject and grow.

Indic tradition has debated the notion of God for centuries. Saints and academics have long discussed this subject, attempting to establish it as *dharma*, or a way of life. The *dharma*, on the other hand, has never been consistent. Some people eventually questioned the existence of God, while those who did believe in God had differing viewpoints. One believed in a God in form (*Saguna* God), whereas the other believed in a formless God (*Nirguna* God). I would want to highlight that in the Vedic tradition, this type of conversation was not allowed among Shudras. Shudras were never involved in the creation or dissemination of knowledge. In contrast to Vedic traditions,

⁵⁷ Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 10, verse 1

⁵⁸ Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 10, verse 2

⁵⁹ Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 10, verse 3

⁶⁰ Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 10, verse 4-5

⁶¹ Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 10, verse 6

⁶² Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 10, verse 7

⁶³ Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 10, verse 8

Islam's core term *Iqra*, which means to read or gain knowledge, permitted people of all castes, creeds, and communities to discuss God.

In Islam, God is referred to as nirguna God, which means "without form." The incarnation hypothesis is refuted by Islam. Islam is based on prophetic tradition and has evolved as a different *dharma*.

Early Indic people were pagans, but they created extremely sophisticated literature, philosophy, art, morality, rites, and the *dharma* throughout time (*dharma* can also be understood as civilization). They were small tribes and thus each tribes had their own *dharma*. Like the pre-Islamic Irano-Semitic area, there was no cultural unity.

Three major traditions arose in the first millennium BCE: Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Shaktism. Vaishnavites considered Vishnu to be the ultimate God and created the Vishnu Purana, a collection of literature, philosophy, and theology. Shiva Purana was created by Shaivites who believed in Shiva as the ultimate God. Those who believed in Shakti as a supreme God (God was portrayed as a woman) produced entirely distinct literature. Between Shaivism and Vaishnavism, there has always been a major struggle (a Vedic fitnah) over who has a better knowledge of God and dharma. As a result, Indian culture might appear polytheistic, pantheistic, henotheistic, monist, monotheistic, or atheistic at times. Their quest, on the other hand, has been a never-ending endeavor to attain ultimate reality.

Islam, on the other hand, is a relatively young development in the Middle East. According to Hodgson, it resulted in a cultural, political, and social unity in the Irano-Semitic area. It implied that there is only one God, and Muhammad is his messenger; that there were many messengers before Muhammad, and that Islam is the most recent revelation. In my opinion, this created the foundation for Islam as a religion, and subsequently Islamicate as a civilisation. The Islamicate evolves as a civilizational enterprise that has an impact on many other cultures and civilizations. In the fourth chapter, I will go through it in greater depth.

2.2. The Bhakti Movement: Development of Monotheism and Egalitarianism in the Indic Civilization

The progress of the human spirit from being to becoming is referred to as Bhakti. Bhakti, according to R Singh, was developed in far ancient history and is represented in the Vedas' oldest hymns. Bhakti is a vital practice because it allows the existential

qualities of life, love, thought, and the divine to reside in close proximity to one another, bringing mankind together.⁶⁴

According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, academics have made the error of defining Islam solely via the sharia or kalam. Islam has various aspects and has been revealed to mankind on the basic levels of *al-islam*, *al-iman*, and *al-ihsan*, as well as *sharia*, *tariqah*, and *haqiqah* from a different viewpoint.⁶⁵ According to his remark, he promotes Islam at multiple levels, ranging from *al-islam* to *al-ihsan*. According to the *tasawwuf*, *al-ihsan* is becoming the perfect one. As a result, he theorizes Islam in English from the standpoint of being to becoming. Bhakti and Sufi have comparable characteristics, practices, and goals.

In the context of Bhakti, Sirajul Islam, in his comparative study of Sufism and Bhakti, argues that Bhakti or mysticism is common to all religious traditions inasmuch as it is a way of life and process of developing the intuitive faculty according to a particular tradition.⁶⁶ Sirajul Islam finds Sufism very similar to the approach of the Bhakti except their particular historical and political aspirations.

In the Islamic worldview, "Islam" refers to the inner spiritual posture of a person of goodwill.⁶⁷ Islam is an Arabic term that meaning "to surrender to God," and Muslims are those who do so.⁶⁸ In other words, it refers to loving God. In both Vedic and Islamic worldviews, love is the path to heavenly existence. It was furthered by Islamic civilisation, which culminated in the attainment of perfect unity with Reality.

Islam, according to Hodgson, is the outcome of complex cultures that led to the unity of diverse societies via the concept of a single God. He also claims that, as a result of the complicated human settlement, widely shared deities arise in Mecca, such as Allah, al-Uzaa, and Manat, who were widely shared deities in the Irano-Semetic area.⁶⁹ This connects them to a larger network of trade, culture, and cosmopolitanism. This phenomena was not limited to a single location. As a result, Islam, as a shift in the

⁶⁴ Singh, *Bhakti and Philosophy*, 7.

⁶⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Meaning and Role of 'Philosophy' in Islam," *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 57, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1595467>.

⁶⁶ Md. Sirajul Islam, *Sufism and Bhakti: A Comparative Study* (Washington: The council for research in values and philosophy, 2005), 1.

⁶⁷ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam. 1*, 72.

⁶⁸ Hodgson, 72.

⁶⁹ Hodgson, 156.

Irano-Semitic area, has become a worldwide phenomenon, claiming one God who may be shared by all communities or civilizations.

The Indian subcontinent was home to hundreds of tribes. Between 2000 BCE and 500 BCE, they had their own personal deities, and they wrote songs to them. Bhakti is important in uniting various tribes into one Vedic identity via love, devotion, friendship, and reverence.⁷⁰ As a result, Bhakti evolved on the Indian subcontinent as a global phenomena, similar to the Irano-Semitic phenomenon. By the end of the first millennium BCE, Vishnu had become an united god. However, cultural unity was still a long way off.

The Bhakti appears in the 1st century CE as the Sanskritik tradition, which is distinct from the second millennium CE vernacular tradition. Bhakti reflected the Vishnu Purana as a route of redemption or liberation in the second millennium. The Vedic people created the Bhagavata Purana, which, together with the Bhagavad Gita and Upanishad, is regarded excellent literature.⁷¹ Bhakti is defined in the Bhagavata Purana as total absorption in and devotion to Krishan, who is regarded an avatar of Vishu.

Rama and Krishna are two significant figures in Hindu mythology. Two significant literatures arise during the Bhakti period: the *Bhagavata Purana* and the *Ramacharitmans*. This is literature about personal god. In the Upanashdic era (700 BCE -300 BCE), the *atman* (soul) and *anatman* (non-soul) traditions flourish in the core Vedic tradition, as well as the heterodox traditions of Buddhism and Jainism, where they served an existential and ontological function.⁷² As a result, Bhakti is a fascinating phenomena that transcends all periods of thought and spiritual endeavor and re-projects humanity's reach.

The monotheistic approach to God became more popular in the first and second millennia CE. The scholastic rivalry between the *Nirguni* and the *Saguni*, however, persisted. Meanwhile, the monotheistic tendency (nirgua or saguna Brahman) grows (forming one people) across the Indian subcontinent, and two main Hindu sects

⁷⁰ Singh, *Bhakti and Philosophy*, 8.

⁷¹ Anand Venkatkrishnan, "Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, and the Bhakti Movement" Phd. Thesis, (Columbia University, 2015), 2, <https://doi.org/10.7916/D8KS6QWV>.

⁷² Singh, *Bhakti and Philosophy*, 9.

emerge: Vaishnavism and Shaivism. Vishnu and Shiva are venerated as the supreme gods among many gods, and they are treated as one deity.⁷³

In order to achieve cultural unification, several Hindu saints and gurus have called for religious reforms centered on Bhakti, or devotion. Bhakti mysticism, or love-mysticism, became popular among Vaishnavas about the same time, and evolved roughly parallel to the love mysticisms of eastern Christianity and Islam.⁷⁴ Rather of relying on rituals, Bhakti mysticism encouraged individuals to have direct faith in a single deity.⁷⁵

Bhakti tradition is the expression of one God in various forms- like art, music, service, devotion and love. The *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Bhagavata Purana*, and the *Bhakti Sutra* of Narada and Sandilya are considered to be the main text source of Bhakti tradition.⁷⁶ Upanishad as well as Vedanta Sutra of Badarayana also highlight the Bhakti. In this period, various new terms are used to conceptualize God such as *Brahman*, *Param-Bhavam*, *Param-dhama*, *Pavithram*, *Purusottama*, *Uttam-Purusa*, *Kshetrajnana*, *Tejas*, *Atman*, *Divyam*, *Tat*, *Sat*, etc.⁷⁷ However, the words *Brahman* and *Atman* are frequently used to denote absolute God or Divine Unity in Upanishad. These are the following examples: “*Om atman va idam ek ev agre aseet*—At first Atman was alone existing”,⁷⁸ “*Atman ev idam agre aseet*—At first there was Atman alone”,⁷⁹ “*Atman ev idam sarvam*—All this is Atman”,⁸⁰ “*Ayam Atman Brahm!*—This self is Brahman”,⁸¹ and “*Aham Brahmasmi!*—I am Brahman”.⁸²

Sankara was a leading advocate of Absolute Monism (Advaitic God), a viewpoint that became the ontological premise of Indian philosophy and religion, as well as the Bhakti tradition. Through his renowned teaching "*Brahma Satyam Jagat Mithya*

⁷³ For example: Sankara travels throughout the Indian subcontinent to unify diverse cultures of the subcontinent. Please check about Sankara in the second chapter.

⁷⁴ Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam. 2: The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods*, Paperb. ed. (Chicago, Ill: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1977), 558.

⁷⁵ Hodgson, 558.

⁷⁶ Krishna Sharma, *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement: A New Perspective: A Study in the History of Ideas* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1987), 109.

⁷⁷ Islam, *Sufism and Bhakti*, 109.

⁷⁸ Aitareya Up.1.1 as cited in Islam, 199–200.

⁷⁹ Brah Up 14.1 as cited in Islam, 199–200.

⁸⁰ Chand Up. 7.25.2 as cited in Islam, 199–200.

⁸¹ Bhah-Up 2.5.19 as cited in Islam, 199–200.

⁸² Bhah Up 140.10 as cited in Islam, 199–200.

(Braman is real, the world is unreal)" Sankara developed his Absolute Monism from Upanishads, which projected Atman and God as the same reality which he termed *Sataya*.⁸³

Raj Singh claims that Bhakti has received less attention in terms of its significance in the development of religion, culture, and the relationship between Bhakti and philosophy in the pursuit for truth. The teachings of ancient philosophers like the Buddha, Mahavira, Sankara, Ramanuja, Mahadeva, and medieval Bhakti saints like Kabir, Nanak, and Tulsidas are apparent in the evolution of religion. The Bhakti concept has influenced modern religious philosophers such as Swami Vivekananda, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, and Mahatma Gandhi. According to Singh, the presence of Bhakti in the Indian system of philosophy, religion, arts, and literature remains permeated because it opens up the possibilities of contact, love, and devotion in every element of human effort.⁸⁴

2.3. Bhakti Movement and the Dissemination of Vedic Knowledge

So far we learnt that the preceding parts have projected Bhakti's origins in Indic traditions, whether they are found in the Vedic Upanishad or Buddhism. On the one hand, Bhakti evolved as a worldview, which had a significant impact on the character of Indic culture at the time. On the other side, it arose as a reaction to Buddhism's 'heterodoxy,' which had supplanted Vedic culture. Unlike Buddhism, Vedic society was centered largely on caste and numerous rituals, or *Karmakanda* of *purva mimamsa*.⁸⁵ The Vedic people reacted to this drastic upheaval, and the Vedic tradition was reformatted as a result. The Nayanmars (devotees of Lord Shiva) and Alvars (devotees of Lord Vishnu) were the first to reform, influenced by the Sankhya School, Sankara's Vedantic, Buddhist, and Jain austerity. They started a popular movement across India, teaching love and devotion regardless of caste, color, or faith, in opposition to Sanskritic tradition's strict framework.

⁸³ Islam, 201.

⁸⁴ Singh, *Bhakti and Philosophy*, 3.

⁸⁵ Jon Paul Sydnor, *Ramanuja and Schleiermacher: Toward a Constructive Comparative Theology* (ISD LLC, 2012), 12.

2.3.1. Sankara and Vedic-Reformation: Cultural unification

Sankara is also known for re-establishing Vedic tradition. As a *sannyasin*, he travels extensively throughout India, from East to West and North to South, in order to bring all Vedic traditions together. He engages in public philosophical discussions with traditional Vedic schools as well as heterodox traditions like Buddhists, Jains, and Carvakas. After winning the discussion, he erected numerous *Matha* (monasteries) during his trips. Sankara's travel-inspired Sannyasin schools, each with *Advaita* ideas, are credited to ten monastic orders in different areas of India, four of which have persisted in his tradition: Bharati (Sringeri), Sarasvati (Kanchi), Tirtha, and Asramin (Dvaraka).⁸⁶ Other monasteries which Sankara is said to have visited include Giri, Puri, Vana, Aranya, Parvata, and Sagara, all of which are linked to the Ashrama system in contemporary Hinduism and Vedic literature.⁸⁷

Sankara is considered as the incarnation of Lord Shiva who comes to earth to save the Vedic faith from heterodoxy and sin.⁸⁸ According to mythology, he was born in a small village of Kerala, Southern part of India. His father died when he was still a child. In his early childhood he mastered the Vedas, their related studies, and the orthodox system of philosophy with extraordinary ease. At the age of nine, when he returned home, he persuaded his mother to become a homeless ascetic or *sannyasin*.

Sankara reintroduced Vedic tradition based on the Buddhist principles of organization and lifelong asceticism into Hindu monastic life. He brought reformation in the Vedic principles rejecting *Karmakanda* and provided for the first time some guiding authority and directions in philosophy and religion in the Indic tradition.⁸⁹ Buddhist religious practice influenced modern Hinduism, which was assimilated through Sankara's meditation to reject bloody sacrifices and some extreme Saktist rituals. According to the current Hindu tradition, Sankara, for instance, brought to an end the practice of worship of the dog-headed Shiva in one of the most famous centers of pilgrimage, the city of Ujjayini.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Natalia Isayeva, *Shankara and Indian Philosophy* (State University of New York Press, 1993), 88.

⁸⁷ J. J. Navone, "Sankara and the Vedic Tradition," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 17, no. 2 (December 1956): 248, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2104222>. *Adi Shankara explained*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 15, 2021, from https://everything.explained.today/Adi_Shankara/

⁸⁸ Ben-Ami Scharfstein, *A Comparative History of World Philosophy: From the Upanishads to Kant* (State University of New York Press, 1998), 369.

⁸⁹ Isayeva, *Shankara and Indian Philosophy*, 88.

⁹⁰ Isayeva, 88.

Sankara's vision was to unite the two main traditions of India- Vaishnavites and Shaivite, subsuming all personal deities in his concept of the *Nirgun Brahman* (formless God).⁹¹ However, his teaching was still restricted to various castes due to prevailing social division on the basis of castes in the Indian subcontinent.

In the 9th century, many saints and scholars called Nayanmars (devotees of Lord Shiva) and Alvars (devotees of Lord Vishnu) began a popular movement throughout India preaching love and devotion regardless of caste, color, and creed against the rigid framework of Sanskrit tradition. They were upper castes but from the lower strata of the society which were influenced by Sankhya School, Vedantic of Sankara, Buddhist and Jain asceticism. They reflected the message in the form of poetry, music, dance, and drama, which helped it to rapidly gain popularity. In this process, Tamil literature and music played important role in the composition of Bhakti verses or hymns and songs praising Lord Shiva and Vishnu. This gave a new spiritual impetus, pan-Indian outlook, and development of vernacular literature in the Indian subcontinent.⁹²

According to Krishna Sharma, Bhakti is commonly viewed in the medieval world as the polar opposite of Advaita Vedanta and Sankara's promotion of *jnana* (knowledge). In contrast to Sankara's impersonal Deity or Nirgun Brahmin, medieval *acharya* (scholars or gurus) like Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Madhava, and Vallabhacharya concentrated on personal god or *Sagun Brahman*.⁹³ However, none of the medieval acharyas (pandits) could refute Sankara's philosophy. Vaishnava Acharya Madava was one of them, and he attempted but failed to refute Sankars' Advaita Vedanta with Dvaitav Vedanta.⁹⁴ In the context of Bhakti, however, both Sankara and Vaishnava Acharyas emphasize *jnana* as knowledge received by inner experience rather than knowledge gained through intellectual endeavor.⁹⁵

2.3.2. Vernacularization of the Concept of God

For millennia, Brahmanical-minded communities, which made up a small percentage of the population, had dominated the Indian subcontinent's social and political

⁹¹ Sharma, *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement*, 130.

⁹² M. Rajagopalachary, K. Damodar Rao, and Kakatiya University, eds., *Bhakti Movement and Literature: Re-Forming a Tradition* (Seminar on Bhakti Literature and Social Reform, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2016), 1.

⁹³ Sharma, *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement*, 130.

⁹⁴ Sharma, 143.

⁹⁵ Sharma, 147.

structures. Shudras (lowest castes) were forbidden from learning, reading, or even listening to Vedas. For Shudra, talking about God was a sin. Because Buddha (whose actual name was Siddhartha) and Mahavira (founder of Jainism) were Kshatriyas (upper castes descended from royal families), they were able to challenge the Vedic tradition's brutality and limitations. They also changed their opinion on Vedic rites and ceremonies such as sacrifices. Nonetheless, Buddhism, which fully rejected the Brahminical structure's supremacy, did not last long on the Indian subcontinent.

When Muslims were successful in constructing a new sociopolitical system in the Indian subcontinent, it bolstered the marginalized groups. They gained the confidence to publicly discuss God, a sensitive subject that had hitherto been kept for Brahmins only. This shift not only gave them a voice, but it also offered them the chance to grow spiritually, which they had been forbidden for centuries. They could speak about God in their own language, write their own literature, and shape their own society. These constituted the vernacular culture.

