CHAPTER 2

The Idea of God

Introduction

Religion, which is a system of faith and worship, is a fluid concept which has the capacity to evolve according to the requirements of the followers. Religion, which refuses to evolve and is not open to changes, just becomes history. Every religion necessarily has three prominent things, viz., the initiator, the entity worshiped and the sacred book which contains the message of God.

The initiator of any religion or cult must undergo the experience God through interaction with a superior or divine entity. This interaction which comprises direct conversations with the entity is known as the message of God or the sacred book or the Word of God. These revelations are sometimes just heard or only seen or both. This revelation decides the formation of worship of the superior entity. In the later process of philosophising, reasoning is used to discuss the exact form of religion/cult. This total process is called 'The development of the idea of Religion/cult'. Of these three basic necessities of religion stated above, we shall focus only on the Idea of God especially with respect to Sant Kabir. This idea of God may be developed by the initiator himself or by his follower and or by philosophers who give a systematized look at his total philosophy as a religion or an independent cult.

In this respect we shall refer to two main categories: Firstly as a philosophical model of the idea of God. For a philosopher the task is to think on the idea of God with various philosophical arguments and with proper philosophical reasoning. Secondly, it can be put forward as Religious or Theological arguments. The task of the theologian is to attempt and understand the idea of God as it is accepted by a common man in his life as well as in the community and society. In other words we can say these are its historical findings in
'Bhakti Traditions' conceptions of God i.e. its history, rationality and acceptance of identities as worshiped entities (as a supportive background to the first category). Methodologically it means that, the point should be put into perspective of the underlying idea of God, in Sant Kabir's constructive thought. This analysis will be done taking into account the wide range of Sant Kabir's Bāni like Bijaka, Kabir Granthāwali, Sri Guru Grantha Sāhib, and all other sources like traditions of followers of Sant Kabir (Kabirpanthis) and oral traditions etc. formed by Sant Kabir in his Bāni and with a clear understanding of the importance in the choice of words to explain the idea of God which was established in his own time.

Basically, the choice of the Idea of God as a superior entity progressively changed which resulted in the growth of knowledge and development of science, intelligence, enrichment and enlightenment of the society as well as that of the initiator and followers. These changes have gone through many stages. As science developed, the fear of natural phenomenon reduced and subsequently the concept of God changed totally.

The Evolution of Idea of God

The idea of God evolved over thousands of years in the history of philosophy. Here we are going to discuss some of the salient points in the evolution of the idea of God. The historical background will help us to know in what and which form it reached to Sant Kabir. The evolution of idea of God goes back to the pre-historic and historic periods of Indian religious, cultural and social antiquity. The Vedas are the oldest scriptures found in Indian history and perhaps even in the world. This is also a major part of Hinduism and thus the prime and most effective literature and culture of all religions which have their origins in India. There is a great effect of Vedic literature and religion its impact on the society. There are possibilities of any other system of beliefs or religion which may have co-existed with Vedic religion. I deeply feel that without understanding the changes in belief systems in Indian religions, I cannot, in a true sense proceed with Sant Kabir's idea of God. The idea developed and received by Sant-Mata and thus by Sant Kabir is definitely having a long religious and historical background.
There are stages of development in idea of God in Indian philosophy. It starts from worshiping entities of nature like wind, fire, sun, some trees, rivers etc. to lord of sacrifice who is giver of favor after performing yagyas i.e. sacrifices. From lord of sacrifices it shifted to energy form. Afterwards in post Vedic period it became Brahman. The concept of Brahman converted to vital energy form (प्राणपालक). That again changed to God and His incarnations. Again in Absolute form in Advait Vedanta in Ācārya’s period. As the concept of God changed thus different pathways to God realization have changed. There are mainly four pathways viz. Karma-Mārga, Yoga-Mārga, Bhakti-Mārga, and Gyāna-Mārga, and the pathway led by Sant Kabir i.e. ‘Nām-Mārga’. Sant Kabir gave a different idea of God i.e. it is Nām and Śabda. In this is the way evolution took place.

