Abhanga: A Marathi metre, also any metrical composition in this metre. The abhanga is the favourite metre of all Warkari poets since the thirteenth century and unlike classical Sanskrit-based metres it is native to Marathi speech and its colloquial forms. It is extremely flexible.

Allah: The Muslim and Arabic name of God.

Alvar: A saint-poet devoted to Lord Vishnu. Tradition recognizes twelve alvars between the sixth and the ninth centuries in the Tamil-speaking regions of south India, of whom Nammalvar is the best known.

Arti: Ritualistic Hindu prayer-service in which incense-sticks and flowers are offered to the divine accompanied with devotional singing and music.

Atman: Meaning the "self", also translated as the "soul" or "spirit," it is the innermost reality of a person, the animate and spiritual principle of life, not to be confused with gross individuality.

Avatarvada: The concept of reincarnation.

Bani: Language or speech.

Bhagvad Gita: Often also referred to in the abbreviated form as "the Gita": the "song of the Lord" that depicts the celebrated dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna during the Mahabharata war and a section of the Bhishmaparva, a chapter of the Hindu epic, Mahabharata.

Bhajan: Devotional singing.
Bhakti: From the Sanskrit root "bhaj," to share, from which is also derived the word "bhagvat," Lord. Here it is used to convey the sentiment of single-minded devotion, and the condition of the whole being of a devotee (bhakta,) whose mind and body are totally absorbed in the object of his worship and remain continually directed or oriented towards it. The object of such worship could be an anthropomorphic deity, a symbol, a name, an image, a concept, an abstraction, or the non-discursive or inconceivable "whole being" itself.

Bhakti-Marga: Marga means the "way", "path" or "method". The term refers to the path of devotion, or rather to devotion as the means to achieving God.

Bhakti Rasa: The term "rasa" in classical Sanskrit poetics means the predominant sentiment or emotion, the active feeling, in a particular work of art or activity. Here it would literally mean "the juice of Bhakti" or "(the uninterrupted flow of) the feeling of devotion".

Brahman: Infinite spirit. Usually translated as the "absolute", in the Vedic literature it means "prayer", or the power of the ritual word. In the Vedanta however, it comes to mean "the ultimate reality underlying the phenomenal existence that is vast, unqualified and imperishable." The infinite spirit is etymologically related to Brahma, the cosmic creator; they are differentiated in Sanskrit by gender, the infinite being neuter, the creator masculine.

Brahmin: The highest of the four castes of Hindu society, this priestly caste is considered pure and chaste. It enjoys an exclusive and privileged access to the scriptures — their recitation, interpretation, teaching and their use in conducting a religious ceremony.
Chandala: A group from among the outcaste section of society.

Daswandh: See page 175.

Fakeer: An Arabic word for a wandering ascetic.

Gaddi: A "seat of position". Literally however it would mean a "cushion used for sitting".

Gayatri: It is known as the most sacred mantra of the *Rig Veda*. The Brahmins have a sacred duty to recite it morning and evening.

Gazal: The rendering of romantic and soulful poetry in a specialized form of singing. Gazal-singing comes from the Islamic culture and its lyrics are set in the Urdu language.

Gopala: It means "cowherd" or "Cow-protector", and is a name popularly used to address the Lord Krishna. Gopala is thus God, the cowherd and his Bhaktas, His fellow cowherds. The cows signify the five senses and the cowherd the self that protects them.

Guna: It signifies the three qualities inherent in nature. Each of these three qualities collectively constitute nature. They are: lucidity (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*), and dark inertia (*tamas*). Together they form the basis of every aspect of phenomenal existence. For instance, the temperament of each individual depends upon the ratio in which these qualities (or "humours," as Dr. Johnson calls them in his play *Volpone*) prevail within him or her.

Guru: Teacher or spiritual guide.

Hari: Another name for Vishnu, Hari literally means "fawn-coloured" and in this sense is perhaps synonymous with "Pandurang", used as another
name for Vitthal by Tukaram and other Marathi poet-saints, and
sometimes by Kabir, Nanak and the other Sant poets.

Hatha-yoga: Developed by the Hindu teachers. Hatha yoga is a minutely
detailed literal and symbolic anatomy of the body. It is a
technique for attaining liberation through physical postures and
breathing exercises, often combined with meditation and
austerities.


Hukam: Divine will.

Jaziya: A tax paid by the non-Muslim subjects of a Muslim ruler.

Kirtana: The singing of religious songs with devotional fervour.

Krishna: "The dark one". One of the three (Rama, Krishna, and the Buddha,)
human avatars — reincarnations — of Vishnu. The divine
charioteer and guru of Arjuna who helped him recover his nerve
and overcome his self-conflict on the battlefield in the war in the
Mahabharata.

Linga: The phallic symbol of Lord Shiva worshipped largely by the shaivites.

Lingayats: Those who wear the "linga".

Maya: It signifies the power of creative illusion and magic. It is derived from
the Sanskrit root ma, which means "to measure", "to form". Maya in
the philosophical context refers to the phenomenal universe, the
ephemera of transient forms. As these forms are always changing,
going in and out of existence, they are illusory. But Maya is also
power — the power of bringing into form, the power of giving shape
to desire. In Bhakti literature, Maya is often personified as a powerful
female, who misleads people into craving and confusion

Mlechchha: "impure" or sullied. A common usage among the Brahmins in the past, while referring to those belonging to a lower caste, particularly the invading Muslims.

Mullah. A Muslim priest.