Not only Shudras, but even Brahmins and Kshatriye from lower socioeconomic levels were sidelined. The economic difficulties of the great majority of people, according to Hiren Gohain, were one of the key causes that contributed to the growth of the Bhakti movement. This movement originated in South India with Alvar saints, who were mostly from the upper castes' lowest strata. Their songs conveyed a deep feeling of worldly discontent as well as a strong yearning for God to be their companion and redeemer.⁹⁶ This movement made its way to India's northwestern region. Ramananda was the one who started it, and Kabir propagated it afterwards.⁹⁷

Financial progress, according to Hazariprasad, causes a shift in social patterns and, in turn, might lead to a shift in castes. He claims Kabir was a weaver from the Julha tribes or the Kori caste.⁹⁸ Their communities were Dravidian, and they resided mostly in India's northwest and central regions. These castes are more rich and have a higher social rank in various regions of Bengal. They have married Brahmins from the upper caste in some circumstances. The development of a new socio-political order in the subcontinent, in my opinion, caused changes in the social, political, and economic

⁹⁶ Gohain, "The Labyrinth of Bhakti," 1970.

⁹⁷ Gohain, 1970.

⁹⁸ Dwivedi, *Kabeer*, 18.

conditions of Indian society during Kabir's time. This was the reason why Kabir, as a member of the lower caste, was able to openly criticize the Brahmanical system.

The socio-economic shift in the lowest strata of society improved their level of living in so many ways that they were empowered linguistically and socially. This shift also provided them a voice in the conversation and allowed them to express their thoughts about God. Hodgson emphasized the role of economics in morals and ethics development. Kabir's community was involved in the weaving industry. They were considered politically weak, according to Hazariprasad, while being socioeconomically stronger than other Dalits.

This period, according to Wakankar, saw the growth of the position of subaltern society, with Kabir as their savior, teacher, or thinker. According to Wakankar, Kabir established not merely a Dalit religion, but a new concept of religion.⁹⁹ Kabir is a subaltern society's memory or history. Kabir's poetry is Dalit history, or a memory that portrays both miraculous and cruelty.¹⁰⁰ Thus, Kabir serves as a gift of language to Dalits and other oppressed members of society, as well as a celebration of tolerance within Hindu Universalism.

2.3.3. Islam in the Persianate Age (1000-1765) and the Development of *Adab*

Richard Eaton's book *India in the Persianate Age: 1000-1765* is an amazing description of the Persianate Culture in India. By the time of the great Mughals in the 16th to 18th centuries, this culture had become increasingly localized. The Persianate culture has left its mark on India's languages, literature, food, clothing, religion, rulership and warfare techniques, science, art, music, and architecture, among other things. This was not an overnight transformation, but rather a long-term process of cultural contact and integration.

Eaton debunks a few misconceptions that still exist. India's image as a self-contained and territorially restricted essence, historically separated from the rest of the world, is one such stereotype that is crucial for this section. The second common misconception is that India was a self-contained Hindu and Sanskrit civilisation that developed

⁹⁹ Wakankar, *Subalternity and Religion*, 9.

¹⁰⁰ Wakankar, 5.

independently.¹⁰¹ Eaton points out that the time period between c. 1000 and c. 1800 is commonly referred to as India's "Muslim era."¹⁰² This section examines the relationship between Islam and India throughout the Persianate period, as well as how *adab* culture evolves alongside Islam.

Islamicate civilization is one that is heavily influenced by Islam. Islam was evolved into a new social order that affected language, literature, philosophy, art, and politics after it was founded by Prophet Muhammad. Hodgson's neologism "Islamicate" emphasizes Islam's dynamic character as it acquired or merged many languages and civilizations during its growth. In addition to Arabic, Muslims embraced Persian as the language of high culture. As a result, the Persianate culture, which flourished between the 12th and 19th centuries, was a hybrid of Persian and Islamic civilizations that were eventually Persianized by Muslim rulers, traders, intellectuals, and Sufis. It evolved into South Asia's dominating civilization. In Indian literature, Persian has a larger effect than Arabic. It spread Islam's general cultural orientation across the Muslim world, particularly in India. It also led to the creation of one of the many new high-culture local languages. "All these cultural traditions, transmitted in Persian or reflecting Persian influence, we may label 'Persianate' by extension," Hodgson says.¹⁰³

When Islamic forces conquered the peoples of Greater Iran in the 7th and 8th centuries, they became part of a vast empire far larger than any that had existed under Persian control previously. Despite the fact that the Irano-Semitic region was developing a new Islamic culture, it included numerous pre-Islamic Persian traditions as well as Islamic practices introduced by Arab invaders. As a result, Persianate culture expanded throughout Muslim lands in Western, Central, and South Asia, particularly among the upper classes.

By the end of the High Caliphate, when Muslims began writing literature and communicating, it was a new type of Pahlavi (Persian) combined with Arabic, according to Hodgson.¹⁰⁴ The new Persian developed during Muslim control, with its

¹⁰¹ Richard M. Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age: 1000-1765* (Penguin UK, 2019), first page of the Introduction.

¹⁰² Eaton. Google book, first page of the Introduction.

¹⁰³ Hodgson, *The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times*, 293.

¹⁰⁴ Pahlavi was the rich cultural language in all dimensions at the hands of the Sasanian ruling classes.

own traditions tinted with a Muslim ambiance, into which Pahlavi elements hardly fit without alteration.

Thus, the Muslim Persians cut themselves off linguistically from the Pahlavi past and adopted literary standards more closely bound to those of Muslim Arabic than to those of pre-Muslim Persian.¹⁰⁵

In the Islamicate civilization, Hodgson stressed the development of *adab*. *Adab* assigned a major position to linguistic brilliance, and hence to literature, as the polite cultivation of the upper classes. As a result, he comprehends *adab* from a global perspective.¹⁰⁶

The word *adab* is commonly translated into English as "manners" or "etiquette," according to Mana Kia, in one of her pieces from her book *Persianate Selves*. *Adab*, however, is considerably more than civility or ethics, according to her. It refers to the correct social and aesthetic structure.¹⁰⁷ The sense of *adab*, according to Lawrence, enabled Muslim traders, elites, and mercantilist to engage with outsiders both at home and abroad. *Adab* is therefore a cultural and behavioural refinement that pervaded networks of "commerce, language, communication, Sufism, Bhakti, and scholarships."¹⁰⁸

However, people in this large territory of Persianate spoke a variety of languages and had divergent loyalties based on sectarianism, localism, tribalism, and ethnicity. In the Persianate world's far-flung cities, from Anatolia to India, poets, painters, builders, artisans, jurists, and intellectuals had their *pirs* (Muslim spiritual teachers). As a result, Persian culture became a significant pillar of Islamic civilization, influencing art, architecture, music, literature, and philosophy across the Muslim world and even beyond. My research will show how long it took for Indian culture to become Islamicate civilisation. I bring up two key figures who are Islamicate exemplars. They play an important role in bringing Islam and Indian culture into a critical conversation. Amir Khusraw and Abdullah Shah Qadri, often known as Bulleh Shah or Baba Bulleh

¹⁰⁵ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*. 1, 450.

¹⁰⁶ Hodgson, 445.

¹⁰⁷ Mana Kia, "Persianate 'Adab' Involves Far More than Elegant Manners | Psyche Ideas," Psyche, accessed September 17, 2021, <https://psyche.co/ideas/persianate-adab-involves-far-more-than-elegant-manners>.

¹⁰⁸ Lawrence, *The Bruce B. Lawrence Reader*, 5.

Shah, are their names. Kabir is associated with Sufi saints, according to Linda Hess. It appears to be a blend of Hindu and Muslim civilizations.

Kabir has affinities with Bulleh Shah, Shah Abdul Latif, Sachal Sarmast, and the richly mixed Muslim-Hindu culture of the Sindhi and Punjabi mystical love legends. All these observations invite new research and discovery.¹⁰⁹

2.3.4. Amir Khusraw as a *Barzakh* Exemplar

Genghis Khan was establishing his kingdom throughout Central Asia in the mid-13th century. Many tribes were forced to migrate as a result of his violent conquest. Some went west, while others went to the Indian subcontinent. From the Samarkand area, Hazra tribal leader Saifuddin Mahmud went to India. Saifuddin Mahmud sought shelter in the Mamluk dynasty's Delhi Sultanate of Iltutmish. He settled in India after marrying a Hindustani woman, the daughter of Iltutmish's courtier.

Saifuddin Mahmud had a son. He gave him the name Abu'l Hasan Yaminuddin Khusrau Dehlvi, and he eventually became known as Amir Khusrau, a poet and Hindavi language pioneer. Amir Khusrau has a remarkable command of the Indian languages. His extraordinary poetic talent drew the attention of many individuals, including Ghiyasuddin Balban, the Sultan of Delhi's court. In Ghiyasuddin Balban's court, he became one of the most admired poets.

Khusrau has seen five monarchs in his lifetime. As a result, he witnessed many changes and developments in India during the Delhi Sultanate and has recorded all of them in his masnavi. For example: Miftah ul-Futuh, Ghurrat ul-Futuh, Khazain-ul-Futuh, Khamsa-e-Khusrau, Duval Rani-Khizr Khan, Nuh Sipahr, Baqia-Naqia, Afzal ul-Fawaid, Tughlaknama and many. He was honored as a royal poet by every king, and they were his sponsors.

Khusrau traveled over the Indian subcontinent, living with locals and learning about their culture. He picked up a local dialect known as Hindavi, which was spoken by common people. It was not as developed as Urdu or Hindi at the time. His spiritual guru, or murshid, was the Delhi-based Sufi mystic Nizamuddin Awliya, to whom he devoted several Persian and Hindavi songs. With the signature line 'Khusrau-Nizam', these poems have become timeless.

¹⁰⁹ Hess, *Bodies of Song*, 96.

The merger of Persian, Arabic, Turkic, and Indian languages is ascribed to Khusrau. He penned several poetry in a variety of languages, which are being performed as Sufi melodies in current times. These poems have also been included in a number of Bollywood films. He was completely devoted to Hindustan. In the realm of Hindustani music, he made major contributions. He introduced a number of ragas as well as musical instruments like as the tabla and sitar. The Persian poet Hafiz of Shiraz bestowed upon him the nickname *tuti-e Hind*, or singing bird of Hindustan. One of his poems—which is written in both Persian and Hindavi—is composed as below-

Zehaal-e-miskeen makun taghافل,
Duraye naina banaye batiyan.
(Do not overlook my misery,
by blandishing your eyes and weaving tales.)

Ke taab-e-hijran nadaram ay jaan,
Na leho kahe lagaye chatiyan.
(My patience has over-brimmed, O sweetheart!
why do you not take me to your bosom.)

Shaban-e-hijran daraz chun zulf,
Wa roz-e-waslat cho umer kotah.
(Long like curls in the night of separation
short like life on the day of our union.)

Sakhi piya ko jo main na dekhun,
To kaise kaTun andheri ratiyan.
(My dear, how will I pass the dark dungeon night
without your face before.)

Yakayak az dil do chashm-e-jadu,
Basad farebam baburd taskin.
(Suddenly, using a thousand tricks
the enchanting eyes robbed me of my tranquil mind.)

Kisay pari hai jo ja sunave,
Piyare pi ko hamari batiyan,
(Who would care to go and report
this matter to my darling.)

Cho shama sozan cho zaraa hairan,
Hamesha giryen be ishq an meh.
(Tossed and bewildered, like a flickering candle,
I roam about in the fire of love.)

Na nind naina na ang chaina,
Na aap aaven na bhejen patiyan,
(Sleepless eyes, restless body,

neither comes she, nor any message.)

Bahaq-e-roz-e-visaal-e-dilbar,
Ke daad mara gharib Khusro.
(In honour of the day I meet my beloved
who has lured me so long, O Khusro!)

Sapet man ke varaye rakhun,
Jo jaye pauN piya ke khatiyān.
(I shall keep my heart suppressed
If ever I get a chance to get to her trick.)¹¹⁰

His poetry established a tradition in the 13th century due to its devotional aspects, and it has continued to this day. *Qawwali* is the name of this tradition. In *qawwali*, a group of people sings in a unique way using indigenous instruments such as the *dholak*, *tabla*, *harmonium*, and hand cymbals while clapping their hands. Nizamuddin Auliya's tomb is still visited by those who sing. They think Khusrau continues to sing for Nizamuddin, his teacher. Nusrat Fatah Ali Khan, Abida Parveen, Farid Ayaz, and Ali Muhammad were among the most famous *qawwals* of the 20th and 21st centuries who sang Amir Khusrau's poetry. In both India and Pakistan, *qawwali* has become an important element of the culture.

Khusrau's poetry is also sung by non-Muslims. *Qawwali* performances bring together Hindus, Muslims, and other cultures. Khusrau is revered as a symbol of love. His poems serve as a foundation for current poets, and I believe Kabir was inspired by him.

2.3.5. Bulleh Shah as a *Barzakh* Exemplar

Abdullah Shah Qadri, often known as Bulleh Shah or Baba Bulleh Shah, was a famous Punjabi Sufi poet who lived from 1680 to 1757. He was born in the Mughal Empire's Uch province of Pakistan. He was a contemporary of the Heer Ranjha-famous Punjabi poet Waris Shah (1722–1799) and the Sindhi Sufi poet Abdul Wahab (pen name Sachal Sarmast) (1739–1829). Bulleh Shah (1723–1810), an Urdu poet Mir Taqi Mir (1723–1810) of Delhi flourished at the same time. They were 400 miles apart from each other, yet the conscience was similar.

¹¹⁰ “Zehaal-E-Miskeen | Amir Khusro | Sufi Poetry,” accessed September 17, 2021, <https://sufipoetry.wordpress.com/2009/11/06/zehaal-e-miskeen-amir-khusro/>.

His father, Shah Muhammad Darwaish, was an imam of a masjid. Bulleh Shah got his primary education from his father and then moved to Kasur to learn the Quran, Hadith, fiqh and music. But, he soon realized that one cannot get satisfied with achieving all this knowledge.

He wrote poetry in Urdu and Punjabi. His poetry is simple but has deep meaning. His poetry covers a wide range of aspects that includes love, religion, and spirituality. Bulleh Shah became his *murid* after meeting with a Sufi scholar and saint of the Qadiriyya tariqa, Shah Inayat Qadiri. Then he wrote poetry about his spiritual relationship with his pir or master Shah Inayat. The poetry describes his love and anger for his pir, and the pain of his separation from his pir. There are two main aspects of his poetry: *ishq* (Love) and *yaar* (*pir*). His poetry urges that there must be a spiritual guru who can guide and nourish spirituality in his *mureed* (disciple) and help him answer all spiritual questions. There must be love for the pir in a way that the mureed has complete faith in his pir to be filled with spiritual guidance.

Bulleh Shah was a well-educated Muslim and he also became an imam of a mosque. He was an extraordinary person, an awakened person. He had a broader vision and understanding. He was struggling in the narrow society of his time. His emotion and his vision can be seen in his poetry. He burnt all the socially imposed identities like Kabir and emptied himself or cleansed his heart to fill it with pure love.

Says Bulla, who knows who I am?
I'am not a momin in the mosque,
Or a believer in false rites.
Not impure among the pure.
Nor Moses or Pharaoh.
Says Bulla, who knows who I am?
I am not in the vedas or holy books,
Not in drug or wine.
Not in the drunk's wasted intoxication,
Not in wakefulness or sleep.
Says Bulla, who knows who I am?
I am not in sorrow nor in joy,
Neither in piety nor in inequity.
I am not water, I am not earth,
I am not fire, I am not air.
Says Bulla, who knows who I am?
I am not from Arabia or Lahore,
Nor from India or Nagaur.
Neither a Hindu, or a Muslim from Peshawar,
Nor do I live in Nadaun.

Says Bulla, who knows who I am?
I do not know the subtleties of religion.
I was not born of Adam and Eve.
I am not the name I assume.¹¹¹

2.3.6. Role of Sufi-Bhakti in the Indian Islamicate Civilization

As a new social, political, and spiritual order in the Irano-Semitic region, Islam significantly impacted Afro-Eurasia. Lawrence argues that Islam as a civilization takes shape in the Middle East and Northern Africa, but it flourishes as Islamicate in the Indian Ocean. With the Indian Ocean, he meant the South Asian and far-flung of South East Asia.

The arrival of new cultures and religion, especially Islam as new faith, brought a tremendous socio-political change in the Northern Indian subcontinent. It pushed the stagnant history of India forward. The stagnation of Indian history was due to the intense practice of the caste system. The lower castes had no status and voice in society for thousands of years. The new political and social structure of Islam somehow gave voice to those oppressed communities who comprised the majority in the Indian subcontinent. Many oppressed communities who were part of the Hindu caste system structure emerged as separate community, and many became part of the Muslim social structure. These new changes resulted in chaos and clashes in Indian society.

The rise of Buddha, Jaina, and other comparable individuals to replace the Brahminical or Vedic *Karmkandi* system occurred in the Indian subcontinent as well. By the 2nd BCE, Buddhism had expanded from deep Afghanistan to the Indonesian peninsula in social, political, and spiritual terms. As a result, Indian society has gone through a period of societal transformation. Therefore, the radical idea of transformation that Islam brought to India was not entirely incomprehensible to Indian culture.

Islam as a philosophy entered India shortly after the prophet's death through trade and commerce, but it arrived as a sociopolitical framework in the 12th century through those who converted to Islam. Through the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate, it was able to build an empire across a larger area of India, resulting in a profound change in the political and social structure of India.

¹¹¹ Aleksandar Stevic and Philip Tai-Hang Tsang, *The Limits of Cosmopolitanism: Globalization and Its Discontents in Contemporary Literature* (Routledge, 2019).

For 320 years (1206–1526), it was a Muslim kingdom that spanned significant swaths of the Indian subcontinent. With the emergence of Delhi as a major metropolis in a global civilization, it introduced cultural diversity to the Indian subcontinent. It was the start of Muslim empires spreading over India.

India's conquest, on the other hand, was not a recent occurrence. Before the Muslims came to India, Alexander the Great and the Persians had conquered it. The Muslim invasion, on the other hand, was unique in that it succeeded in establishing a new socio-political framework, leading to India's designation as *Dar-al-Islam*.¹¹²

It was a period when empires ruled the world. Many new kingdoms were sprouting up over large expanses of territory. The Mongol Empire was one of them. The development of the Mongolian Empire under Genghis Khan's (1162-1227) leadership resulted in a major human civilisation movement. Between the 12th and 13th centuries, a large number of philosophers, poets, tribes, traditionalists, and administrators sought refuge in India. This flood of people brought cultural blossoming to the Indian subcontinent during the Sultanate of Delhi. In the Delhi Sultanate's court, some of these artists, poets, and even tribal chieftains found a home.