Here are some of the terms used by Sant Kabir for God like निर्गुण, निराकार, अपार, अलेख, अग्नि, सूक्ष्म (Nirgūṇa, Nirākāra, Apāra, Alekha, Vyāpaka, Sukṣma) etc. we see that these are all abstract terms. He uses general or common terms as well. For example सारंगणी, बिठुला, पिया, पुंसाई, जननी, भरतार (Sārangpāṇi, Bithulā, Piyā, Gusāi, Janani, Bhartār) etc. are the terms with attribute or some of it suggest the name of incarnations of Viṣṇu. These all words for God are deeply rooted in Indian soil. He uses Islamic names of God like Khudā, Allah, Karim, Rahiman etc. as Islam was one of the major religions at his time. Even though he uses different words for God but the basic idea of God does not change in the philosophy of Sant Kabir. He is a believer of One God. He says, 'Where did the two gods come from; Allah, Rām, Karim, Keśav, Hari, and Hazrat are the names given to Him. Gold is the same in all the jewelry; there can be no other element; The same one is called Mahādev and Mohammed or Brāhma and Ādam; ... They have different names, but they are all pots of the same clay.'

The basic concept of God in Sant Kabir’s philosophy is God is inside of ourselves and not outside. It is attributeless, formless, all pervading and always present. He says that just as in wood there is fire, as in mud there is pot and as there is oil in sesamum seeds, in the ultimate being, God dwells in us.

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11 Kabir, Bijak, Śabda – 30
There are some mystical ideas of God in Sant Kabir's philosophy. He says, 'There is a tree standing without roots, and without producing flowers it bears fruits; It has no branches nor leaves, but reaching the eighth sky it thunders; The petals have no form, and the gourd is produced without flower, and without having a tongue there is the song of God's glory; The singer has no form nor outline, but if there is a Satguru then he can make Him visible. The Supreme Lord is fathomless'.

Pre Vedic Idea of God:

The pre-vedic culture was having very different ideas and conceptions of gods and goddesses. It can be conceived through the excavation of archeological sites, coins, artifacts etc. of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro civilizations. In 'Encyclopedia of Hinduism' it is written that 'Some practices of Hinduism must have originated in Neolithic times (c. 4000 B.C.E.). The worship of certain plants and animals as sacred, for instance, could very likely have very great antiquity. The worship of goddesses, too, a part of Hinduism today, may be a feature that originated in the Neolithic'.

'Many seals found at Indus Valley sites were apparently used to mark commercial goods, and had engraved upon them pictures, that some have related to later Hinduism. One is the “proto-Shiva” seal, which shows a person, seated in a cross-legged position, with a head dress with horns on it and what appears to be an erect phallus. The head dress is said to relate to the later god Shiva’s title of “Lord of the Animals,” and the erect phallus is said to be related to the common icon of Shiva, the lingam, which is phallic in shape. Some see his seated posture as being the yogic lotus position. Shiva is known for his yogic practices. Other Indus Valley seals seem to depict what came to be known as the “Seven Mothers,” still worshipped in contemporary Hinduism. Additionally, B. B. Lāla, the most prominent Indian archaeologist of the Indus Valley culture, argues that other artifacts and fire sites of the...
Indus Valley complex appear to be designed for rituals associated with the Vedic ritual tradition, which is usually dated many centuries later.\(^{14}\)

The Vedic literature is very informative about this local religion. Epics like *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata* also denote the existence of other religious practices or different religions than that of Vedic or *Sanātana*. These two streams are also known as *Śrāvaka* and *Śramana* traditions. *Śrāvakas* are those who are followers of highest and upper level religious practices. *Śamans* means common house-holder practices of daily routine. Obviously these two names and traditions came much later. So, in conclusion we can say that some kind of traditions of worships were prevalent in the pre-vedic period which was popular among the masses. In Vedic period itself there was a drastic change in the conceptions and images, culturally and socially. In a way it was the acceptance of the concept of God with rationality and with more clear reasoning, and a change in the mind-sets of people. The concept of God also changed according to the need of the times. This change can be divided into pre-vedic, Vedic, *Brāhmanic*, *Āranyak*, and *Upaniṣadic* conceptions. The change again took place in the medieval period, especially in the two noticeable periods, viz., in *Ācāryas* period and in *Sant* tradition.