Nirguna. Throughout Indian religious history, saguna and nirguna designate two major modes of conceiving God or ultimate truth. Saguna is the concept which perceives God as one having physical form and/or attributes. Nirguna is the concept which perceives God as unmanifest, formless, and as an experience that is beyond the limits of human expression.

Om. A word and symbol of power, in Hindu mysticism. Om unfolds the finer sensibility and perception. It stands for cosmic harmony and presents the rhythm deeply underlying the spirit. See page 172-173.

Pauri: A Punjabi word meaning, a stanza.

Puranas: General name given to collections of Hindu myths in Sanskrit; for example, the Bhagavat Purana contains the stories of Krishna’s life on earth and the principles of Krishna Bhakti. Purana means old.

Puranic: Belonging to the Puranas.

Qawwali: An form of singing which has its origins in the Sufi school of mysticism. It generally has two participants who take the song forward through a series of questions and answers.

Qazi: A Muslim legal expert.

Raga: A raga is a unit of musical-notes whose arrangement is exclusive to it.
There are several ragas in the Indian system of classical music. The saint-poets of medieval India were in the habit of rendering and singing their compositions in a particular raga.

Ram • In Hinduism, the name of the seventh avatar of Vishnu, King of Ayodhya, hero of the Ramayana epic. In Bhakti literature, "Ram" is more often used as a synonym for God than as a specific reference to the Hindu deity of Ramayana.

Ragis • Singers of the Sikh community who sing kirtan based on verses from the Granth Saheb. Since the compositions are based upon (and sung in) particular ragas their singers are called Ragis.

Rhababis : Practising Muslims who sing kirtan based on the Gurbani verses.

Rishi : Sage, an ascetic of the highest order

Saguna . The school of Bhakti which advocates God as manifest. The saguna manifestations of God being the familiar deities of Hindu mythology, especially the chief incarnations of Vishnu, Ram, and Krishna.

Sahaj : That which is "simultaneously arisen" or "co-emergent". Sahaj is a paradoxical state of being in which the physical/material world and the spiritual world are experienced simultaneously, and hence (in so far as they represent duality,) they erase each other.

Sakhi : Stories surrounding the lives of the saint-poets, myths that are partly fact and partly fiction.

Samadhi : Spiritual state in which the meditating person loses all consciousness of the material world.

Sant : A saint.
Shabad: Literally the term means, "word". Here in the chapter on Nanak, it refers to the singing of devotional compositions, taken mostly from the Sant and Bhakti literature. Shabad-singing lays more stress upon the word and its meaning. See page 108-109.

Shaiva: Those who worship the Shiva the Lord of destruction.

Shloka: A couplet

Shudra: The last of the four main caste divisions of Hindu society. The Shudras were denied access to a temple in the past.

Tantrism: A religious cult. Tantrism brought the sublime conceptions of the Upanishads and the stark ideals of early Buddhism down to earth, making the body the proving ground for theories about reality and liberation. It radically tested the concept of non-duality, insisting that the individual body/mind, far from being a mere obstacle to overcome, was the vehicle and revealer of enlightenment, was enlightenment itself.

Ulatbamsi: A particularly intriguing category of Kabir's poems written in an "upside-down language," which uses subversive linguistic techniques to express ideas that otherwise would be difficult to express and articulate. The ulatbamsi poems in "upside-down language" intrigue because they are "absurd, paradoxical, crazy, impenetrable" and yet keenly intuitive and meaningful. Kabir's ulatbamsi poems are part of a long tradition in India. They have their genesis in the systems of Tantrism and Hatha yoga.

Ulema: A Muslim theologian.

Upanishad: Is derived from the Sanskrit root upa (near), ni (down), and sad (to sit), i.e. "to sit down near". Groups of pupils would sit near the teacher to learn from him the secret doctrine, while the seer
on his part adopted a certain reticence in communicating the truth. Upanishad became a name for a mystery, a secret communicated only to the tested few, who after receiving the knowledge were released from ignorance. The Upanishads are the concluding portions of the Vedas. They represent the central aim and meaning of the teachings of the Vedas.

Vaishnava: One who worships the Lord Vishnu.

Vaishyas: The third of the four castes of Hindu society. The first two being, the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas.

Veda: The body of ancient hymns and ancillary liturgical texts preserved in an oral tradition by the priestly (Brahmin) class. The four Vedas are: Rig, Yajur, Sama, and Atharva.

Virashaiva: Militant or heroic shavism. The Virashaivas are also commonly known as lingayats — those who wear the "linga", the auspicious symbol of Shiva, in a string tied around their necks.

Vishnu: One of the three major Hindu deities. Vishnu is the Lord who preserves and nurtures the universe. The other two deities are Brahma the creator and Shiva the destroyer. All the three personify the three phenomenal forces of existence.

Vithoba: Vitthal, another name for the deity Krishna (an incarnation of Vishnu,) as he is worshipped in Maharashtra in the region of Pandharpur. The origin of the name Vitthal/Vithoba is obscure.

Warkari: One who makes a "war" which in Marathi means, “round trip” or "pilgrimage" or "regular visit to a place and return from it." A Warkari is committed to undertaking a pilgrimage to Pandharpur twice every year, on the festivals of Ashadhi and the Kartiki.
Yama  The Hindu God of death.

Yoga  One of the six major schools of philosophy in ancient India. Its Sanskrit root is *yuj*, "to yoke" oneself to the divine purpose through discipline. Yoga is a codified system of practical discipline that can take one towards liberation.