The massive migration at the time resulted in a more complicated socio-religious structure, as well as a new socio-political system in Delhi, the empire's capital. Because of the multicultural and dynamic environment that it illuminated, the city might be compared to Baghdad or Cordoba. People from far-flung places, both from villages and from other parts of the world, were drawn to cities as economic and political power grew. India now had new Muslim populations coexisting with Hindus.

The change also brought additional societal distress in the form of clashes among Hindus and Muslims. In addition to the distressed caused by the caste-ridden structure of society, the new urban development brought additional conflict due to racial and religious ideology of the governing Muslim class. This governing class, with their rigid orthodoxy of emerging Muslim feudalism and the *ulama*, freedom of indigenous groups became even more limited. In this afflicted situation, mystic poets or the Bhakti saints and Sufis became the only hope for the indigenous people. The mystical

¹¹² Dar al-Islam designates a territory where Muslims were free to practice their religion.

experience empowered them and strengthened the recognition of marginalized sections of society comprised by both Hindus and Muslims.

These Sufis, poets and other spiritual leaders, who were singing in local languages rather than Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian, attracted ordinary people; thereby humanitarian approach propagated by this wave became an effective practice to harmonize Hindu and Muslim groups in Indian society. In the Hindi region, Kabir, Mirabai, Tulsidas, Surdas, Raidas, and many Muslim mystics such as Nizamuddin, Amir Khusrau, Daud, Kutuban, Jayasi, Manjhan and later Bulleh Shah and Waris Shah produced enormous literature in the form of poetry. These were performed in the vernacular and similar performative media to convey a new message to the masses against archaic practices¹¹³. They knew that the compositions in Sanskrit or other high culture languages would neither reach an ordinary man nor help them understand the messages conveyed through poetry.

People from lower socioeconomic classes benefited from the cultural diversity. They began really discussing God, which had hitherto been a topic reserved for either Brahm in the Hindu society or the ulema in the Muslim community. As a result, God's discourse also pioneered a reformed sense known as mystic (Bhakti in Indian language and Sufi for those inspired by Islam), which was distinct from the conventional meaning. The new type of religious practice was distinct from both Hindu *karmkandi* and Muslim orthodoxy. It was all about Sufi and Bhakti.

2.3.7. Justice vs. Love: Sufi-Bhakti poets

Richard Eaton uses the term "justice" to describe Islam in India. The spread of Muslim authority was aided by the rule of justice. Sharia law, on the other hand, limited justice for non-Muslims. Non-Muslims were required to pay poll taxes, and the Muslim administration did not treat them equally. Disparities in terms of social and political status existed. This difference grew, resulting in confrontations between Hindus and Muslims. Indigenous Muslims were growing more extreme in terms of religion and social issues. As a result, the Muslim administration's justice failed till Akbar becomes the Mughal Emperor.

¹¹³ S. M. Pandey and Norman Zide, 54.

Sufi and Bhakti saints were more liberal than orthodox Muslim and Hindu because they treated everyone equally. Their method was based on love. Their method of connecting with the Divine love was to love others. Ordinary people were drawn to the approach of Bhakti and Sufi saints, and as a result, saints gained a large following.

2.3.8. Sufi-Bhakti: Cosmopolitan Culture

The hospice of the Sufis and mystic poets in Medieval India became a cultural synthesis center where religious, intellectual, social, and cultural ideas were freely shared. Divine love via songs, which eventually became part of Indian oral culture, was a popular vehicle for this communication. The early Indo-Muslim saints' substantial social focus had a vital role in the formation of their ideology. The founder of the Chishti order in India, Shaikh Muinuddin Chishti, believed in the ultimate form of religious devotion: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and assisting those in need.¹¹⁴ Sufi saints believed that living a satisfying life would lead to salvation. As a result, their path was one of love and humanitarianism, which helped to shape India's moral and spiritual culture. It drew many people from the margins of society because it was seen as a source of hope. Untouchability, which was deeply rooted in Hindu society, was eventually repudiated by Sufi saints.

Furthermore, Sufis never took a defiant stance against Muslim orthodoxy. They provided believers with a practical alternative to the *ulama's* contentious discussions and caustic disagreements.¹¹⁵ As a result, the Sufi tradition was one of tolerance. It embraced people from all walks of life in the name of divine love, resulting in religious syncretism and a link between the governing Muslims and their Hindu subjects. The outcome was the growth and enhancement of vernacular culture. In addition, several saints rose from the strata of the marginalized. Raidas, Surdas, Tulsidas, Kabir, and Nanak were among those who wrote many spiritual couplets or songs.

Some Sufi groups were associated with the State in exchange for government financial support, while others stayed aloof. The Naqshbandis and Suhrawardis paid visits to the Sultans' courts, accepting gifts and government services, and amassing enormous

¹¹⁴ Marta Irene Franceschini, "Mysticism, Love and Poetry,' A Comparative Study of Amir Khusrau and Jacopone Da Todi" (Master Thesis, New Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2012), 80, shorturl.at/qNRV3.

¹¹⁵ Franceschini, 81.

riches in the process. The Chishtis, on the other hand, refused to own property and despised any association with royalty and power structures, even if it meant death.¹¹⁶

In Islamicate civilisation, Hodgson emphasizes the significance of public opinion and respect for Sufi-Bhakti saints. Sufi-Bhakti saints became popular and had a big following. This may have resulted in some form of power decentralization. As a result, popular opinion was lauded in terms of political benefit and religious validity. Sharia Laws required political loyalty in order to protect the sentiments of the umma. This loyalty was not only spiritual, but also a social and, in some ways, political virtue. Even in periods when Sufi mystics supplied an alternate kind of devotional sensitivity, only public opinion that could be trusted gave the Shari'ah and its ulama their near-monopoly of legal and moral legitimacy.¹¹⁷

In the second millennium CE, gurus, saints, and shaikhs became populist in society with mass followers. This was a significant change in Indian society in Islamicate. Since umma was the primary concern to the Muslim ruler, in the case of India, umma was not limited to Muslims rather Hindus were also part of it socially and politically.

2.3.9. Network of Gurus, Saints, and Shaykhs

In both Sufism and Bhakti, the notion of Guru is highly important. Both Islamic and Indic traditions have a strong sense of the emergence of *guru-shishya parampara* or *pir-mureed silsila*, and they have impacted each other in some way. Sufis, on the other hand, were not seen as foreign to Indian culture since they were comparable to people who embraced Vedantic and Buddhist mysticism and asceticism, and Sufi organizations, such as the *shaykhs* or *pirs*, were seen as Hindu devotional poet-saints. Sufis formed fraternities led by shaykhs based on identical ideas, known as the "*Guru and Shishya parampara*," or *murshid* and *mureed* (teacher and disciple tradition). The Chishti order, founded in India by Moinuddin Chishti (1141–1236), was the most powerful Sufi network in South Asia.

Moinuddin was born in the Uzbekistan region of Chishti. At the late 12th century, he traveled from Afghanistan to India and established his center in Ajmer, Rajasthan. Shaykhs were said to possess baraka, or heavenly charisma. Sufi saints Moinuddin Chishti of Ajmer and Nizamuddin Awliya of Delhi were active and vibrant Sufi

¹¹⁶ Franceschini, 78.

¹¹⁷ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam. 1*, 120.

devotional centers in India. These Sufi and Bhakti saints had a common goal: Bhakti (devotion) and love for humanity.

2.3.4.1. The Tariqah Orders

The *tariqa* order is a very organized and disciplined system of Islamic institutions where pirs reach back their spiritual lineages to the Prophet. *Tariqas* (literally, 'ways') were well-defined and even hierarchically controlled 'ways' of mystical discipline: with its rituals, its chiefs, and its endowments.¹¹⁸ In this system, there is a relationship between master and disciple and the sequence of teaching is handed over to respective eligible disciples. It is also called *silsila* (chain). The pir Abdulqadir Gilani (1077-1166) was considered to have been the *qutb* in his time. He was a Sunni-Sufi teacher in Baghdad, around whose followers built the Qadiriyyah tariqah. Nizamuddin Awliya (1238-1325) was a pir in Delhi of *Chishtisilsila* or Moinuddin Chishti.

2.3.4.2. Mathas or Monastery

In the Upanishadic heritage of Indian culture, the matha or monastery already existed. The learner sits near the instructor while acquiring spiritual knowledge, which is referred to as an upanishad. Due to the vernacularization of knowledge or diffusion of knowledge in vernacular languages in this entire process of social movement, this tradition continues and becomes increasingly popular in the Bhakti movement. However, unlike Sufi saints or Vedic scholars, new Bhakti saints lacked *khanqah* or *mathas* and extremely structured disciplines. Later, in newly created Bhakti *mathas*, the framework or disciplines were built.

Kabir's popularity grew after a society named Kabir Panth published a collection of his poetry in the book *Bijak*. They built *Kabir Chaura* (monasteries) where the saints resided for a while and traveled about reciting Kabir songs in different parts of the country. They were commanded by the Mahant (abbot), a senior monk who was in charge of them. However, throughout time, Kabir's disciples dispersed into various branches.

¹¹⁸ Hodgson, 214.

I have placed Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement in a larger Islamicate setting in this chapter. The next chapter will look at Kabir as a vernacular millenium, *barzakh* exemplar, and the notion of muhabbat-e kul in the Bhakti movement.



CHAPTER III

KABIR AS A BARZAKH EXEMPLAR: BRIDGE OR BARRIER

For almost 500 years, people have been reciting and singing Kabir's poetry across the Indian subcontinent, including modern-day Pakistan and Bangladesh. Kabir is also known as Kabir Das, which means "servant of God." He is one of India's most well-known poets in the vernacular languages. He was born in Varanasi, one of the oldest towns on the Indian subcontinent, which was once a cosmopolitan metropolis. Due to the Indian diaspora and the poem's translation into numerous languages, Kabir's poetry is now renowned around the world.

In this section, I present the biography of Kabir; where he was born, who his parents are, how he got an education, who was his guru, how was his personality, communication with people and attitude towards society? What are his contributions in the change of culture as a poet and how to understand him as a *barzakh* exemplar as the bridge between two great civilizations— Islamic and Indic, and at the same time as a conscience in pre-modern India.

3.1. Kabir and legends about him

Kabir's birth and death are the subject of several tales. According to tradition, he was found as a newborn floating on a lotus in a pond in Benares (Uttar Pradesh, India) by a Muslim family, Neema and Neeru. According to another tale, he was born to a Brahmin widow who, fearful of being ostracized or intimidated by her community, abandoned the infant near a pond. Weavers by trade, Neeru and Neema were freshly converted Muslims. They did not have any children of their own. They believed that God had given this baby to them as a blessing when they found the anonymous infant. They adopted the child as if it were their own. The discrepancy between the two stories has persisted to this day.

According to Prahlad Singh Tipaniya, a Kabirpnanthi and a well-known singer of Kabir's songs, if people are aware that Kabir was born to a Brahmin widow, they must also be aware of who that Brahmin widow was. This would mean that Kabir was not born, but he appeared or he was simply incarnation of God.

People also say that when he died, Hindus and Muslims fought over who would bury or burn his remains. As a result, his body vanished, and flowers appeared in its place. In line with their respective traditions, Hindus and Muslims held burial rites.

These anecdotes about Kabir are surrounded by a plethora of conflicting legends. Hindu orthodoxy, Hindu heterodoxy, Dalits (tribal groups), Muslim, secular, and oppressed populations all believe in these stories. These stories make Kabir more interesting and popular among ordinary people, as well as scholars who are working on expanding the literature. These stories have grown more invented and altered over time in many languages.

We do not know who Kabir is, according to Wakankar; we only recognize him by his signature line in poetry, which ends or begins with "*-kahat Kabir.*" He is a gift of language to ordinary people for this unique form of poetry that begins with *Kahat Kabir* and finishes with *Kahat Kabir*, which became so famous among ordinary people that people began adding lines and producing poetry.¹¹⁹ After years, tens of thousands more poetry in various Indian dialects surfaced with that signature phrase.

The name Kabir is derived from the Arabic word *kebir*, which meaning "vast" or "big." Kabir's parents Nima and Neeru had just converted to Islam, according to Wakankar. As a result, his parents gave him the Muslim name Kabir. His parents were weavers by profession and lived in Banaras, Uttar Pradesh. That is why he was also a weaver. They came from a lower social class in India. Kabir's parents were unable to afford his schooling due to their poverty. Therefore, he continued to be illiterate. His exceptional ability to ask questions and his thirst for knowledge drew the attention of everyone.

Kabir learnt to weave as soon as he was grown enough to manage his life. However, his need for knowledge drove him to seek out a guru. The *guru-shishya parampara* or *murshid-murid* tradition was popular at the period, and it was believed that everyone

¹¹⁹ Living Science, *Anomaly of Kabir: Dr Milind Wakankar, IIT-Delhi*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jfsqyjzAA0>.

should have a guru who could guide them to salvation. Wakankar claims that he was mocked since he did not have a guru.¹²⁰

As a result, he sought out a guru and discovered Ramananda, a Hindu guru. Guru Ramananda of Kashi's renown had gone far and wide at the time. Kabir approached him and asked him to accept him as one of his students. Ramananda, on the one hand, first declined. Kabir, on the other hand, was adamant about becoming his pupil. He lay down on the Gangaghat (bank of the Ganga River) stairs one day, on the same route where Ramananda used to go to bathe in the Ganga. Ramananda's foot unexpectedly landed on Kabir's chest as he walks into the Ganga. Ramananda screamed, "Ram! Ram!" in wonder. Kabir said that he had received the mantra, which would become his core mantra, and that Ramananda had become his guru. Some argue that he didn't have a guru and instead learned from his own experiences. According to Muslim mythology, Kabir's murshid (guru) in later life was the great Sufi Pir Takki of Jhansi. The Hindu saint Ramananda, on the other hand, is the only human instructor to whom Kabir expresses gratitude in his lyrics.¹²¹

3.2. Kabir and his nirguna God

There are two ways to think about the Bhakti movement's nature. Nirguna bhakti and saguna bhakti are the terms used in Indian languages to describe it. Worshiping nirguna Brahman is nirguna bhakti, while worshiping saguna Brahman is saguna bhakti. Nirguna Brahman is the Ultimate Reality that is devoid of form, characteristics, or quality. Saguna Brahman, on the other hand, is concerned with form, qualities, and characteristics. Nonetheless, both nirguna and saguna have been interpreted as two different ways of understanding the same Brahman's essence. The Bhagavad Gita, Purana, and Upanishads are all sources for these words and notions. Bhakti is love and devotion to God or Brahman in both senses of the word. Bhaktas (devotees) believe that the devotee loves God and God loves the devotee, thus their love is mutual.

Sankara in Advaita Vedanta, Ramanuja in Vishishtadvaita Vedanta, Madhava in Dvaita, Nimbarka in Dvaitadvaita, and Vallabhacharya in Shuddhadvaita systematically developed and theorized these types of Bhakti from Vedic literature

¹²⁰ Living Science.

¹²¹ Rabindranath Tagore, *Songs of Kabir* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915), 3, shorturl.at/ijlrM.

such as Upanishad, Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavad Purana, and Bhakti Sutra of Narada and Sandilya.¹²² The ultimate goal of Bhakti's growth and ideas is to acquire jnana, or knowledge. The root *jna-* signifies in Hindi as '*janna*', and in English as 'to know'. Its antonym is *ajnana*, in Hindi - *anjan*, which in English means ignorant. Thus, Bhakti develops in terms of attaining enlightenment, a virtue or the Ultimate Reality.

Lord Krishna has described four types of bhaktas in Gita:

1. Arta: the distressed one.
2. Artharthi: the one who seeks some gain.
3. Jijnasu: the one who seeks knowledge.
4. Jnani: the one who is wise and has the proper understanding of the Self.¹²³

The fourth one, the *jnani*, who knows the Self and has attained Self-realization, has been described as the best bhakta by Krishan in the Bhagavad Gita.¹²⁴

The majority of academics consider Kabir to be a nirguna bhakta. Kabir, according to my high school instructors, was a nirguna saint or poet who believed in a formless god. However, at the time, my grasp of the nirguna idea was limited. I have found that many individuals in my culture believe in nirguna Brahman, or God. I recall seeing a photo of a nirguni bhakta deity being used to worship him. However, there was no face in that photo, only hands and legs. Some pictures had no human shape but had the phrase Om (the sacred sound of Vedic people).

I subsequently discovered that prophets were shown without a face and with hollows beneath their heads in Islamic miniatures. We see a similar idea in the Hindu depiction of deities. Nevertheless, of course, each creative form has its own set of challenges and concepts. Nonetheless, they had that understanding of nirguna. However, many nirguna bhaktas did not worship God with an image or idol, instead singing, chanting and gathering.

According to David Lorenzen and other historians like Krishan Sharma, who have studied Bhakti and the Bhakti movement thoroughly, Kabir was a *nirguna* bhakta who practiced Advaita Bhakti in the Vaishnava tradition. Kabir, Raidas, Guru Nanak, and Dadu were nirguna bhaktas who were inspired by the Brahmin school of Advaita

¹²² Sharma, *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement*, 109–31.

¹²³ Sharma, *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement*, 113–14.

¹²⁴ Sharma, 114.

Vedanta, according to Lorenzen in his book *Praises to a Formless God: Nirguni Texts from North India*.¹²⁵ Although Kabir had a strong belief in nirguna Bhakti, it would be incorrect to think of him as a rigorous thinker who investigated the concept of nirguna Bhakti.

तू कहता कागद की लेखी मैं कहता आँखिन की देखी ।

मैं कहता सुरझावन हारि, तू राख्यौ उरझाई रे ।¹²⁶

You talk of what is written on paper, I talk of what I have seen with my own eyes,

I talk of God in a simple way, you make it very complex.¹²⁷

Scholars and the broader population have recognized Kabir as an uneducated weaver, an oral poet, and a saint in nature. He could not have had a systematic knowledge of *nirguna* Brahman discipline. He was a self-taught individual. His poetry reflects the conscience he formed as a result of his social experiences. As a result, he is not affiliated with any sectarian religion or intellectual school of thought. Like Sankara, Madhava, Vallabha, and Ramanuja, he does not establish a systematic grasp of *jnana* or the Ultimate Reality.