**The Vedic Idea of God:**

The *Rgvedic* religion was polytheistic at the start and different hymns were addressed to various gods. Some of these gods are clearly the personification of the powers of nature like the Sun, the Earth, Wind and so on. Later on, *Hiranyagrabha*, *Viśvakarmā* and *Prajāpati* are as nearly monotheistic Gods as one could see. At first, gods are praised and worshipped in pairs e.g. *Varuṇa-Mitra*, *Dyavā-Prithivi*, *Varuṇa-Āditi*, *Indra-Varuṇa* etc. This worship of the totality of gods paved the way for the adage.

In due course, the Vedic priests indifferently chose any one god at the time of worship and at that moment that god was considered to be the highest.

The *Upaniṣadas* developed this concept of a deeper oneness even further. They labeled this deeper reality as *Brahman*, which they described as unchanging, infinite, immanent and transcendent reality that is the Divine Ground of all being. This Supreme Reality is regarded as the source and sum of the cosmos; eternal and genderless, yet utterly beyond description. The concept of *Brahman* in the Indian philosophy could allow the religion to be classified under what scholars refer to as emanation of mystical monotheism. However, this is a point of contention, since *Brahman* is also beyond being and non-being alike, and thus does not adequately fit with the usual connotations of the word God, and perhaps even the concept of monism. Here mystical monotheism is where humans come into communion with one ineffable God or monistic principle through various tangible manifestations of that principle.

Contemporary Indian philosophy is divided into four major divisions, *Vaiśnavism*, *Śaivism*, *Sāktism*, and *Śaṃtism*. These denominations all believe in one deity or deities but differ in their conceptions of God. *Vaiśnavites* conceive of God as *Vishnu*, and *Śaivites* conceive of God as *Shiva*. These denominations, then, can be said to follow a singular concept of God, which would classify their beliefs as pantheistic monotheism or pantheistic monism.15

'It is useful to remember that in Hinduism, within which one has to view the six schools, *Īśvara* cannot be equated with the concept of God as it is understood in the Abrahamic religions. *Īśvara* does not have the role of creator because *Īśvara* does not create the world and the selves from "nothing." The theory of karma and the cyclical evolution and dissolution of the universe in periodic cycles, in keeping with karma, does not allow *Īśvara* the same role that is assigned to God in the Abrahamic religions. Hindu schools of philosophical thought have liberation or *mokṣa* as their highest value, and each school develops its ontology and epistemology in order to realize this eschatological value.16

15 http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/monotheism
There are six main schools in Hinduism. Unlike the other religions Hinduism does not equate God to Iswara. Herein we can introduce the Theory of Karma and the cyclical concept of birth and death and that of Moksha or liberation from this cycle. In Hinduism it is not Iswara that creates the world and hence is different from the God of other religions. ‘Mokṣa’ is one of the goals and has thus been developed by various schools giving it its relevant value.

Notion of God in Bhakti Tradition of Ācāryas

Ādi Śaṅkara’s (788–820 A. D.), commentary was based on a recession of the Gīta containing 700 verses, and that recession has been widely adopted by others. For Śaṅkara theism is less important than Brahman-realization. Ordinarily for Śaṅkara theistic worship is valuable, both for itself and for its instrumental value in the supreme task of Brahma-realization. Śaṅkara also grants that Bhakti of Iswara leads to Krama-mukti (liberation by successive steps Vs. III.3.1; Vs. I.1.11; I:1.24:III:2.42). But it must be conceded that for Śaṅkara, Iswara Bhakti does not always lead to Brahma-jnāna because Bhakti may be conducted for purposes other than Brahma-prāpti. Besides, Bhakti in itself is dualistic, but Brahma is non-dual. Hence, for Śaṅkara, only Jnāna will lead to Brahma-realization.

Rāmānuja is highly critical of Śaṅkara’s doctrine of attributeless, non-dual Brahman. Brahman bethought itself: ‘Would that I were many! Let me procreate myself. Everything has proceeded from Brahman himself. As a spider might come out with his thread, as small sparks come forth from the fire, even so from this Soul (Brahman) come forth all energies, all worlds, all gods, all beings (Brhadāranyaka 3:1.20).

For, Rāmānuja, Brahman is an all-inclusive Iswara that comprises both cit (conscious beings) and acit (non-conscious objects called the whole material world). This Iswara, therefore, is qualified, with the world and Jiva as the body of Iswara and He is the indwelling soul of this body.