At one point, Krishan Sharam acknowledges this reality and claims that Kabir does not subscribe to the Vaishnava faith. He is neither a systematizer nor a member of any one sect.¹²⁸ Kabir's idea of God, Brahman, or Allah, in my opinion, is the conscience. Between *al-mawjud* (the seen) and *al-ghaib* (the unseen), a self-experienced understanding of God is both *al-mawjud* and *al-ghaib*, or beyond *al-mawjud* and *al-ghaib*. This conscience is the result of a long journey through human history that links, bonds, and unites people in the 15th and 16th centuries.

मोको कहाँ ढूँढे बन्दे, मैं तो तेरे पास में ।

ना तीरथ में ना मूरत में, ना एकांत निवास में ।

ना मंदिर में, ना मस्जिद में, ना काबे कैलाश में ॥

ना मैं जप में, ना मैं तप में, ना मैं व्रत उपास में ।

ना मैं क्रिया क्रम में रहता, ना ही योग संन्यास में ॥

¹²⁵ David N. Lorenzen, *Praises to a Formless God: Nirguni Texts from North India* (SUNY Press, 1996), 259.

¹²⁶ Dwivedi, *Kabeer*, 134.

¹²⁷ Hess, *Bodies of Song*, 1. I have translated the above poem from Hindi to English with help of Linda Hess translation of the same poem.

¹²⁸ Sharma, *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement*, 176.

नहीं प्राण में नहीं पिंड में, ना ब्रह्माण्ड आकाश में ।
ना मैं त्रिकुटी भवर में, सब स्वांसो के स्वास में ॥
खोजी होए तुरत मिल जाऊं एक पल की ही तलाश में ।
कहे कबीर सुनो भाई साधो, मैं तो हूँ विश्वास में ॥

Where are you searching me, friend! I am near you!
I am not in the sacred river (Gangage), not in idols, nor in solitary living!
I am not in the temple nor in the mosque, neither in Kasi¹²⁹ or in Kailas¹³⁰!
I am not in Japa, nor in penance, neither in rites nor in fasting!
I do not reside in rituals, nor in Yogic practices or renunciation (Sanyasa)!
I am in the breath of the body, neither in the cosmos or the sky!
I am not in inaccessible caves, but in the life breath of the living !
If you search me sincerely, you will find me in a moment's search.¹³¹

Kabir's God is everyone's God, not only Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Brahmins, or Dalits. His nirgun God can be found everywhere, at any time, and is only a call away. In Kabir's poetry, God is the superior notion, both metaphysically and historically. He frees God from the conviction of Brahminical conscience. For thousands of years, the lowest castes did not have complete access to God. In a historical setting, Kabir has the boldness and courage to release God from the Brahmanical belief. His poetry expresses a feeling of defiance, claiming that God is for everyone. He refers to God in the same way that Hindus and Muslims do, viz Ram and Rahamana.

So I'm born a weaver, so what?
I've got the Lord in my heart.
Kabir: secure in the arms of Ram, free from every snare.
-Adi Granth, sakhi 82; Hawley and Juergensmeyer 2004: p. 58¹³²

The One is one with the All,
the All is one with the One.
Kabir is one with the knowledge without duality.
-Sakhi 272 / Dharwadker 2003: p. 184¹³³

¹²⁹ Holy place in Varanasi for Hindus. Kasi is considered to be the city on the *trishul* of Lord Shiva. Kabir was born in Varanasi.

¹³⁰ Holy mountain Himalaya, where Lord Shiva resides.

¹³¹ V. K. Subramanian, *Sacred Songs of India* (Abhinav Publications, 1996), 168–69.

¹³² Lakshmi Chandrashekar Subramanian, "The Mystic Mind and Music of Kabir," *Himalayan Academy*, accessed September 17, 2021, shorturl.at/rvxR9.

¹³³ Subramanian.

Kabir has been classified as a social-reformer by Hazariprasad Dwivedi, rather than a philosopher or poet. Dwivedi has beautifully and lyrically depicted Kabir in his Hindi book *Kabir*,

ऐसे थे कबीर। सर से पैर तक मस्त-मौला। स्वाभाव से फक्कड़ , आदत से अक्खड़। भक्त के सामने निरीह , भेषधारी के आगे प्रचंड। दिल के साफ़। दिमाग के दुरुस्त। भीतर से कोमल बहार से कठोर। जन्म से अशृश्य। कर्म से वंदनीय। वो जो कहते थे वो अनुभव के आधार पे कहते थे। इसलिए उनकी उक्तियाँ बेधनेवाली और व्यंग चोट करने वाले थे।¹³⁴

Kabir was like that. From head to toe, Mast-Maula. By nature, he is careless, and by habit, he is arrogant. Innocent in the presence of the devoted, ferocious in the presence of the disguised. He had an open heart. With the proper mindset and intent. On the inside, he was soft, yet on the exterior, he was hard. By birth, he was untouchable. For his deeds, he was revered. Whatever he said was based on his own personal experience. As a result, his words were sharp and sarcastic. (Author's own translation)

Kabir belonged to the untouchable caste. But he possessed the gift of language and intelligence, allowing him to talk and stand in front of the Brahminical minded people and conservative minded people. He has addressed and opposed the unjust practices of Brahmin and Maulavi throughout his poetry (Muslim priest). Most of the pandits (scholars) and maulavi were envious of him because of this. As a result, Kabir's speech was an exceptional achievement.

हरि बोलो भाई हरी बोलो भाई । हरी ना बोले भागु राम दुराई।
काहे को पढता किन- किन गीता । हरिनाम लिया सो सब कुच होता।।
मेरा मेरा कर क्या फल पाया । हरी के भजन बिन झूठक माया।
कहत कबीरा हरिगुन गाना । मावत नाशत वैकुंठ जाना ।।

O! brother! Recite the name of Hari, the Destroyer of sorrow!
Recite the name of Hari!
If you do not recite Hari's name, the Lord will be far away!
Why do you read the Gita loudly, repeatedly?
If you take Hari's name, everything happens.
What benefit did you reap, saying: "Mine, Mine!"
Without the worship of Hari, there is only false illusion.
Says Kabir: Sing the glory of Hari!
And all sins will be destroyed, and you will reach Vaikunta! the abode of the Lord.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Dwivedi, *Kabeer*, 134.

¹³⁵ Subramanian, *Sacred Songs of India*, 154–55.

3.3. Kabir as a *Barzakh* Exemplar: Bridge or Barrier?

Barzakh is a Quranic term that refers to the distinction between salt and freshwater. As a result, it is a stumbling block. Bruce Lawrence, on the other hand, theorizes *barzakh* as a civilizational and cosmopolitan force. Rather than a barrier, he sees this word as a bridge. According to him, *barzakh* is a thin line that links two spaces without allowing one to be diluted by the other. It can also be seen as a metaphor for spiritual engagement. According to Lawrence, *barzakh* is both an idea and a process.

Though *barzakh* comes from the Qur'an, it is as much method as metaphor, a delight to believers, a puzzle to scholars... One could conclude that *barzakh* is merely a divide between two oceans, or between man and woman, or between this world and the next, or between heaven and hell, but at the most profound level it is also the space, the thin space, at once evident yet porous, between the divine and the human, the Creator and the created, and it is therefore a bridge as well as a barrier. It is, in effect, the network of networks within the realm of Islamic spirituality.¹³⁶

According to Lawrence, *barzakh* is a network of networks within the realm of Islamic spirituality; "every Muslim who invokes Allah also expresses a desire to dwell in the *barzakh*, to live simultaneously in this world and the world beyond, and the mark of that dual commitment begins with the common name AbdAllah".¹³⁷

As a result, I realize that Kabir lives in the *barzakh*, is a slave of Rama or Hari or AbdAllah, and is also known as Das Kabir (Allah's servant), and serves as a bridge between two civilizations, Indic and Islamic.

In his poetry, Kabir has thoroughly discussed and interpreted God. In his poems, he addresses four primary themes:

- The conception of God.
- Critiques of religious customs.
- The transience of life.
- The spiritual need for the right teacher or guru.

¹³⁶ Bruce B. Lawrence, *Who Is Allah ?* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh university press, 2015), 40.

¹³⁷ Lawrence, 41.

Contemporary saints in Northern India, such as Guru Nanak and Mirabai, support his attitude of rejecting mainstream Hindu orthodoxy. As a result, Kabir and his poetry cannot be classified as either Hindu or Muslim, nor as anywhere in between. His poetry, on the other hand, goes beyond them and resides in the *barzakh*. Therefore, Kabir is revered by different Hindu, Sikh, and Sufi groups not just in India, but also in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The vastness of mankind is conveyed through Kabir's poetry, which causes us to reconsider our views on history, identity, and civilization. He represents the jnani, or greatest bhakta, or guru, who has reached Self-realization and understands himself. As a result, in the framework of human civilisation, I refer to him as a *barzakh* exemplar.

3.4. Poetry as Moral Conscience in pre-modern India

In many ways, Kabir and his poems are memories. It is a remembrance of a secular or cosmopolitan India, alternatively, according to Hodgson and Lawrence's projections, Kabir is Islamicate or cosmopolitan/*barzakh*. He is the remembrance of the Brahmanical structure's brutality for subaltern society, as well as the message of peace, harmony, and love for mankind. He is a symbol of coexistence for Hindus and Muslims alike. His poetry shows a blend of Persian and Hindavi (a variety of regional Indian languages) and has a wide popularity among Indians. Most experts and people see him as the pinnacle of Hindu-Muslim harmony and a symbol of modern secular India.

In the most major section of the Indian subcontinent, his poetries as wisdom are sung in both Sufi musical style and bhajan, and his adherents hold him in high esteem. Thousands of poems bearing his *chhap* (mark) "*kahat Kabir*" have been credited to him in various Indian dialects. As a result, everyone has their own interpretation of Kabir, and Kabir evolves in this way. Hindu terminology is used in the poems, while Perso-Arabic language is used more frequently.¹³⁸

Despite the fact that his poetry uses blunt language that subverts and critiques religious identity and institutions, he was welcomed. Because of the bitterness in the language, this type of poetry is known as *shabdo ki chot* (bitter truth). His couplets are taught in India's educational curriculum, particularly in primary school. Students in higher education are using his poems to create new literature. Kabir is the most studied and

¹³⁸ Subramanian, *Sacred Songs of India*, 154–55.

researched figure in Indian history and literature. As a result, he constitutes a significant milestone in medieval Indian history.

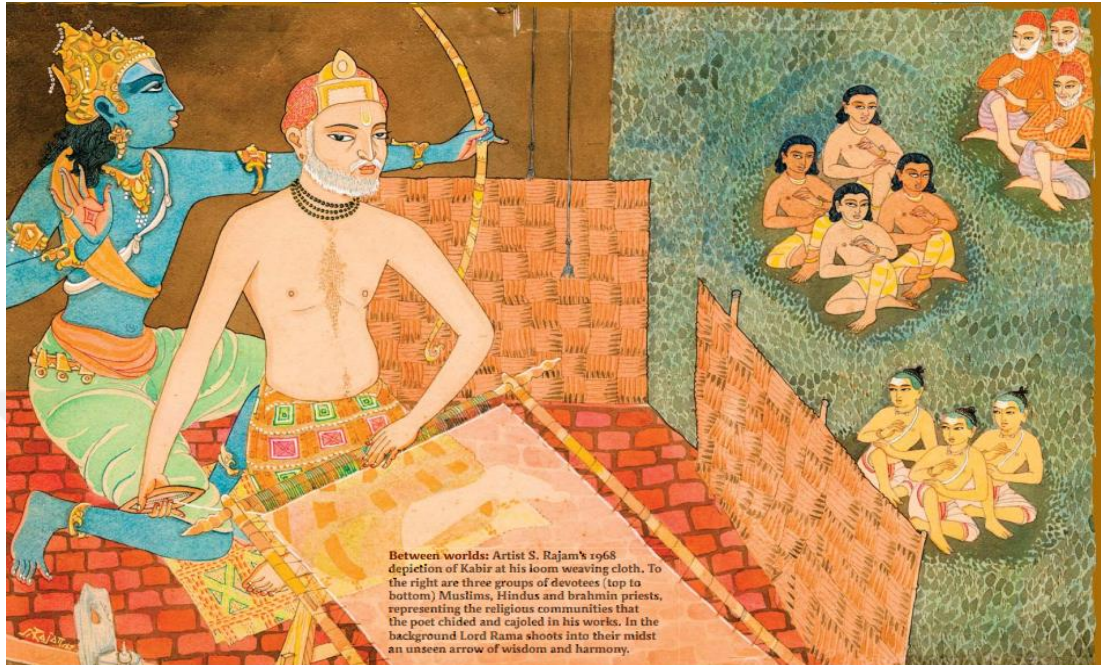


Figure 3: Depiction of Kabir.

Source; Subramanian, “The Mystic Mind and Music of Kabi”, 1996¹³⁹

There are many stories about Kabir in Indian history that are extremely useful for social, spiritual, and literary growth. As a result of these changes, Kabir has become a symbol for cultural diversity, peace, and harmony, rather than just a poet or social reformer. History and metahistory may both be used to theorize Kabir. He represents both the historical development of society's conscience and the promise of a better humanity.

हिन्दू कहो तो मैं नहीं, मुसलमान भी नाँहें ।

पांच तत्व का पुतला, गैबी खेलै माँहें ॥¹⁴⁰

If you call me Hindu, I am not, neither a Muslim.

¹³⁹ Depiction of Kabir. In this portrait, Kabir is depicted at his loom weaving cloth. To the right are three groups of devotees (top to bottom) Muslims, Hindus and Brahmin priests, representing the religious communities that the poet chided and cajoled in his works. In the background, Lord Rama shoots into their midst an unseen arrow of wisdom and harmony.

¹⁴⁰ Patel, S. (2018). *Kahat Kabir*, Ankita Prakashan Pvt. Ltd. Uttar Pradesh, India, p. 33

बड़ा हुआ तो क्या हुआ जैसे पेड़ खजूर ।

पंथी को छाया नहीं फल लागे अति दूर ॥

You're big? So what?
The date palm's big, yet it gives
no shade to the traveler, and fruits
are out of reach. (Hess, 2015, p. 32)

मत कर मन गुमान, मत कर काया को अहंकार।

केसरिया रंग उडी जाये लो, गुलाबी रंग उडी जाये लो।।

Don't be proud
of your power, don't admire
your body. The golden color
will fly, the rosy color
will fly.¹⁴¹

Wake up, man, wake up !
The birds have eaten your field,
you who did not have a guru.
Wake up now in your mind,
wake up now in your heart.¹⁴²

Kabir disliked being associated with any caste, sect, or religion. In terms of comprehending identity, he was well ahead of his time. He identifies himself with his occupation as a *Julha*, or weaver. He has no sense of superiority or inferiority, though, he was a weaver. Instead, he places a high value on his profession and learns everything from it that even a *pandit* who has studied the Vedas or the Quran would find difficult to comprehend. He places a high value on one's career or deeds rather than one's caste or religion. He likes calling himself *Julha* as an identity because his occupation is weaving. In my opinion, when he refers to himself as *Julha*, he is not embarrassed of his job; rather, he is attempting to transcend the brutality that he and his community had faced as *Julhas* or lower castes.

Kabir was born in Banaras, which used to be one of the important cities in the global market or *bazaar*. *Bazar* was the gathering point of various types of people for not just exchanging goods but also language, ideas, cultures, and differences. Prushottatm Agrawal says that Kabir must have interacted with various types of people and observed the complexity of the cosmopolitan city, and that could have occurred in a

¹⁴¹ Hess, *Bodies of Song*, 86.

¹⁴² Hess, 51.

bazaar that is open for every caste, creed and religion for purpose of trade. He notices the differences and possibilities of present society. He says:

कबीरा खड़ा बाजार में सबकी मांगे खैर

Kabir is standing in the market for the well being of everyone.

(Author's translation)

Wakankar says Kabir comes as a gift of language for common people in the form of a particular style of vernacular language from which common people can produce art, culture, and wisdom that they were not able to produce in Sanskrit due to the Brahmanical structure in India. Sanskrit was that Vedic language which common people could not learn and speak due to its restriction. The circulation of poetry with the signature line *Kahat Kabir* occurred due to trade networks of the city covering a vast range of geography and in different local languages from Bengal to Sindh. Thus, thousands of couplets have been attributed to Kabir. These consisted of different dialects and stories.¹⁴³

Most scholars, including Pollock, argue that Kabir and his contemporary saints like Nanak refused the Brahmanic establishment and the Muslim *ulema*.¹⁴⁴ However, in my view, Kabir was especially critical about their wrong and unfair practices rather than completely denying particular religious claims. According to Prushottam Agrawal, he focused more on religiosity than religion.

Kabir was neither aware nor concerned with the West's problems; for India, in lieu of the existing dichotomy between denominational religions – Hinduism and Islam – and competing gods – Allah and Ishwar – he created a substitute dichotomy between a universal religiosity/spirituality and a universal God. This God was neither Ram nor Rahim; he was as often both Ram and Rahim.¹⁴⁵

Through his poetry, he has communicated with Brahmin and Muslim priest (or *maulvi*) of the established orthodoxy and ordinary people. He has questioned their practices so that they could correct it. He was neither against orthodoxy nor against heterodoxy.

¹⁴³ Living Science, *Anomaly of Kabir*.

¹⁴⁴ Sheldon I. Pollock and Benjamin A. Elman, eds., *What China and India Once Were: The Past That May Shape the Global Future* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 256. Note: The devotional poems of Nanak and Kabir are equally dismissive of the Hindu brahmanic establishment and of the Muslim ulama, the most prominent religious specialists within orthodox Muslim circles.

¹⁴⁵ Harbans Mukhia, "Book Review: Discovering Indigenous Modernity in the Words of Kabir," *The Wire*, July 16, 2021, <https://thewire.in/books/book-review-discovering-indigenous-modernity-in-the-words-of-kabir>.

He was the man of conscience and bridge. He shows the thin line to the people where they meet and connect themselves. The following poem describes that our creator is the same, woven all of us like cloth. At that time, it was not easily acceptable, yet Kabir attempted to convey the message to both Hindus and Muslims orthodox.