According to Rāmānuja, this personal Brahma may be called bhagavān. Besides them five aupanishadic attributes are found in Brahma, Namely, Self-luminousness, ananda (bliss), ananta (infinite), satya (truth) and
amalatva (purity). The essential attribute of a jiva is to remain dependent on God as his master and the ultimate refuge. Hence, God can be best approached through bhakti. Steady remembrance of the Lord is called bhakti (devotion), uninterrupted like the flow of oil in a burning lamp (Śrībhāṣya 1.1.1). However, for Rāmānuja, this bhakti has knowledge and karma as well.³⁷ For Rāmānuja steady remembrance means the same thing as Upāsanā (meditation).

'However, the most popular form of theism is found in the Avatāras of Krisna and Rama. Lord Krishna has been raised to the status of the Absolute Brahma, endowed with personality. In the form of religious worship, the Bhāgavata Mahā-Puraṇa dwells on the playful activities of Lord Krisna. In the form of an influential religious philosophy the worship of Lord Krishna is found in the Gita. Here the doctrines of three pathways of salvation they are jnāna-mārga, karma-mārga and Bhakti mārga. The Ācāryas' Bhakti tradition gave us very important concepts of ‘Niśkāma Karma’ (disinterested discharge of one's duty), openness of the lord to all castes (Gita 9.32) is carried forward by Sant-Mata or Sant-paramparā i.e. traditions of the saints.

'Brahma is the creator, Viśnu is sustainer and Śiva is the destroyer of the world. Lord Viśnu is the most benign god. Krisna and Rama are the most adored incarnations and they sustained the most exalted form of Bhakti. 'Ramakrishna has combined both Nīrguna and Saguna forms of Brahman. Brahma with forms can be approached through bhakti and Brahman without form can be realized through jnana.'³⁹

One point to be mentioned here is that in the later times, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika was busy in proving the existence of God. However, in this philosophy, God is taken to be an efficient creator. As contrasted with this conception of an efficient cause, Śaṅkara regards his 'Īśwara' both the efficient and material cause of the world.

³⁷ Vedartha-Samgraha, padas 127, 129, 136
³⁹ http://religion.indianetzone.com/1/concept_god_in_hinduism.htm
The journey of the idea of God till 'Bhakti Movement' is shortly described in 'Notion of God'. The Bhakti tradition, as stated above is divided into two, i.e. that of Ācāryas' and saints or Bhaktas. In this respect it must be noted that one can see the influence of Buddhism and Jainism as well. Especially Buddhism which has a heterodox system, made people re-think the very notion and concept of God itself. After Ācāryas' traditions the social mass wanted a concept of God which could be accepted by everybody, at all levels of their lives and society as a whole. A big shift was the need of the times. We shall now consider the development of idea of God took place.

The source of the concept of God in Hinduism can be attributed to the Upaniṣadas, Vedānta and Bhagwatgītā which profess the major two ideas of Brahman - Nirgun and Saguna, Parabrahma, Īswara, Swayambrahma etc., which were basically various concepts of God, personal and abstract forms of God. Thus the concept of God in India varied in different sets by region and nature. These can be described in a wide verity which includes henotheism, monotheism, polytheism, panentheism, pantheism, pandeism and monism and the like.

Dr. Dandekar has given the origination of the idea of the God as 'I would like to characterize the primary and the most basic religious concept in the early Vedic period as 'Orendism' or 'Asuism'. The Vedic man believed in a magic potence - and he often thought of it in terms of something like "soul-stuff" - which permeated through nature and the human world and thereby constituted the essential basis of their existence and functioning. This magic potence was shared alike by gods, human beings, animals, trees, etc. - of course in varying proportions. The Nāme for this potence, which is particularly popular with the anthropologists, is Mana or Orenda, and its Vedic counterpart, in my view, is asu. The Vedic poet-priest speaks of several other aspects of this essential magic potence, to whose operation man is believed to be subjected either positively or negatively. So far as the primary conception of Godhead of the Vedic poet-priests is concerned, three points need to be specially stressed, viz. that (1) the Vedic gods are generally conceived as being subservient to an all pervading magic potence; (2) since they participate in this magic potence
together with all other categories of existence in this magic potence, together with all other categories of existence, they cannot be said to be essentially distinct from the latter (the 'potence' being more basic and more important than the inherent qualities of the 'person' or 'thing'); and (3) all these categories, including gods, depend on one another for their proper functioning. Everything else is mythology. It is a polytheism and anthropomorphic in character. Anthropomorphism of the Vedic gods is itself highly variable. There are no clear and well-defined functions in the world process and world rule assigned to the various members of the Vedic pantheon. As a matter of fact, one may hardly speak of a pantheon of Vedic gods in the strictest sense of the term. The frequent grouping of gods also points in the same direction.\(^{20}\)

**Idea of God in Islam and Sufism**

Sant Kabir sees the religion itself from a very different point of view. He is not against any religion or any religious thought but just wanted to make people aware of what they are doing and the main reason behind any religious practice. The practices may be the result of particular time and place. However before practicing we need to give it a rational thought. None of the religions are bad in their principles. Prime or basic principle of any religion is not of religion but that they are the principles of mankind/human community. The difference is only because of differences in place, time and understanding of the people who follow or interpret it. We can see differences in the practice of the same religious and rituals in different places and communities.

During the period of Sant Kabir, Islam had fully settled down in India. Along with Islam, Sufism also came to India. The Sufi thoughts are very similar to Indian Bhakti tradition. Sufism is an outshoot of Islam whereas Bhakti movement is an outshoot of Hinduism. Another point of difference is that in Bhakti, God is mentioned as a male lover and in Sufism God is a female lover. It was but obvious that some concepts and terms came into the philosophy of Sant Kabir. There are many words in Sant Kabir’s *Bāni* which have directly come from Islamic philosophy. It describes the idea of God in Islamic.

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ambiance on Indian soil. *Allah, Hazarat, Noor, Karim, Rahim, Muhammad, Koran, Murid, Tatbir, Kalimā, Hadis, Ādam, Hawwā* etc are some of those.

The names of God in general are divided into two parts. First, those names which are just proof in essence, without any credit meaning or attribute. In other words, it is used as a proper noun like Allah in Arab language, *Khoda* in Persian etc. Secondly, names that are derived from attributes and proof in essence which have additional meaning. For example, if someone has two names one is Mohammed another is scientific, of course word of Mohammed doesn’t point to any quality special within that man, vice versa scientific name in addition points to that man himself. It also refers to attribute of that man. The word Allah also doesn’t point to anything except the holy essence of God. But in derived names, essence is regarded as attribute.21

**Allah**

There are two terms in Arabic language for God which is very close to each other in terms of meaning. Yet, at the same time they are different. One is “Illah” and the other one is “Allah”. “Illah” grammatically is common noun but “Allah” is proper noun. Allah is derived from al-Iaha – the worshipped.22

Sant Kabir says “O my dear brother! Where did the two gods come from; tell me who has caused this confusion? *Allah, Rām, Karim, Keshav, Hari,* and *Hazrat* are the *Nāmes* given to Him. Gold is the same in all the jewelry; there can be no other element; For the sake of speaking and hearing, they have established two methods, one is the *namaz* and the other is *puja*: The same one is called *Mahādeva* and Mohammed or Brahma and Ādam; Who can be said to be a Hindu and who a Turk (Muslim); they both live on the same earth; These read the book of the Vedas and those read the Koran; these are called *pāndes* and those are called mullahs; They got different names, but they are all pots of the same clay; Kabir says that both of them are mistaken. for neither have

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21 Mohammad Mehdi Alimardi, *Concept of God in Islam and Sikhism*, Thesis submitted to Department of Philosophy, University of Pune, Pune, 2008, p. 33-34

22 ibid
found God; These cut the goat and those cut the cow. and in vain they are wasting their lives.”

'Islam at the beginning was primarily a legalistic religion and placed before its adherents little more than a code of ethics combined with a set of rituals. During the Um Māyād period, after Islam had made direct contact with other Eastern oriental religions, a deeply mystical movement arose within its realm, in many ways, perhaps, indebted to the influence of these faiths for its motivation and principles, but nonetheless an independent theosophy developing purely within the framework of the Islamic society and heritage.

The movement is known as Sufism (tasawwuf) and its followers are known as Sufis. The word Sufi comes from the Arabic Suf, meaning "wool", and implies that the Sufi is a wearer of a woolen garment. Later on the name was adopted by those who sought to obtain knowledge of God through various stages of spiritual self-denial as asceticism in Islam gave way to mysticism.