Subtle, subtle, subtle
is the weave
of that cloth.
What is the warp
what is the weft
with what thread
did he weave
that cloth?
Right and left
are warp and weft
with the thread at the center
he wove
that cloth.
The spinning wheel whirled
eight lotuses, five elements,
three qualities, he wove
that cloth.
It took ten months
to finish the stitching
thok! thok! he wove
that cloth.
Gods, sages, humans wrapped
the cloth around them
they wrapped it
and got it dirty
that cloth.
Kabir wrapped it with such care
that it stayed just the same
as it was at the start
that cloth.
Subtle, subtle, subtle
is the weave
of that cloth.¹⁴⁶

His poems are all about what he does for a living. It demonstrates his profound reflection on his work as well as his extensive empirical expertise. He possessed the ability to detect prejudice, aggression, and unethical behavior in society. It demonstrates his degree of comprehension at a period when a poor, illiterate weaver could not even come close to achieving that level of knowledge. This level of

¹⁴⁶ Hess, *Bodies of Song*, 167–68.

conscience had not yet evolved in society, particularly among oppressed people who were unable to perceive or sense unfair practices of Brahmins and Muslims. He spoke out against a wide range of unequal behaviors that were not limited to certain populations. Because of his grasp of the language he was using, he not only had the abilities of comprehension, but also the guts to speak.

Broadcast, O mullah, your merciful call to prayer—
you yourself are a mosque with ten doors.
Make your mind your Mecca, your body the Ka'aba—
your Self itself is the Supreme Master.
In the name of Allah, sacrifice your anger, error, impurity—
chew up your senses, become a patient man.
The lord of the Hindus and Turks is one and the same—
why become a mullah, why become a sheikh?
Kabir says, brother, I've gone crazy— quietly, quietly,
like a thief, my mind has slipped into the simple state.

(Adi Granth, Raga Bhairava, shabad 4)¹⁴⁷

Thus, he was fearlessly independent. This fearlessness was coming from the spiritual height that he has attained. He knew himself in the best way, and he knew how to present things. Thus in this context, I present a poem of Kabir which shows his fearlessness.

मुखड़ा क्या देखे दर्पण में
तेरे दया धर्म नहि तन में।
आम की डाली कोयलिया बोले, सुगना बोले बन में
घरवाली तो घर में राजी फक्कड़ रानी बन में।
ऐसे धोती पाग संभारे तेल चुये जुल्फें में
गली गली की सखी रिझाई दाग लगाया तन में।
पत्थर की एक नाव बनाई उतरा चाहे छण में
कहे कबीर सुनो भाई साधो ये क्या चढ़ेंगे रन में।

Why look at the face in the mirror?
Your compassion and righteousness are not in the body.
Let the Koel (Cuckoo) sing on the branch of the mango tree or
the parrot in the forest.
The wife is in the house, but you make merry with a queen in the woods.
To show off your vanity, you wear a dhoti, eat sweets, and
apply oil on your lock of hair!
In street after street, the courtesan captivates, and
leaves a stain on the body.
You make a boat out of stone, and
you want to go across in a moment.

¹⁴⁷ Subramanian, "The Mystic Mind and Music of Kabir."

Says kabir: Listen, good brother!
Will all this help the ascent in the final battle?¹⁴⁸

Kabir was raised in a Muslim family of *Julaha* castes which is one of the low castes in India. These castes are socially and economically weaker. Professionally, they are weaver in general. Since there is no caste system in Islam, those in the lower caste considered converting to Islam to escape from the inferiority perpetuated by the caste system. But their conversion did not raise their status, neither in the eyes of Hindus nor among Muslims. The caste practice among Muslims in India continued.

Kabir was much beyond the socially constructed identity. For some people, he was a Muslim and as his parents-given Arabic or Islamised name attests. A Muslim family brought him up. Thus, by definition, he was a Muslim. But his faith later appeared disputed among Muslims because of the use of Hindu terminologies in his teaching.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, some scholars argue that he uses the Hindu terminology because he was living in Hindu communities. He wanted to reach them through Hindu terminology.¹⁵⁰ Some argue that the amount of Islamic education *Julahas* received was very limited as most of the people of his caste were illiterate. Kabir was illiterate as well.

Wakankar says that Kabir played a significant role in the upliftment of the lower castes, or today's Dalit. Dalits are not limited to Hindu only as even those who have converted to Islam are also labelled as Dalits. Dalit is a politically used term in modern India for extremely backward communities and tribes who have always been considered as untouchable even prior to the arrival of Islam. Dalit community adopts him as a leader, guru, or even god. Thus, Kabir becomes a subject matter of identity. He has been instrumentalized in this context where everyone claims him for their particular political and social interests. It is essential to note that Kabir gives space and possibilities to every community, especially to society's oppressed section.

Nevertheless, Kabir's impact on his contemporaries was profound. Various legends are told among folks that illustrate his power, insight, and various aspects of his

¹⁴⁸ Subramanian, *Sacred Songs of India*, 154–55.

¹⁴⁹ Kabir and Ajaib Singh, *The Ocean of Love: The Anurāg Sāgar of Kabir* (Sanbornton, N.H: Sant Bani Ashram, 1982), xviii.

¹⁵⁰ Kabir and Ajaib Singh, xviii.

extraordinary personality. It also includes the story of his honesty, unforced humility, total dependence on God, compassion and bluntness in language.¹⁵¹

His poetry as wisdom is sung in both Sufi musical style and *bhajan* or *bhakti* in the more significant part of the Indian subcontinent. Kabir had many devotees giving him great regards and was attributed thousands of poems in many Indian dialects with his *chhap* (mark) “*kahat Kabir*”. Among those devotees are Abida Parveen who is a Muslim Pakistani Sufi singer, Farid Ayaz and Abu Muhammad who are Muslim and from Pakistan, Shabnam Virmani and Prahlad Singh Tipaniya who are non-Muslims from India, and Mukhtiyar Ali who is a Muslim from India.

कबीरा खड़ा बाज़ार में, मांगे सबकी खैर!

ना काहू से दोस्ती, न काहू से बैर!!

Kabira khara bazaar mein maange sabki khair (bazar and khair are persian words)

Na kahu se dosti, na kahu se bair

Kabir is standing in the market, he wants good for all.

He has neither friendship with anyone nor enmity.

Kabir is well known for his renowned *bhajan* songs, the lyrics of which were composed many years after his death. His poetry, known as *bhajan*, spread from the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent to Punjab and Rajasthan by the 16th century. His poetry is written in common speech. People sing his poetry in a variety of ways. Linda Hess meets Prahlad Ji, a *bhajan* singer and member of the cultural organization ‘Eklavya Kabir Munch.’ Since 1980, he has been one of the most significant personalities in the Indian oral-performative tradition. Every year, he arranges a Kabir yatra with individuals who go from one location to another. As a result, Kabir will continue to exist as long as the vernacular languages do.

Abdul Bismillah and Purushottam Agarwal, documentary filmmaker Shabnam Virmani, Linda Hess, and David N. Lorenzen, Abda Parveen, Farid Ayaz, and Prahlad Tipanya are among the many persons who have been working substantially on Kabir. They are working to spread the message of Kabir and the conscience developed as poetry. I would call them too as *barzakh* exemplars. In the succeeding sections, I mention some *barzakh* exemplars of the 21st century of the Indian subcontinent.

¹⁵¹ Kabir and Ajaib Singh, xxiii.

3.4.1. Prahlad Singh Tipanya as a *Barzakh* Exemplar

Tipanya has come a long way with his music exclusively singing Kabir's poetry. His family is of the untouchable caste and economically humble. They had little chance at education. However, Tipanya managed his studies and became a schoolteacher. Somehow, he discovered Kabir. He learned the music at all-night bhajans, which were music jams that used to happen at his home and locality. Tipanya and his family are now Kabirpanthi. He has a very renowned disciple, Shabnam Virmani, who is a filmmaker of Kabir project and a singer of Kabir's song.



Figure 4. Prahlad Singh Tipanya

Source: Kate Abbott, "Prahlad Tipanya Sings in a 15th Century Poet's Voice," BTW Berkshires, October 17, 2019, <https://btwberkshires.com/arts/prahlad-tipanya/>

Shabnam Virmani, who learnt Kabir-songs from Tipanya, calls him a rural rockstar.¹⁵² Tipanya is the most regarded among Kabir Panthis. Admirers rush to him and touch his feet, wave a flaming āratī tray in front of him, and jostle to put garlands around his neck. Huge crowd emerges for his stage performance. He is a popular folk singer of Kabir.

¹⁵² Hess, *Bodies of Song*, 54.

3.4.2. Farid Ayaz and Abu Muhammad as *Barzakh* Exemplars

Farid Ayaz was born in Hyderabad but moved to Pakistan. He is now one of the most famous Pakistani qawwal. He belongs to the Qawwal Bachchon Ka Gharana of Delhi, which is also called Delhi Gharana. It is an old tradition from Mughal time. They say that they have been singing and praying for more than 700 years. With his younger brother, Muhammad, Farid Ayaz performs various genres of Hindustani classical music such as dhrupad, khayal, tarana, thumri, and dadra.

Shabnam Viraman is a filmmaker. She along with Tipanya reaches Karachi, Pakistan from India to meet Farid Ayaz-Abu Muhammad and their group. They work on their 'Kabir Project'. On the way to Ayaz's home from Airport, Shabnam conversed with one of the Qawwals in the car who came to receive them. He said that they are basically from Delhi but in partition people moved from one side to another. They still have a home in Delhi and sometimes they go to visit. But because of current political problems, they are not able to go. Their ustad and forefather Taan Ras Khan used to be the ustad (singer) of the court of Bahadur Shah Zafar of the Mughal Empire.

In his conversation with Virmani and Tipanya, Farid Ayaz pointed finger towards the picture of his father and says "in my view my and near me, my Kabir rahmatullah alaih (may Allah peace be upon him), is my father."¹⁵³ In this conversation, he said various times "Kabir *Allah unpar rahamt nazil farmaye* (May Allah bestow mercy on him)", "My father gave me wisdom, music and other things", "I have met Kabir, I have seen Kabir and I know Kabir."¹⁵⁴ Such statements of Ayaz represent the notion of Kabir in him, which is beyond the smaller identity such as Hindu and Muslim.

I've burned my house down,
the torch is in my hand.
Now I will burn the house of anyone
who wants to follow me.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Ajab Shahar - Kabir Project, "Meeting Farid Ayaz" - Episode 06 from the Film "Had Anhad," 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EW3vxIYZcA>.

¹⁵⁴ Ajab Shahar - Kabir Project.

¹⁵⁵ Hess and Singh, *The Bijak of Kabir*, 5.



Figure 5. Farid Ayaz and Abu Muhammad

Source: Fareed Ayaz, Abu Muhammad Qawwal and Brothers (Complete),” Asia Society, accessed September 18, 2021, <https://asiasociety.org/video/fareed-ayaz-abu-muhammad-qawwal-and-brothers-complete>

Ayaz says that if a person wants to know Kabir, then one needs to approach him. In order to do, a person has to leave all sorts of identities to reach Kabir. Hess, who got utterly engaged with Kabir and wrote a few books on him, says that to know Kabir, one should know people, places, times and should use her ears, nose, voice, skin as well as more cerebral capacity.¹⁵⁶ Any seeker of Kabir should appreciate the local performance, starting with the first location: one’s own body.

Without my guru whose praise shall I sing?
 If the guru is not will,
 No wisdom will be mine.
 Among the wise I will be the ignorant.
 What good luck- my pitcher shattered!
 I am done with all that hauling water.
 The burden's off my head!¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Hess, *Bodies of Song*, 16.

¹⁵⁷ Ajab Shahar - Kabir Project, “Meeting Farid Ayaz” - Episode 06 from the Film “Had Anhad.”

From the above poem, I understand that the word pitcher implies identity. Kabir is above all these imposed or constructed identities. He relieved himself from the ongoing Hindu-Muslim or Brahmin-Shudra clash.

The well (God) is one, says Kabir and water-bearers(people), many.
The pots (body) may differ in shape and size But the water (God) in all of them is one.¹⁵⁸

Being an Indian Muslim, Kabir never compromised with his experiences. He said what he saw. He knew that people are not aware that they are fighting for the same.

One who leaps across boundaries is an Awliya,
One who leaves across the boundless is a Pir
One who leaps across the bounded and boundless he is called a Faqir, Kabir!
They all went crying my border, your border !
No one went beyond borders!
In that boundless field, the one who plays is Kabir!¹⁵⁹

3.4.3. Abida Parveen as a *Barzakh* Exemplar

Abida Parveen (1954) is a Pakistani singer, composer, and musician of Sufi music. She is one of the highest paid singers in Pakistan, and she is known as the 'Queen of Sufi music. She is also one of the famous folk singers of Kabir's songs. Hess says that Kabir swims in the sea of Hindu Kabir Panthis poets in India, and similarly he swims in a sea of Sufi poets in Pakistan. Thus, Hess was also attracted by the works of Abida Parveen who has recorded a long track of Kabir's couplets called *Man lago yar fakiri men*.¹⁶⁰

Abida just uses the phrase *Man lago yar fakiri men* as a refrain and goes on for sixteen minutes apparently singing whatever doahas happen to arise for her. When the spirit moves her, she sings the tag line, *Man logo*. At the end she sings the well-known concluding stanza of the bhajan, *kahe Kabir suno bhai sadho, sahib mile saburi men, man lago*. Farid Ayaz also follows this kind of structure with the track *Maula maula*, on the Kabir Project 's CD Kabir in Pakistan.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Ajab Shahar - Kabir Project.

¹⁵⁹ Ajab Shahar - Kabir Project.

¹⁶⁰ Hess, *Bodies of Song*, 96.

¹⁶¹ Hess, 96.



Figure 6: Abida Parveen

Source: “Abida Parveen: The Soul of Sufi Music,” Global Village Space, February 20, 2020, <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/abida-parveen-the-soul-of-sufi-music>

3.4.4. Shabnam Virmani as a *Barzakh* Exemplar

Shabnam Virmani is a film-maker who has initiated and developed ‘The Kabir Project’ which has an online platform. She has done remarkable work on the legacy of Kabir in the Indian subcontinent. She also sings Kabir’s song. She worked with Tipanya and considered him as guru. Her documentary film on The Kabir Project, *Kabira Khada Bazaar Mein*, won the Special Jury Prize at the 58th National Awards in June 2011.



Figure 7. Shabnam Virmani

Source: “Ram Bina Re Koi Dhaam Nahi,” accessed September 18, 2021, <https://groundreport.in/shabnam-virmani-kabir-project/>

Shabnam Virmani's Kabir Project depicts the unity between Hindu and Muslim musicians through their love of the medieval or pre-modern Indian Bhakti poet Kabir.¹⁶² All these singers have many followers. They do concerts, and people gather in large numbers to listen to the poetry of Kabir.

3.4.5. Mukhtiyar Ali as a *Barzakh* Exemplar

Mukhtiyar Ali is a member of the Mirasis, a semi-nomadic people noted for their oral Sufi singing heritage. For many generations, Ali's family has been Sufi musicians. Following the Kabir Project of Shabnam Virmani, Ali sang a Kabir's poetry in the film 'Had Anhad'. That made him a well-known folk singer. He was awarded the GiMA Award for Best Music Debut for 2015 for the song 'Fanny Re' in the movie Finding Fanny.



Figure 8: Mukhtiyar Ali

Source: Music Connects People with Life: Singer Mukhtiyar Ali,” accessed September 18, 2021, <https://muslimmirror.com/eng/music-connects-people-with-life-singer-mukhtiyar-ali/>

चदरिया झीनी रे झीनी, रे राम नाम रस भीनी

Body is like finely woven cloth and is permeated by the name of Rama

¹⁶² A. Sen, *Postcolonial Yearning: Reshaping Spiritual and Secular Discourses in Contemporary Literature* (Springer, 2013), 29.

अष्ट कमल का चरखा बनाया, पांच तत्त्व की पूनी
Eight-petaled lotus was used as a spinning wheel, and the five elements as
yarn

नौ दस माँस बुनन को लागे, मूरख मैली कीनी
Took nine to ten months to knit it, Oh fool you soiled it!

जब मोरी चादर बन घर आई, रंग रेज को दिनी
When I got my sheet, I gave it to person who dyes sheet(guru).

ऐसा रंग रंगा रंगरे ने, लालो लाल कर दिनी
It was dyed such, totally red in color

ध्रुव प्रह्लाद सुदामा ने ओढी, शुकदेव ने निर्मल किन्ही
Dhruv prahlad and sudama wore it, Shukdev made it pure.

दास कबीर ने ऐसी ओढी, ज्यों की त्यों धर दिनी
Das (Abduallah or servant of God) Kabir wore it such, he left it as it is(as he
got it).¹⁶³

It is important to note that how oral performative tradition carries Islam, and how *adab*, spirituality and language develops through orality. Oral performative tradition consists of many elements - like various musical instruments, rhythm, sound, language, expression, aura, and above all an appeal. This as culture attracted people the most - even people who are not Muslim listen to this music. Thus, from the 11th century to the late 19th century, Hindavi as the popular vernacular language emerged as high culture. Poetry and music were its essential elements. Among these was Ramacharitman by Tulsidas whos was one the popular literature in Vernacular language written in the 16th century.

If one re-imagines demography and geography from a musical perspective, then its understanding might be perceived differently. Consisting of Arabic, Persian, Turkic and Hindavi vocabularies as well as Islamic and Indic terminologies, Qawwali is popular among Muslims and non-Muslims, and among Indians and non-Indians. The song *Tajdar-e-Haram, nigaah-i karam* (O King of the holy sanctuary, bless us with your merciful gaze), was sung by Indo-Pakistani singer Atif Aslam and has more than 317 million views. Even though the song consists of complete Islamic elements, it is

¹⁶³ "Chadariya Jheeni Re Jhini -Kabir Bhajan with Meaning," accessed September 18, 2021, <https://groups.google.com/g/sathvishayam/c/n8iR8LU3KGM?pli=1>.

viewed not only by Muslims but also by non-muslims. Today all such types of songs are available with English translation to convey the message to the masses in the language which is convenient for people to understand.

Nevertheless, Kabir and other Sufi-Bhakti saints are the *barzakh* exemplar who brings unity among Hindus and Muslims. They are also the product of Islamicate civilization. The influence of Islam has been significantly intensive through poetry, music, art, architecture that it brought a transformation in Indic civilization altogether.