'From the Sufi's point of view, God is an Absolute Being, and whatever exists, is a determination or manifestation of Him. The Sufi maintains that all existence exists through God's being and is a manifestation of that being, without which there would be nothing. As Rumi says, 'We are non-existent, displaying the illusion of existence. You are an Absolute Being and, this is our only existence.' In the words of Koran (XXVIII:88), "All things perish but His face," with the understanding that there is nothing but Him in the abode of existence.'

Sufism is principally a quest for a living knowledge of the Supreme Being. To the orthodox Muslim Allah is the Lord of the Worlds, unique in his essence and attributes, ruling over the entire universe and quite unlike anything in his creation. To the Sufi, on the other hand, "God is the One Real Being which underlies all phenomena." He is everything and there is nothing but Him.

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23 Kabir, Bijak, Šabda –30
Man's purpose is to lose his natural sense of a separate identity from his Creator and to be absorbed instead into his knowledge until there remains no distinction of consciousness between him and God. Through a series of stages (maqamat) and subjective experiences (ahwal) this process of absorption develops until complete annihilation (fana) takes place and the worshipper becomes al-insanul-kamil, the "perfect man".

The Sufi concept of a God who is "all in all" differs radically from the orthodox conviction that the further he is placed from his creation, the more he is glorified. Historically it is a marvel that Sufism grew out of the bedrock of Islam but its development will not surprise.

The Sufis do not separate the realm of existence from God's existence. The Koranic verse, "God is the light of the heavens and the earth" (XXIV&35), has been interpreted by the exoteric Islamic clergy to mean that God is the source of all illumination for the heavens and the earth. The Sufis, on the other hand, take this to mean that God is the very being, the reality of the heavens and the earth.

The insight that there is only one Absolute Being in the whole universe, and that whatever exists does so through His existence, has been called the philosophy of the Unity of Being.

The awareness of Unity of Being, though, is a perception of the heart, and it is everlasting and unchanging. Philosophy pertains to the mind and discourse, whereas perception of the Unity of Being pertains to love, revelation and vision. Therefore, in Sufi's view, it is to be referred to as the principle, rather than the philosophy, of the Unity of Being.

**The 'Unity of Being'**

'If we liken Absolute Being to an ocean, then the waves of this ocean can be thought of as individual beings, the true reality of which is water. The transitory form of each being is the individual wave, which lasts for but a moment and is then obliterated, whereas the reality of the wave – that is the water – is everlasting. Until each individual is aware of his waveform, he can

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know nothing of the water. When the conception of the ocean as transitory waves disappears, one will then realize that there is in reality nothing but the water. Hence, the Sufis have annihilated their wave-selves in the water of Absolute Being, they express it as 'I am the Truth', 'Glory be to my sublime station,' and 'there is nothing under this garment but God.'

Absolute Being can be compared to light and individual beings to shadows. As long as the shadow remains a shadow, it can know nothing of the light. If the light moves away from the shadow, the shadow will always follow it. Thus, if one attempts to pursue the Truth under one's own power — that is, as a shadow — one will never attain it. Such an action in fact indicates that the Truth is actually moving away from one. Only when the light moves towards the shadow, thereby relieving it of its 'shadow-ness', will the shadow become the light.

If we conceive of Absolute Being as a point, then individual beings may be compared to lines or patterns, springing into existence from a single point. Whatever form is displayed outwardly is, in fact merely transitory. Whatever form we see is, in truth, no more than a point.

In conclusion, from the Sufi's point of view, the realm of individual existence, which is one of the levels of being, is imaginary — and imagination is one of the levels of being — while at the same time, in truth, it is Real. It is imaginary from the perspective of 'shadow-ness', yet it is the foundation of Being from the perspective of Reality (that is, light).

In India, especially in medieval period, the Bhakti tradition evolved, which increased the value of God not only as worshiper but also as Ultimate Reality too. Invaders came with new religions and with a new idea of God. They were strictly believers of the books. They started spreading their religion and thus the idea of God. It led to controversies and conflicts between indigenous religion and foreign religion.

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That was the time when a synthesis of a common idea of God was required. Thus many saints from Bhakti Movement developed a congruous idea of God. Sant Kabir is foremost among these saints.

This chapter centers on the idea, which traditionally, has been associated with the very goodness of God – the idea of divine absoluteness developed in 'saint' tradition specially in the philosophy of Sant Kabir, as in its new form i.e. as 'Nām' – and puts certain cultural, historical, social, logical, religious, ontological and cosmological aspects which finally ends with the path to God realization. The root of this idea lies in the Indian *Upanishad* philosophical thought in the form of *Sumiran* or *Simran* i.e. chanting god's name, which was enriched by Sant-Mat via the early initiators of Bhakti Movement. Even so, there is much indication, particularly in Sant Kabir's thought, that the Indian Medieval period pushed theological thinking towards a social or relative concept of divine being. The idea of divine absoluteness or 'Nām' achieves full and systematic development in the thought of Sant Kabir. A close analysis of Sant Kabir is highly revealing in terms of laying out the logical and theological problems that arise out of the notion of rigidity in contemporary religions and beliefs in Indian society. What is interesting is that Sant Kabir's idea of God suggests a social or relative mode of divine being. Sant Kabir drew out the social implications of the idea of God in a social form. The present situation is that the 'Social idea of God' stands as a rich but untapped theological doctrine in India today.

There is, of course, every reason to believe that Sant Kabir was sensitive to the tensions evoked by his responses to the ongoing religious situations and his social thoughts as well as aware of the fact that his idea of social God strained against religious disputes.

Modern science has qualified our understanding of things such that we can know ourselves and our world in a new way. Mankind has realized that, we are governed by the laws of nature and that we are not independent of it, nor can we control it, although, we may worship and respect its superiority. Fear of natural phenomenon and death has been replaced by curiosity for the superior entity and love for knowledge. This curiosity converted into the Love
for superior entity. The fundamental principle which informs our re-knowing is stated by Sant Kabir when he says that "The mother is impure, and the father is impure. The fruit they produce is impure. Impure they come, and impure they go. The unfortunate ones die in impurity. Which place is uncontaminated?... The fire is impure, and the water is impure. ... Says Kabir, they alone are pure, who have obtained pure understanding." In this Šabda Sant Kabir is making a point that we should think on purity and impurity. Basically what is that which make one pure and other impure? It is not any external element but the connotation or the notion which make a thing pure or impure. He says, "People are beset with a huge circle of doubts! ... Who is male and who is female? The body is beautifully made of clay, and the same energy flows through it; when the body dissolves what name can we give it? The foolish person is lost in search. All have the same skin, bones, feces and urine, and the same blood and marrow; all are created from a drop of semen. Who then is Brahmin and who is Šudra? Sant Kabir says always realize God in yourself. There is no Hindu and no Muslim." With this thought he wanted people to understand that the energy inside everything is the same even as the form it takes differs from each other. The important is the energy and not the form. Thus Sant Kabir says that respect and love your fellow being as they are. Accept them as they are. Don’t see the outer form but see only that there is one God in everyone.

What this means is that it is now possible for theology to break loose from the compulsion of its class and caste based religious heritage to conceive of deities having equal status. The justification of this procedure must lie in its fruits, which I believe to be threefold:

a) Some of the most intractable logical, moral and religious problems which have historically beset orthodoxy can now be met. There were problems like discrimination, the class and caste problem, immoral behavior of elite class. Religious problems like misinterpretations of religious texts for the benefit of selected class/ caste people.

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28 SGG5, p. 1195
29 Kabir, Bijak, Šabda – 75
b) An ontology is established which is at one with the direction of Sant Kabir's theology. It has various conceptions about Reality were in the society. The *karmakānda* was prominent then, and was considered a true proposition of Reality. Sant Kabir gave new direction towards new interpretations of the same terms like a) *Rām*, a *Rām* is incarnation of *Viśnu* who took birth at *Daśratha*’s home, a *Rām* is that who dwells in everybody, a *Rām* is the creator of the world, and that One *Rām* is secernate from all attributelessness. b) *Bhakti*, According to Sant Kabir the vital force is the root for *Bhakti*, while mind and emotions co-exist. It is an internal source without support and its power cannot be borne by everybody. It requires a stable mind and an unwavering attitude. c) *Prem*, Love is not grown in the field, and it is not sold in the market. But a king or a pauper, who likes it, offers his head to obtain it. d) God, e) Meditation in sense *lau lagāṇa*, *lagan lagāṇa*, and *surat lagāṇa*. f) Man (*Manmukha*, *Gurumukha* and *Jivanmukta*) and so on with new meanings to them and he could make possible a great change in the metaphysics itself. By that time the philosophy of mysticism was developed in its real sense. Especially in Sant Kabir’s Bāni we find neo poetic mystic language that is famously known as *उलतबासी* *Ulatbāsi*, the upward sayings.