3.5. Re-imagining Bhakti with reference to Kabir: The scope of humanity

Bhakti is a phenomena or egalitarian notion that may be applied to areas outside of India. Bhakti, with reference to Kabir, is a universal and progressive notion that effectively portrays a better prospect for mankind's peace and prosperity. Kabir, as conceived by artists, serves mankind in a civilizational capacity. It has the capacity to reimagine geography, history, civilization, and identity. Kabir's identity trajectory may be viewed as a concentric circle identity with the same center but a continual expansion.

3.5.1. Re-imagination of Human Geography and History

Kabir, as a concept, collects or incorporates all castes, creeds, religions, and ethnicities that have emigrated from many civilizations and locations throughout the world. In addition, it tells a trans-territorial and trans-temporal story of a society's violence and misery. As a result, Kabir allows for a re-imagination of human geography.

As a result, Kabir, as a *barzakh* paradigm, acts as a bridge rather than a barrier. Yet, as Lawrence describes *barzakh*, Kabir is the narrow boundary or margin between Islamic and Indic traditions that does not allow them to bleed into one another. Thus, Kabir's poetry, which symbolizes pre-modern India's evolved conscience, is a result of humanity's long-term connection.

CHAPTER IV

METAMORPHOSIS OF INDIC CULTURE AS ISLAMICATE CIVILIZATION

For almost a thousand years, Muslims and other faiths have coexisted on the Indian subcontinent. It is not difficult to believe that they are indigenous people.¹⁶⁴ I would like to clarify that when I refer to the Indian subcontinent, I am referring to the presence of both Vedic and Buddhist literature and philosophy in the region, which stretches from Afghanistan to the Indonesian Peninsula. Nonetheless, why do Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, and Jains in India have more heated antagonism than Muslims and Hindus? The answer is not that they hold opposing worldviews. It is a difficult question to answer, but I recall Sheldon Pollock saying, "The more you read, the more space you give to other perspectives, culture, and religion." There will be a less contentious society if Pollock's teachings are heeded.

Beyond its religious significance, Islam has a profound impact on Indian culture. Interaction, assimilation, trade, methods, Sufism, and coexistence helped Islam establish itself as a religion in the Indian subcontinent. As a consequence, Islam increased the diversity of Indian society. As an outcome, India has a diverse culture and has evolved into a new environment.

My projection of the transmutation or metamorphosis of Indic culture into Islamicate civilization is beyond religious projection. It is not the supremacy of one religion over another. Rather, it is a total civilizational projection of Hodgson's Islamicate civilization. The neologism Islamicate as a civilizational change refers to the broad expanse of Africa and Asia which were regions influenced by Muslim rulers, Sufis, and traders, but their contributions to these regions were not solely restricted to the

¹⁶⁴ Gilmartin and Lawrence, *Beyond Turk and Hindu*, 1.

practice of Islam as a religion.¹⁶⁵ It is a projection of the change and the movement of humanity as a whole due to interconnection and exchange.

I believe that Ibn Khaldun's projection of *al-umran* inspired Hodgson's civilizational concept, which is concerned with the development of "feelings" in humanity that tie individuals together to form a group, community, society, or tribe. Ibn Khaldun had referred to it as *asabiyya*. In this study, my understanding of *asabiyya* and *umran* is unique. *Asabiyya*, in my view, is the source of humanity's feelings and contributes to civilization's growth. As a consequence of this development, humans and their civilizations will eventually advance to the greatest level of civilization, which I refer to as love. The search for love, on the other hand, is a never-ending journey for humanity, which Ibn Khaldun refers to as the "rise and fall." Therefore, the terms "*umran badawi*" and "*umran hadhari*" may both be interpreted as "being" and "becoming" respectively for humanity or civilization. Despite this, the goal of love has yet to be realized in society, the ultimate goal will be pursued by society continuously.

I want to show love (*muhabbat-e kul*, as Abu'l Fazl coined it) as the pinnacle of civilization. To accomplish so, I use Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyya* to create a feeling of belonging and help it develop into an oceanic emotion I call love. My usage of *asabiyya* is peculiar in that academics have historically used it to examine political events from a sociological perspective. It is what I use to create an atmosphere that may then be expanded into an oceanic experience. The ultimate goal of mankind is to experience the oceanic feeling, and this goal should be sought. I am thinking of calling it *barzakh* or *nirvana*. "Every Muslim who invokes Allah also expresses a desire to live in the *barzakh*," Lawrence writes in his book *Who is Allah?*. "From Bistami to Hallaj to Ibn Arabi, every Muslim who invokes Allah also expresses a wish to dwell in the *barzakh*."¹⁶⁶ In Sufi terminology, it refers to *Ana'l-haqq*, and in Buddhist it is *nirvana*. From Hallaj to Arabi, and from Buddha to Sankara to Kabir, they seek *barzakh* rather than hell or heaven. Lawrence's list of *barzakh* supporters includes all of these individuals. Thus, *barzakh*, love, and *nirvana* are oceanic emotions. This will be the subject of my future research projects.

¹⁶⁵ Gilmartin and Lawrence, 1.

¹⁶⁶ Lawrence, *Who Is Allah ?*, 40.

Ilm al-umran is a multiplex method developed by Ibn Haldun that blends empirical experience with spiritual experience in constructing society. I would want to link the concept of *ilm al-umran* to *muhabhat-e kul*. As a result, Therefore, Hodgson's study of civilisation is both a spiritual and an imperial undertaking, which he saw via a vast network of people, as well as the development of art, architecture, a sense of ethics, morality, justice, and politeness, among other things. His vision of civilisation is one in which human society and spiritual experience are intertwined rather than one in which one civilization dominates the other. As a result, in Hodgson's view, civilisation covers a wide range of human occurrences as well as the growth of conscience as a civilization.¹⁶⁷ It also has to do with a sense of civility— *adab*— and the evolution of *umran badawi* (being) into *umran hadhari* (becoming).

What do I mean when I say the Indic has transmuted or metamorphosed into the Islamicate? The Islamicate civilisation, according to Hodgson, is a time in which socio-political and spiritual transformation happens as a result of the diffusion and dissemination of Axial-Age's knowledge through the rise of cities. It is a time when morals, ethics, the heart, art, architecture, politeness, and equality are all concerned with the prospect of a better humanity or human condition. It is a lengthy procedure. It is a process in which Islam, Islamic discipline, and its adherents play a critical part in the development of civilisation. As a result, human growth occurs as a new culture through language, art, poetry, architecture, aesthetics, morality, *adab*, and ethics.

In the Indian subcontinent, the transmutation of Indic culture into the Islamicate one is in threefolds: (1) The strong administration, political supremacy, development of cities, architectural, aesthetical, moral, and ethical development and cosmopolitan milieu, (2) Emergence of Sufi-Bhakti networks for their egalitarian treatment towards people, and (3) Vernacularization of knowledge; Diffusion and dissemination of Indic knowledge as Islamicate.

4.1. Metamorphosis: From the Indic to the Islamicate

Since pre-Islamic times, the Arab world has maintained a trading and cultural ties with the Indians. They have been trading products, ideas, cultures, and people. Arabs have

¹⁶⁷ With the term conscience as a civilization, I mean that understanding civilization consists of laws, morality, ethics, sense of forming a government, and so on. Civilization is not constant here, it is also always progressing, and thus, conscience develops or evolves.

served as intermediaries in commerce between the Eastern and Western hemispheres, as well as customers in the other direction. According to Ehtesham bin Hasan's text, the people of India and the Arabian Peninsula have known each other since ancient times and have enjoyed good neighborly ties.¹⁶⁸ They shared a cooperative attitude in trade and the transfer of socio-cultural values.¹⁶⁹ India's cultural link with Arabia, according to PN Chopra, dates back to ancient times.

India's cultural relations with Arabia date back to prehistoric times. In India the Harappans, Dravidians and Aryans wove the webs of many cultures. In the Arab lands, Babylon, Assyria, Syria, Palestine, Arabia, Egypt, Sumer and Elam were the centres of ancient civilizations. The people of the Indus Valley had intimate relations with the people of Sumer and trade relations with Egypt and Crete.¹⁷⁰

In the 3rd century BC, Ashoka's empire was widely stretched from Afghanistan to the Indonesian Peninsula. Once Ashoka embraced Buddhism, a belief system deduced from the religious movement in Vedic tradition, it spread widely in Asia from Afghanistan to the Indonesian Peninsula. Thus, the Indian-Arab relationship has been on a significant development with the massive movement of people between India and the Arab Peninsula due to pilgrimage and labor migration. By the 6th century, Arabistan or Arabia emerged as an important center of trade and commerce, which connected three continents in terms of exchange of goods, spices, slaves and culture.¹⁷¹ Mecca became the destination of an annual pilgrimage.¹⁷² Thus, Arab traders, including Muhammad who later became a Prophet, were trading old Indian goods and spices, and they knew the Indian culture and people at some extent and in a similar way, Indian traders knew about Arabia at some extent. For example, the various stories of Panchatantra and tales from Jatakas (Buddhist tales) were translated into Persian by Borzūya in 570 and then later by Ibn al-Muqaffa in 750 CE into Arabic.¹⁷³ Thus, ever since, both Indians and Arabs have never been foreign to each other. Later on, the Arabian traders, with the rise of Islam, built their permanent settlements on the western

¹⁶⁸ Ehtesham Bin Hasan, "The Impact of Indian Thought on Arabian Society before Islam," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 46 (1985): 630.

¹⁶⁹ Hasan, 630.

¹⁷⁰ P N Chopra, "India and the Arab World: A Study of Early Cultural Contacts," JStor, 1983, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45071864>.

¹⁷¹ Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 14.

¹⁷² Lapidus, 14.

¹⁷³ Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *Encyclopedia of the Literature of Empire* (Infobase Publishing, 2010), 213.

coast of India during the era of Chera Kingdom, which played an essential role in the exchange of Indo-Arab cultural relations.¹⁷⁴

In the Arab world, a new social, religious, and political framework was formed after the advent of Islam, which was founded by the prophet Muhammad, who used to be a trader until the prophethood was conferred upon him. Prophet Muhammad gathered tribes under the rule of the city of Yatrib (Madinah) in 629 AD, after eight years of constant battle with the Meccans. His Muslim disciples spread this new socioeconomic and political order across the Irano-Semitic area. According to Marshall Hodgson, this shift is the result of cultural complexity in the Irano-Semitic area, which has resulted in the transition of the Irano-Semitic structure into a new system known as the Islamicate structure or new socio-political order, which has supplanted the previous system.

The intrusion of Islam into Irano-Semitic society and the genesis of a new social order. In Iran, in the Fertile Crescent, in Arabia, the way was being prepared, as it turned out, for the new order. First came the shaking up of the old Sasanian political order; but the central event of the period was the advent of Muhammad and his followers' rising to the power from Nile to Oxus and even beyond.

The first period of Islamicate civilization proper: A classical civilization under the Marwanid and earlier 'Abbasid' caliphates. Islamicate society formed a single vast state, the caliphate, with an increasingly dominant single language of science and culture, Arabic. The Islamic religion was being given its classical formulation; Muslims, Christians, Jews and Mazdeans were renovating and weaving together the lettered traditions of several pre-Islamic backgrounds into a creative multiple flowering.

Establishment of an international community spreading beyond the Irano-Semitic areas. The great expansion of Islamicate society was based on a decentralization of power and culture, in many courts and in two major languages, Persian and Arabic.¹⁷⁵

Islam became a global society during the Abbasid period. The Umayyad dynasty stretched the Islamic kingdom from the Balkans to the Hindu-Kush in 661 CE. Between 750 and 833, the Abbasids enhanced the reputation and strength of the Islamic empire, encouraging trade, adab, tahzib, and science, notably during the reigns of al-Mansur, Harun al-Rashid, and al-Ma'mun, which Marshall Hodgson considers to

¹⁷⁴ Avijeet Bhattacharya, *Journeys on the Silk Road Through Ages—Romance, Legend, Reality* (Zorba Books, 2017), 41.

¹⁷⁵ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam. 1*, 96.

be "full swing Islamicate civilisation."¹⁷⁶ Al-Rashid is remembered as the ideal great monarch in the stories of the *Thousand and One Nights*.¹⁷⁷ In the time of al-Rashid, Baghdad appeared as the center of *ilm* or knowledge wherein Natural Sciences and Metaphysics were also the focus of their studies. "The most famous works of medicine, mathematics, and astronomy, especially, were translated: probably first from Pahlavi and Syriac but then also from Sanskrit and Greek."¹⁷⁸ It drew a large number of non-Muslims for the aim of obtaining an education. Many academics traveled to the place in order to translate existing Axial-Age literature into Arabic. As a result, the Muslim world rose to prominence as a center for research, development, and education. This type of setting emphasized the development of adab culture, which bolstered communication and literature. Son of Al-Rashid al-Ma'mun, eventually founded *Bayt al-Hikmah*, which at the time looked to be a world-class library.¹⁷⁹ This period is also known as the Golden Age of Islam in world history.

Cultural exchange was a two-way activity throughout the Abbasid period. It disseminated and communicated as much knowledge as possible in the sciences, the arts, religion, philosophy, social and cultural values, and other fields. This did not just apply to the Arabian Peninsula, but also to the entire Eurasian continent.

Due to the continuing translation movement led by Harun al-Rashid and subsequently al-Ma'mun, this development was taking place in Baghdad. Medicine, Mathematics, Astronomy, and Literature were among the works translated into Arabic. Indeed, Islamic rulers and thinkers were aware of India's vast resources. Harun al-Rashid and al-Ma'mun support the *Bayt al-Hikmah* (House of Wisdom) academy, which seeks knowledge in Greek and Indian traditions. They summoned Indian pundits (scholars) to show their mastery of mathematics, medicine, astronomy, and philosophy.¹⁸⁰ Ibn Sina, Ibn Farabi, Ibn Rushd, and Ibn Arabi made significant contributions to Indic and Greek science, literature, and philosophy by disseminating and expanding Axial-Age knowledge.

¹⁷⁶ Hodgson, 91–92.

¹⁷⁷ Hodgson, 92.

¹⁷⁸ Hodgson, 298.

¹⁷⁹ Hodgson, 298.

¹⁸⁰ Rajendra M. Abhyankar, *West Asia and the Region: Defining India's Role* (Academic Foundation, 2008), 225.

Panchatantra is a work of classical literature that is regarded as a book of wisdom, and it was translated into Arabic as *Kalila va Dimna* by Abdullah bin al-Muqaffa in the 8th century. It became well-known throughout Europe after being translated into Arabic, Hebrew, Latin, Spanish, and Italian. The tales of *Alf wa Layla* (The Thousand Nights) may be found in *Jataka* literature (tales) from ancient India.¹⁸¹

As early as the 8th century, the Muslims got interested in all the learnings of the Hindus. The great Abbasid Caliphs, Harun-al-Rashid and Mamun-al-Rashid, set up an Academy in Baghdad to know the rich heritage of the past, particularly of the Greeks and the Indians. They invited the *Pundits* from India, who liberally showered their learning in mathematics, medicine, astronomy and metaphysics. The Arabic numerals which the world knows today are in fact the product of Indian genius, who brought about a revolutionary change in mathematics through their discovery of zero and digits. The stories of *Alif-Laila*, *The Tales of a Thousand Nights*, could be traced, at least some of them, to the Panch Tantra. Later, Al-Beruni opened the eyes of the Muslims to the cultural heritage of the Hindus and to their scientific achievements by translating not one but 27 of the Sanskrit works and by writing his magnum opus, *Al-Hind* (Indica) running into 700 folios. The mystic trend of the *Bhakti* movement merged harmoniously with the Sufi doctrine of love of God and service to man. The interaction of the two resulted in leveling down the barriers of caste, creed and class taking the stand on the bed-rock of humanity.¹⁸²

Ahmad Daisy, who wrote a PhD thesis on Indo-Arabic cultural exchange, writes in his dissertation:

...many astronomical were translated into Arabic that time include: Aryabhata (in Arabic Arjabhad) by Aryabhat of Kusumpura; Khandakhadyaka (in Arabic Al-Arkand) by Brahamagupta... Many Sanskrit astronomical terms were Arabicized and freely used by Arab astronomers in their treaties, for example-kardaja (Karamajya, Sanskrit) was used and later replaced by Arabic Witr Mustawi then Jib (Jiva, Sanskrit), auj (Uch, Sanskrit) were used by earlier Arab astronomers.¹⁸³

Some of the stories which have been mentioned in the dissertation of Ahmad Daisy were “*Sindbad Kabir*, *Sindbad Sagheer*, *Kitabul Badd*, *Kitab Baunasef wa Balohar*, *Kitab Bonasef*, *Kitab Adabul Hind wa al-Sindh*, *Kissa Hubute Adam*, *Kitab Turuk*, *Kitab Dabak Hindi* (on Man and women), *Kitab Suwerum*, *Kitab Shanaq fid Tadbeer*,

¹⁸¹ Ahmed Daisy, “Development of Indo Arabic Literature and the Contribution of Dr Sayeedur Rahman al a Zmi al Nadwi to al Baas al Islami,” *University*, 2015, 30, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in:8080/jspui/handle/10603/93172>.

¹⁸² Abhyankar, *West Asia and the Region*, 225.

¹⁸³ Daisy, “Development of Indo Arabic Literature and the Contribution of Dr Sayeedur Rahman al a Zmi al Nadwi to al Baas al Islami,” 30–31.

Kitab Baidba (on wisdom and knowledge) and *Kitab Utur Mashrubat*,”. These were translated from Indic literature to Arabic.”¹⁸⁴

There is an excellent work done by the Turkish scholar Rasih Güven on Indo-Islamic cultural relation. He has listed in Indic works, which have Arabic translation. He argues that Sufism was inspired by Indic mysticism and asceticism as well. This study also finds that mediation techniques, compassion, love, and middle path were the core practices of both Bhakti and Sufi traditions. In my further research, I will try to project the Buddhist-Network and link it with Islam.

Hindu and Manichian mystics who had renounced the world made travels in Iraq and other Islamic countries. These travelling monks in their turn influenced Muslim Sufis and so also have the Buddhist ascetics influenced Muslim Sufis. It is they who have spread the life story of Buddha as a symbol of asceticism. Another important point worth mentioning in this connection is that more than a thousand years before the rise of Islam, Buddhism had spread in Turkestan that is Balkh, the birth place of Maulana Jalalu'I-Din, and Bukhara and also beyond the Oxus river (Mawara'un-Nahr. It had many famous temples. The temples of Balkh were especially famous. "One such Naw Bahar (New Monastery) whose banner could be seen from a distance of 100 Koş (200 miles).¹⁸⁵

The mystic trends of the Bhakti movement merged harmoniously with the Sufi doctrine of the love of God and service of humanity. Thus, Bhakti develops more than *bhajna* or worship, devotion or love of God, prayer. This term is a historical term associated with a particular period in Indian history, and it is considered as a new phase of social and spiritual growth and evolution. It is also represented as a cultural movement appearing in various forms of expression and parallel in various regions of South Asia and Western Asia. The movement and cultural expressions were centered on God as singular and their approach was mystic.

The Bhakti saints like Nanak (founder of Sikhism) traveled to Punjab, Kabir in Banaras, and Chaitanya (*Saguni*) in Bengal to convey to people a mystic approach to God. They composed thousands of songs, couplets, verse dialogues and narratives in which they preached a new type of devotion and means of worshipping God. These compositions expand through oral-performative tradition. Thus, over time, it changes

¹⁸⁴ Daisy, 39.

¹⁸⁵ Rasih Güven, “Indo-Islamic Cultural Relations,” *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, 1990, 207, https://doi.org/10.1501/Dtcfder_0000000819.

and takes a unique shape. Sufi, on the other hand, goes hand in hand with Bhakti. Both have now a monotheistic God through which they interact with each other. It attracted many marginalized sections of societies.

4.1.1. From Kabir to Akbar: Sulh-e Kul to Muhabbat-e Kul

Interestingly, there are many similarities between Kabir and the Mughal king Akbar.¹⁸⁶ These similarities are my own observations. Kabir and Akbar, both names are derived from the Arabic language. Kabir means great, and Akbar means the greatest. Both were illiterate but they were cosmopolitan in their way of thinking.

A Muslim family brought up Kabir, but he uttered poetry in Hindavi and frequently used pre-existing Indic names to represent God, for example, *Hari* and *Ram*, and he also used Arabic and Persian. On the other hand, Akbar was a Muslim but married a Hindu woman. He gave space to his wife to practice her faith. His court was vibrant in terms of religious and cultural differences. Contrary to Akbar, his son Jahangir was educated, and he deviated from his father's not-so-orthodox religious policies.

Nevertheless, what I want to highlight here is that religion is one aspect of civilization. Civilization goes much beyond religion, so in this understanding, perhaps Hodgson uses the term Islamicate civilization rather than Islamic civilization. Many scholars still misunderstand Islamicate terms, and they think that it is Islamic terminology. Furthermore, I would like to highlight here my understanding of civilization, which I understand from Hodgson, that there were many civilizations in the Axial Age. But in the Post-Axial Age, and especially in the Technical Age, there is a single civilization, yet many cultures. Why do I call it a single civilization? It is because now, not a single community or society is standing in isolation. In our time, all *umran bedawis* are connected to *umran hadhari*, and *umran hadhari* is expanding continuously. It is better to call Hindu-Network, Muslim-Network, Christian-Network, or Buddhist-Network than Hindu civilization, Muslim civilization, Christian civilization, or Buddhist civilization. For example, there was never a Hindu or Vedic civilization in the Indian subcontinent, nor a Buddhist civilization. It is essential to delineate the manner I perceive what civilization is in order to clearly convey the significant of my projection

¹⁸⁶ Akbar is the title given to the Mughal king Abu'l-Fath Jalal-ud-din (transliteration!) Muhammad because of his generosity and justice for all caste, creed, and faith. He has been well known since then as Akbar.

of love in the context of civilization. I draw the civilization interpretation from Hodgson that it is a process or a continuous strive to achieve its highest level, love or *muhabbat-e kul*. Hodgson highlights that sometimes one person reaches the highest level of civilization and inspires society. Kabir is such a person.

Sometimes the thoughts of great figures such as the Buddha or Isaiah came to be directly accepted, in principle, as the creative springs of the new traditions and as sources of inspiration among even illiterates. Often new figures and new leadership intervened, launching relatively independent traditions.¹⁸⁷

The Bhakti movement is a phenomenon which was inspired by series of civilizational exemplars. It appeared in pre-modern Indian as a process which develops a conscience of co-existence. Kabir becomes a very significant exemplar in pre-modern India that one can be neither Muslim nor Hindu or can be both. He paved the way for many people and later for Akbar and Abu'l Fazl.

Kabir's perspective of religion and religiosity has inspired Harbans Mukhia, a medieval Indian history scholar. He has delivered several talks on Kabir and Abu'l Fazl. He has published several essays about Kabir. Mukhia believes that Bhakti and Sufi philosophers affected Akbar considerably, leading him to adopt a secular or *sulh-e kul* approach in statecraft and religious matters.¹⁸⁸ The term secular in the Indian context does not mean against religion. Instead, it gives the space for all faiths to establish communication so that a society, a nation, or a state could prosper. In his knowledge, Abu'l Fazl, the architect of *sulh-e kul* in the court of Akbar, was very much influenced by Kabir because Abu'l Fazl's father was also inspired by Kabir. It was his father who informed Abu'l Fazl about Kabir.¹⁸⁹ Designed by Abu'l Fazl and Akbar, the *sulh-e kul* was a civilizational project that was in the perception of many ulema was against Islam or seen as a new religion.

Guru Nanak was the contemporary of Kabir. He was also a significant Bhakti thinker of that time. He moved from central India to Punjab with his Muslim companion, singing and playing music and writing poetry. Nanak's poetry was collected and

¹⁸⁷ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam. 1*, 125.

¹⁸⁸ Harbans Mukhia, "Lessons for Our Turbulent Times from Kabir and Akbar," *The Wire*, October 12, 2015, <https://thewire.in/culture/recalling-the-lessons-of-kabir-and-akbar-for-these-turbulent-times>.

¹⁸⁹ Live Baatcheeet, *Prof. Harbans Mukhia, JNU, on Kabir | ARSD College, DU, Part-2*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mNaZT0Ukd4>.

compiled into a book called Guru Granth Sahib. It is the sacred book of the Sikh community today.

At the beginning of the 16th century, Sikhism emerged as a new religion in Punjab due to the strong Bhakti movement. Guru Nanak (b. 1469), the founder of Sikhism, has served as an inspiration for people to respect all religious communities. He travelled to Punjab with a Muslim companion in the mid-15th century, but after his death, his followers established a new religion, called Sikhism. Nanak preached a very pure ethic grounded in a strict monotheism beyond ongoing religious practices.¹⁹⁰ But such a universalist approach was not satisfactory to all orthodox Hindus and all orthodox Muslims.¹⁹¹

On the one hand, it was not acceptable for traditional orthodox Muslims to go beyond religious practices. On the other hand, for orthodox Hindus, their dominance and their constructed tradition of caste practice appeared at stake. This was reason for the conflict between Hindus and Muslims in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The Universalist orientation of Sufi and Bhakti moved Akbar to appreciate their significance in the society. Akbar was the third emperor of the Mughal dynasty in India whose reign lasted almost half a century from 1556 to 1605. He showed respect for the Sufi pirs and Bhakti saints because of their Universalist tendencies. It is believed that Akbar also gave respect to Sikh Gurus who fought against the Mughal in the beginning.

Akbar brought some crucial reforms in the first years of his reign for non-Muslims. He showed respect for other faiths which appeared to some 'ulama' as less of a Shariah-oriented rule.¹⁹² He abolished trade and market taxes for non-Muslims, which were questionable from a Shariah viewpoint, and he also removed the *jizya* tax on non-Muslims.¹⁹³

Akbar kept bringing changes in his state policies. He eliminated the slave trade, started charity works for the needy, built hospitals and caravanserais along the highways for people and traders, and surveillance groups against official oppressions. It is believed that sometimes Akbar used to go to the people in disguise to learn about people's

¹⁹⁰ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1, 69.

¹⁹¹ Hodgson, 69.

¹⁹² Hodgson, *The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times*, 71.

¹⁹³ Hodgson, 71.

concerns. He established libraries and promoted art, architecture and music, which served as a source of employment for artisans and musicians. He invited in his court not only Muslim *ulemas* but also non-Muslim pundits and scholars. For these reasons, people started believing that Akbar was not an ordinary person. They called him Akbar –the Great.

Furthermore, similar to the values of Indic people, he also showed compassion for animals. Akbar gradually gave up hunting and flesh in food. "He goes much further at the moral level. He forbade the slaughter of animals on certain days, his own birthday, and certain areas held sacred by Hindus."¹⁹⁴ These pleased the Jains and upper-caste Hindus.

Akbar was very patient with the traditional-minded people to bring change in them. He gradually banned child marriage and the practice of Sati-Partha, the burning widow with her husband's corpse, and he encouraged widows to remarry.¹⁹⁵ He stopped Hindu women from converting to Islam to marry Muslim men.¹⁹⁶ All religious sects, including Sunnis, Shi'is, Hindus, and Buddhists, as well as Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians, were accommodated by Akbar. He invited members from all of these groups to his court and provided financial support to the construction of temples for many faiths. "In this way, he put into reality a universalist perspective in religion, which was an important part of the court's inter-confessional cultural climate."¹⁹⁷

Some famous courtiers were also interested in his religious quest and moral improvement. It was none other than his historian and advisor Abu'l Fazl, a scholar with a wide range of viewpoints, who was present, together with his father and brother.

4.1.2. Abu'l Fazl: Sufism and Civilization

Abu'l Fazl learned religious independence from his father. He respected his father's guidance, but he never ceased his anguished personal search for the resolution of spiritual problems. He had even faced many attacks and criticism from the rest of the *ulama* for his principles.

¹⁹⁴ Hodgson, 71.

¹⁹⁵ Hodgson, 72.

¹⁹⁶ It is important to note that such reforms was much influential in cities like Delhi, Agra only.

¹⁹⁷ Hodgson, *The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times*, 73–77.

According to Hodgson, "We may argue that Abu'l Fazl was the historian for those who were predisposed to Sufi metaphysics, just as Tabari was the historian for the Sharrah-minded and Ibn-Khaldun was the historian for the Faylasufs. Abu'l Fazl, like Ibn Khaldun, tried to apply the Philosophers' ideas of timeless generalization to the processes of historical development. Abu'l Fazl attempted to categorize history and worldly civilisation in terms of unitive mystical thinking."¹⁹⁸ In addition, Hodgson regarded Abu'l Fazl as part of the evolution of moral administration and society. As a result, in his work *A'in-e Akbar*, Abu'l Fazl depicted Akbar as a flawless man or qutb (the highest rank in Sufism).¹⁹⁹ His contribution to Akbar's statecraft and the depiction of civilisation based on the King as leader of art and science is the most significant. Hodgson argues that Abu'l Fazl's literary representation of Akbar's statecrafts was one avenue for Akbar's tremendous impact on his dynasty's succeeding rulers.²⁰⁰ As a result, Abu'l Fazl's achievement, like Tabari's and Ibn Khaldun's, was noteworthy in his day.

Both Ibn-Khaldun and Abulfazl described at length the Islamicate culture of their time. But whereas Ibn-Khaldun, writing in the Arid Zone and in the Middle Periods when civilization was always threatened with being reduced to a minimal agrarian-urban symbiosis, stressed the social mechanisms on which civilization could be built up, Abulfazl, writing in a wellwatered region and in the time of the great gunpowder empires, stressed the material and spiritual potentialities of civilization once it was developed. Islamic conscience, especially as that conscience faced the age of the gunpowder empires: how to reconcile the Sufi stress on the inward life, to which the course of history often seemed almost irrelevant, but which had come largely to dominate sophisticated intellectual and imaginative life, with the sense of historical accomplishment embodied in the great absolute empires and their refined high culture.²⁰¹

Abu'l Fazl expresses a personal vision based on empirical knowledge. His literary expression projects advancement of conscience on how the complex society of the Indian subcontinent can live justly in Islamdom.

4.2. Indian Culture within Islamdom

Indian culture and civilization have flourished with immense assimilative power. The Greeks, Sakas, and Hunas were easily absorbed within the fold of its population.

¹⁹⁸ Hodgson, 182.

¹⁹⁹ Hodgson, 72.

²⁰⁰ Hodgson, 80.

²⁰¹ Hodgson, 73–74.

However, it did not happen with the Turk-Afghan invaders who maintained their distinct identity. But the long association of the two groups and the demand for peace and security coupled with the broad outlook of several people did create interaction and synthesis. This interaction and synthesis are exciting. But, it was not appropriate for some group of people for Islam to project everyone as equal in the eyes of God.

On the other hand, nor the lofty ideals of toleration of the various creeds of Hinduism were accepted by Islam. Therefore, without undergoing any radical changes in their beliefs, the Bhakti Movement prepared the ground where the two could meet.

The Bhakti movement is treated chiefly as a literary movement or, at best, an ideological phenomenon that had religion as the basis of its inspiration. This has mainly happened due to lack of emphasis on social history, and hence the socio-economic factors which aimed at bringing in a change have been generally ignored. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that every religious reform movement has a specific purpose. It rises out of particular socio-economic conditions and aims to uplift the unprivileged and oppressed sections of society. A study of the Bhakti Movement with this emphasis would be constructive in understanding this movement in its proper context.²⁰²

Between the 12th and 16th centuries, there was a fall of Sanskrit cosmopolis and the rise of vernacular due to the restriction of the use of Sanskrit language to particular communities. In this understanding of Eaton and Pollock, I find Amir Khusrau as the pioneer and later Kabir as an exemplar of vernacular, and whose poetry in vernacular became the most recited and the most influential in the Northern Indian subcontinent. In contrary to the positions of most of the historians and philosophers of history, Sheldon Pollock, Richard Eaton, and Bruce B Lawrence argued that Islam was the one aspect of the change but the crucial reason for the change lies in language, trade network, and high culture. They understand that if Islam could have been the main reason for the change then it could have followed Arabic as language. However, when we analyze the change in the Indian subcontinent, we find that Persian is more influential than Arabic.

4.2.1. Development of Spirituality, Morality, and Civility: *Adab* Culture

²⁰² Rekha Pande, "The Bhakti Movement—An Interpretation," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 48 (1987): 214.

The historical achievement of this period was the significant spiritual and moral development along with a sense of civility in ordinary people. It is the ‘*adab*’ culture. In this period, people generally talked about coexistence. Their approach was egalitarianism and chanting God to purify the heart. They developed a sense of civility, cosmopolitanism and expanding the scope of humanity.

City played a significant role in this development. City was the centre or *bazaar* not only for exchanging goods but also for learning languages, ideas, cultures, and differences. Sufis emerged as a densely cultural set of such practices of civility due to urban development which promoted engagement with urban life.²⁰³

Kabir, who was in Banaras, the cosmopolitan city of his time, used the term *bazaar* in this context. He was doing business of knowledge and wisdom. He says *Kabira Khara bazaar me sabki mange Khair*, that is, Kabir is standing in the market for the well-being of everyone. So here, *the bazaar* represents the city which is the center of gathering.

Linguistic creativity facilitated content translation, transmission and nourished its variation.²⁰⁴ The Persian language got mixed up with Indic language, which appeared in the Indian subcontinent as a new fascinating language, first in oral and vernacular forms and then in written literary genres often cultivated in courtly milieus.²⁰⁵ This process of language assimilation or linguistic development nurtured ethical and lyrical modes of sociability and thus, the result of the civilizing process opened a wide range of discourse such as inner cultivation, participation in intellectual debates, and outward etiquette.²⁰⁶ Social etiquette becomes crucial for humanity and such is called the sense of civility. The sense of civility developed within the society, called *adab*, helped people to connect with various communities. Lawrence says that *adab* as cultural and behavioural refinement permeated the networks of trade, language, Sufism, and scholarship in which Muslims interacted with strangers at home and abroad.²⁰⁷

Such civility is sociologically relevant for its habitualized dimension reflected in self-composure, modulated exposure, and communicative skills suitable to build connectedness out of local engagement. As aptly summarized by Green, ‘in showing how the seeker could come closer to God, partake in his knowledge

²⁰³ Salvatore, “Sufi Articulations of Civility, Globality, and Sovereignty,” 159.

²⁰⁴ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2, 293–96.

²⁰⁵ Salvatore, “Sufi Articulations of Civility, Globality, and Sovereignty,” 159.

²⁰⁶ Salvatore, 159.

²⁰⁷ Lawrence, *The Bruce B. Lawrence Reader*, 5–6.

and in some cases in his power, these were doctrines with immense socio-political potential'.²⁰⁸

Hodgson understands *adab* in terms of cosmopolitan outlook.²⁰⁹ It means that the *adab* culture is the development of human relations. We can also understand it in terms of the network developed by traders, Sufis, and Bhakti saints among people, which goes beyond the boundary of an individual community. Hodgson projects civility, morality, and spirituality as the quality of life and the achievement for humanity throughout history. This is Hodgson's understanding of *adab*.

If one can distinguish two poles between which range our criteria for judging the quality of human life, a pole at which moral relationships among people take precedence over all else, and a pole at which what matters is the excellence of learning and art and the fine use and appreciation of human resources, in however few out of a given population, then the Shari'ah-minded stood at the moralistic pole and the *adibs* very nearly at the other...*Adab* cultivation entailed, in principle, a comprehensive synthesis of all high culture. It made a certain place for the Shari'ah-minded learning and its requirements, and gave a certain honour to the 'ulama: ; in turn, some of the 'ulama' made a point of cultivating the social graces and even appeared at court. Some touch of knowledge of Falsafah was an asset to an *adib*. But *adab* had its own unmistakable spirit.²¹⁰

Economic development brought considerable changes in the behavior of people. They could travel, read and also maintain themselves distinguished and deemed essential in the political affairs and dwell in cities. They were called civics and elites. Cities become the nodes to integrate the countryside and constituting themselves as corporate powers. According to Salvatore, political and economic elites play a crucial role in developing local and long-distance networks.²¹¹ Furthermore, he says that the “artisans and traders often shared this social imaginary and capitalized on its civilizing prestige to enter relations with urban elites. They also tried to integrate within court milieus.”²¹²

The inner codes of interaction at court largely rested on the notion of *adab* and related practices, representing the modality of ethical behavior in the 'worldly culture of the polite classes.'²¹³

²⁰⁸ Salvatore, “Sufi Articulations of Civility, Globality, and Sovereignty,” 159–60.

²⁰⁹ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam. 1*, 445.

²¹⁰ Hodgson, 551.

²¹¹ Salvatore, “Sufi Articulations of Civility, Globality, and Sovereignty,” 159–60.

²¹² Salvatore, 160.

²¹³ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam. 1*, 239.

Adab is a knowledge legacy that pre-Islamic Arab custom and Persianate court culture passed down to the Islamicate civilisation. It was made up of a class of literati, courtiers, and secretaries who nurtured the ethical and practical norms of a virtuous and beautiful existence. This tradition also placed a premium on self-awareness as well as knowledge of statecraft and administration.

Literature and poetry, and the modes of their cultivation, figured prominently within *adab*, which became the high genre of mastery of forms, codifying the right way to order and invest interests and values (both ethical and aesthetic) within social commerce.²¹⁴

Sufi practices emerged as a systematic practices like the Bhakti of the first millennium in the Indian subcontinent. The pedagogies of Sufi practice merged with the tradition of *adab* flourished along with hadith moralism. “As a result, the *adab*-tradition became a diverse source of rules of civic intercourse.”²¹⁵ Thus, the culture appeared in the age as a civilization element.

This participation of non-aristocratic strata in *adab* supported Sufi efforts to facilitate an effective blending between the *adab* of self-composure and hadith moralism. The process enabled bundling together cultured life forms considered adequate to respond to Islam’s core religious message without falling into the trap of assuming it totalizing in mundane terms. Overall, the culture of *adab* and the role played by the Sufis in it contributed to a civilizing process.²¹⁶

4.2.2. Social Transformation

The advent of Islam in India profoundly affected its political, religious, and socio-cultural life. The history of medieval India began as ‘confrontation, shifted to cooperation, and then followed by interaction and synthesis between the two forces. This interaction and synthesis are fascinating. Face to face with the egalitarian social ideal of Islam where all were equal in the eyes of God. However, the social rigidity of the Hindus continued to exist along side it.

On the other hand, the lofty ideals of toleration of Hinduism’s various religious sects and creeds were not accepted by Islam. Thus, without undergoing any radical changes in their beliefs, the Bhakti movement prepared the two communities to meet. Attempts

²¹⁴ Salvatore, “Sufi Articulations of Civility, Globality, and Sovereignty,” 160.

²¹⁵ Salvatore, 161.

²¹⁶ Salvatore, 161.

were made to give a fresh lease of life to the decadent religion by reviving the past and interpreting it in the light of the new socio-economic forces, giving rise to new ideas. The Bhakti movement of the medieval period was an ideological manifestation of the socio-economic realities of the time.²¹⁷

Following are the terms and concept of Bhakti period that brought a tremendous social change in the Indian subcontinent:

Nirguna Brahman: Nirgun Brahman is the formless God or God without quality, whose quality cannot be defined, rather it can only be described. For Nirguni, it was not clear who God was. God is transcendent. Perhaps, they believed that God is one, but we call Him with different names. For example, Kabir uses the word Ram for God, which is loosely used in Vaishnava tradition of Saguna God. But, Kabir's Ram was a generic name for God.

Saguna Brahman: Saguna Brahman or God is the God whose quality can be visualized, either as an idol, fire, air, or other forms. It was a revolutionary step in society to idolize God, like Krishna or Rama or any form of God, by having an idol to worship at home. People did not need to go to temples because economically weaker classes and lower castes were restricted from entering a temple.

Bhakti saints: Mostly, saints were from low-caste or lower strata of the upper caste in the 15th and 16th centuries. They were using vernacular and colloquial language to write poetry and communicate with people. That made them famous and attractive.

Methodology of Bhakti-Sufi saints: Prem marga (way of love) and *Gyan* or *jnana marga* (path of knowledge)

Saint showed a simple path to God. Temples were not required to worship; sacrifices, offerings, and rituals were not obligated from worshippers. They could only chant in their remembrance of God to deliver good and goodness. They also focused on deeds by helping and guiding the needy. Vedic texts were not anymore required to reach God. So people bypassed the temples, priests, and expensive rituals.

However, Bhakti was neither successful in abolishing the caste system nor the patriarchy. Thus, it could not become very successful in practice. Yet, it opened the

²¹⁷ Rekha Pande, "The Social Context of the Bhakti Movement-A Study in Kabir," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 46 (1985): 230.

window for the lower caste to imagine, think, develop spirituality and morality, or become better. It enriched the vernacular literature, empowered illiterate and impoverished people to think and resist.

4.2.3. The Linguistic Transformation: The Rise of Vernacular Culture

Between the 15th and mid-17th centuries, the Bhakti movement expanded from south India to northern India. It also gave birth to many religious sects that were not divided by caste. They primarily expressed themselves theologically, literarily, and ritually in vernacular languages. It was a time when Axial Age knowledge began to appear in common languages, and high culture that had previously been limited to the court or city began to become vernacular as well. That is to say, vernacular culture became high culture as well.

Earlier Indo-Muslim rulers had already sometimes encouraged the development of the Sanskrit literary traditions in the medium of the various vernacular languages that had come to be used; this was further encouraged by the Timuri court. In any case, relations to the indigenous heritage were always a live issue... Muslims and Hindus often shared the same arts and learning. Especially in northern India, many Hindus read Persian (and some Muslims read Hindi); the cultivated painting and, to a degree, architecture of Muslims and Hindus, their music, and in many polished circles their manners also gradually came to be essentially at one; and (whatever Indic elements might be included) this unity was on terms set by the Muslims and mostly in close continuity with the cultural forms of Islamdom at large.²¹⁸

Sheldon Pollock starts his book, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*, with a quote from Gramsci: "I feel that if language is understood as an element of culture, and thus of general history, a key manifestation of intellectuals' "nationality" and "popularity," this study is not pointless and merely erudite."²¹⁹ Pollock detects a dramatic linguistic change in the second millennium AD, which he dubs the "vernacular millennium or vernacular epoch."²²⁰ As a result, he coined the term literarization to characterize the transformation of everyday language into literary language.²²¹

²¹⁸ Hodgson, *The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times*, 59–60.

²¹⁹ Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Univ of California Press, 2009), 1.

²²⁰ Sheldon Pollock, "India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000-1500," *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (1998): 42.

²²¹ Pollock, 41.

In the early years of the second millennium, Pollock witnessed a massive change across Eurasia, particularly in India and Europe. This change expresses itself in cultural practice, social identity formation, and political order, all of which have far-reaching and long-term consequences.²²² This is referred to as vernacularization by him. It's a period of transition during which the previous millennium's universalistic orders, institutions, and practices were gradually supplemented and replaced by localized variants.²²³

The transformation process is divided into two phases by Pollock. During the advent of the Common Era, the original Sanskrit language, which was only utilized for religious purposes, was revived as a code for literary and political expression. Sanskrit spread over most of Southern Asia, from Afghanistan to Java, as a literary language. The second point is that, around the millennium's turn, local speech variations emerged as dignified literary expressions, vying with Sanskrit for poetry and polity.²²⁴ Eventually, vernacular languages superseded cosmopolitan languages.

Power and cultural transformations begun in both Asia and Europe with rise of Islam. The social and political order had been completely replaced by the 17th century. The development of the local language was a result of the decentralization of authority, or the fragmentation of polities. According to Pollock, the early 2nd century saw a resurgence of commerce networks, which concentrated wealth in local power centers. The spread of Islam, on the other hand, provided fresh cultural impulses on its western and eastern boundaries.²²⁵

4.2.4. Vernacular: Language of Love

Nirmal Dass, who has translated the songs of Kabir titled *Songs of Kabir from the Adi Granth*, says that vernacular appears as *lingua franca* for the devotional poet in Northern India. They were using a particular style of language at that time which she says *santbhasha* or language of saints.²²⁶ Especially in India's northern and central part, one can find a similar language pattern in the poetry of that time, which is based on

²²² Pollock, 41.

²²³ Pollock, 41.

²²⁴ Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men*, 1.

²²⁵ Pollock, "India in the Vernacular Millennium," 42.

²²⁶ Nirmal Das, *Songs of Kabir from the Adi Granth* (USA: State University of New York Press, 1991), 23.

khari boli. It was drawn from various dialects of Hindi such as Avadhi, Rajasthani, Brajbhasha, Kosali, Bhojpuri, and with elements of Punjabi and Bengali. These Dialects were better known as Hindavi at that time.

4.2.5. Literalization of the Vernacular: The Vernacular Millennium

The important location for understanding the process of vernacularization, according to Pollock, is literary culture. Local languages are initially allowed to literacy through vernacularization, which Pollock refers to as literization.²²⁷ These languages are united and homogenized by being adapted to "literary" as defined by pre-existing global models (literarization). Languages eventually find their way into new territorialization and, in some cases, ethnicization efforts. Vernacular literary cultures progressively absorbed and transcended the previously dominant trans-local codes, aesthetic forms, and geo-cultural settings as a result of this process.²²⁸

These shifts in literary culture not only correspond to shifts in social identity, but they also appear to coincide with shifts in the perceived extent of political authority at times. Parallel to vernacularization, a previously dominating ambition to transregional control appears to have been superseded by more restricted, if not confined, power regimes. This was critical in the development of national states in various regions of the world, as well as the emergence of other types of polity that are now poorly understood.

Thus, unrecognized dialects became unified standards, diverse practice became homogenized culture, and undifferentiated space became conceptually ordered place as a result.²²⁹ Vernacularization ushered forth-new regional realms as a result of these developments.

²²⁷ Pollock, "India in the Vernacular Millennium," 42.

²²⁸ Pollock, 42-43.

²²⁹ Pollock, 42-43.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The Quest of Kabir: Conscience as Poetry in Pre-Modern India is my humble attempt to present a novel narrative of the Bhakti Movement in Indian history, with a specific focus on Kabir. Kabir, who epitomizes *muhabbate-e kul* (universal love), is the subject of my research from the standpoint of civilisation. That is what I want to do in my thesis, and I contend that Kabir's poetry symbolizes a civilizational metaphor or conscience reached in pre-modern India. To bolster my claim, I invoke Marshall G S Hodgson's projection of Islamicate civilization, which highlighted three figures in unity in the Indian subcontinent: Kabir, Akbar, and Abu'l Fazl. The Mughal Emperor Akbar and his advisor-historian Abu'l Fazl founded *sulh-e kul* (universal peace) in pre-modern India. Both wanted to establish *muhabbate-e kul*, which Kabir had envisioned. *Muhabbat-e-kul* represents a historical marker of Hodgson's neologism: Islamicate civilisation, at once associating with Islam but embracing non-Muslim resources in the quest of justice through love, since it supports an aspirational view of justice as the ultimate manifestation of love. Thus, Hodgson's neologism of Islamicate civilization embodies and justifies *muhabbate-e kul*.

I reconstructed the course of Hodgson's Islamicate civilisation, supplemented by Bruce B Lawrence's *barzakh* logic, by focusing on Kabir's poetry as a missing narrative. My interpretation of Kabir's poetry takes this method, and it has far-reaching consequences for South Asia's civilizational heritage. Imagining the Bhakti movement in Hodgson's timeline and projecting the change in the Indian subcontinent from Indic to Islamicate civilisation is a civilizational perspective. It is what I refer to as the transformation or metamorphosis of Indic civilisation into Islamicate civilization, or the cultural fusion of Islamic and Indic traditions. Kabir represents the transition, or *barzakh*, between the Indic and Islamic traditions. *Barzakh* is a Quranic word *barzakh*, refers to the distinction between salt and fresh water. As a result, it is a stumbling block. Bruce Lawrence, on the other hand, considers *barzakh* to be a civilizational and cosmopolitan force. Rather than a block or barrier, he sees this word as a bridge. According to him,

barzakh is a thin line that links two areas without allowing one to be diluted by the other. He refers to it as *Barzakh logic*. In academics, the *barzakh logic* may be extremely useful in overcoming the ongoing binary Hindu-Muslim or East-West conflict in contemporary culture, as well as in civilization studies, which will offer mankind a better chance.

My understanding of the transition of Indian culture into Islamicate civilisation, based on *barzakh logic*, goes beyond religious interpretation. It is not a matter of one religion being superior to another. Rather, it is Hodgson's complete civilizational projection of the Islamicate civilization that validates Abu'l Fazl's definition of *muhabate-e kul*. Islamicate civilization refers to the evolution of civilization throughout a large swath of Europe, Africa and Asia. It was influenced by Muslim rulers, Sufis, and traders, all of whom played an important part in linking human history, but it was not limited to the practice of Islam as a religion. It is a projection of humanity's overall development and mobility as a result of connectivity, whose foundation is Axial Age.

As a result, in Hodgson's view, the idea of civilisation is fluid and encompasses a wide range of human progress. This is a spiritual and moral awakening, a kind of growth that moves a person from being to becoming. My civilizational worldview goes from "*Being to Becoming*". We need to develop a sense of belonging (*asabiyya*), spirituality, politeness, morality, ethics, society, and laws, among other things. Linda Hess, in her book *The Bijak of Kabir*, beautifully articulates this "from being to becoming" *Vikar, sanskar, subhav, and swabhav* as the four stages of this procedure.

I emphasize the moral consciousness established in Kabir's poetry, as well as the birth of mankind, which is *asabiyya*. One of humanity's most remarkable achievements was *asabiyya*, or a sense of belonging. On this foundation, I develop a civilizational interpretation of pre-modern India's history as a process of achieving *nirvana*, taught by Buddha, or *al-ihsan*—to become a flawless man, in *tasawwuf*. It is what Aristotle refers to as virtue. Nirvana is the condition of humankind in which it no longer need religion, rules, and justice. Rather, a man becomes lawful, just, compassionate, moral, and ethical in his actions, both conscious and unconscious. *Asabiyya* is thus an important idea that requires further development. As a result, I invoke Ibn Khaldun's idea of *asabiyya* as a sense of belonging and expand it as an oceanic sensation that I term love, *prem*, or *ishq*. Therefore, my interpretation of the term "*asabiyya*" differs

from how scholars have traditionally used it to describe political occurrences from a sociological standpoint. I invoke it to develop the sense of belonging that will eventually become an oceanic feeling, or *ilm-al-umran* or *wahdat al-wujud*, or simply *ishq*. As the ultimate objective, humanity should strive for this oceanic sensation. I would like to relate it with *nirvana* as well. The *asabiyya*, the beginning of cultural union that expands as an oceanic sensation, is the consciousness created in people living together throughout history, according to this study. The Bhakti period is an expression of oceanic sentiment that created society's conscience, allowing Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews, and others to coexist. In order to discuss *nirvana*, *advaita*, *ana'l-haqq*, *wahdat al-wujud*, *ilm-al umran*, *muhabbat-e kul*, *madhahb-e ishq*, and *barzakh logic* in line, I shall work on this in my future studies.

What I mean by the metamorphosis of Indic into Islamicate is that Islamicate is a state of humanity that *asabiyya* develops in broad Asia, Europe, and Africa, in which the change occurs due to the diffusion and dissemination of the great knowledge of the Axial-Age in vernacular language, allowing everyone to achieve *al-ihsan* or *muhabbat-e kul*, as proposed by Abu'l Fazl. For integrating Quranic, Vedic, and Buddhist knowledge in common language, Kabir is the model of the vernacular millennium. Islam, both as a religion and as a new socio-political system, appears to play a significant role in this transformation.

Islam has had a tremendous impact on the course of history. It had an impact on a variety of civilizations. The protracted process of the Bhakti movement, which saw Indian society, literature, and culture enter a new phase of development and change, exemplifies this impact. In pre-modern India, the Bhakti Movement was a broad cultural movement that manifested itself in numerous kinds of artistic expression, including religion, philosophy, language, art, and literature. This movement was made feasible by the production of poetry in plain language, and Kabir and his poetry played a key part in the Islamdom as a result. This movement was not just intended against the Brahmanical system in the Indian subcontinent; rather, it was a continuous social movement with Islamic influence as a supporting factor that gave Indic culture a new direction.

This movement arose from changes in essential processes in the 11th and 12th centuries, when distinct castes emerged and regional languages and literature formed as a result

of the growth of cities, which linked numerous small groups. The Bhakti Movement accelerated the development of many regional languages, laying the groundwork for the development of modern Indian languages. As literature in regional languages began a new period of growth and development, it looked to be free of Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit. As a result, Indian literature and culture broke free from the constraints of Brahmanism and appeared to be heading in the direction of a more creative people's culture. Bhakti poetry is an expression of people's culture—their feelings in their languages—free of the formality of old poetics, Brahminical culture, and the courtly environment. The Bhakti Movement and its literature exhibit cultural awareness, ideals, and sensitivities that are more closely connected to the culture and society of their time than to ancient Indian culture and literature. As a result, Bhakti saints seemed to be dynamic in their thought in order to urge mankind to advance or to adopt a cosmopolitan viewpoint.

Kabir's poetry is a blend of Persian and several regional Indian languages known as Hindavi, and it has a wide appeal among Indian audiences. In many ways, Kabir and his poetry are part of our collective memory. It is a remembrance of a secular India, or, as I interpret Hodgson and Lawrence's projections, Kabir is Islamicate, cosmopolitan, or *barzakh*. As a Muslim, Kabir projects both his Muslim and his Indic or Hindu identities. He is the reminder of the Brahmanical structure's brutality and social corruption for subaltern society, as well as the message of peace, harmony, and love for mankind. Kabir is a symbol of coexistence for Hindus and Muslims alike. Most historians and people see him as the pinnacle of Hindu-Muslim harmony, as well as a symbol of modern secular India, cultural union of Indic and Islamic traditions, and South Asia's cosmopolitan legacy.

This research allows me to continue working on the cosmopolitan heritage of South Asia, or legacy of civilizational understanding *ishq* expressed in Buddha's *karuna* (compassion), Shankara's *advaita*, Hallaj's *ana'l-haqq*, Ibn Arabia's *wahdat al-wujud*, Kabir's *poetry*, Ibn Khaldun's *ilm al-umran*, Abu'l Fazl's *muhabbat-e kul*, Marshall Hodgson's *Islamicate*, and Bruce Lawrence's *barzakh logic*, with a focus on Buddhism, as an extension of my thesis. “*From Indic to Islamicate: The Cosmopolitan Legacy of South Asia with Special Reference to Buddhism*” is my potential topic for additional research.

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