c) *Kabirpanthis’* faith is rendered more intelligible to more than five hundred years of tradition, as *Kabirpanth* was established more than 500 years ago.

**Idea of God in the Philosophy of Sant Kabir**

All saints in India especially those who belong to the ‘Bhakti Movement’ have never doubted the existence of God. They do not feel the need to prove the existence of God. However, Saint Kabir has given us proof of the existence of God. He says “The stars which are seen in the sky - who is the painter who painted them? What is the sky attached to? Very fortunate is the knower who knows this. The sun and the moon give their light; God's creative extension extends everywhere. Says Kabir, he alone knows this, whose heart is filled

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31 Kabir, *Saki Granth*, Bhakti ko Anga – 3
32 ibid, Prem ko Anga – 6

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with the Lord, and whose mouth is also filled with the Lord. No one knows the secret of God, the Cosmic Weaver.

In spite of the fact, that the existence of God is an assumption and a presupposition, Sant Kabir mainly relies on the inward belief. We can gather this from the hymns of the *Granthawali* and *Bijak* which can be described as the basis of that belief and therefore the proofs of the existence of God. The first proof of God is the existence of our own spiritual self. Descartes’ *Cogito Ergo Sum* merges into the Vedantic lore of *Aham Brahman Asmi*. We can know God by means other than our own self, if He were not our own self. We can know a table and prove it, because it is in its present form other than the subject which knows it. When the self has to know its own greater self, no other proof is required except the idea of its own self. Sant Kabir says that if He were other than the self, we could establish, prove and make others understand of His existence. The self is the conscious activity, the idea and the will. The natural anthropomorphic tendency leads us from our own will to a Supreme Will. Sant Kabir represents Him as perfectly blissful, without fear and enmity. He is the embodiment of all conceivable Virtue. Such a being becomes a necessary postulate for Kant. The communion with a moral God makes the devotee moral. A happy God will make his believer happy; a fearless one will make him fearless. A man becomes like the God whom he worships. This forms the basis of *Simran* (remembrance of God) in the philosophy of Sant Kabir.

About the knowability of God, Sant Kabir says "Through these fifty-two letters, the three worlds, all things are described. These letters shall perish; they cannot describe the Imperishable Lord. Wherever there is speech, there are letters. Where there is no speech, there, the mind rests on nothing. He is in both speech and silence. No one can know Him as He is. If I come to know the Lord, what can I say; what good does it do to speak? One who knows the Lord understands His mystery, and bit by bit, the mystery disappears." He is

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33 Kabir, *Kabir Granthawali*, pada – 141 and in SGGS p. 329
34 Kabir, *Kabir Granthawali*, pada – 259
35 SGGS, p. 340
unknowable and immaculate; He does not change. 'One cannot know the secret of the weaver of the universe who has made the tānābānā of the world. He has made the earth and the sky, the Sun and Moon. He expertly made the soot and kusoot, the only weaver of the world.' When the Siddhas and seekers come to know the Lord's mystery, they themselves become the Creator; they themselves become the Divine Lord.

In the philosophy of Sant Kabir we find the development of idea of God is to realize God and for self-experience. Sant Kabir is eminent for his clear understanding of the idea of God. He efficaciously used language to put his thinking and experiences in words. He asked many questions for understanding and clarifying idea of religion and the concept of God. He never questioned the existence of God. Nonetheless his journey starts with a keen interest into the investigation of realization of God. When we read his Bāni, it cannot be said with certainty which thought process expressed through his Šabda came first, thus rendering it difficult to trace the development of the concept of God. However it is clear to me that he gives great importance to a certain order in his theory and practice if we are to put things in a particular way in the philosophical process. Keeping this in mind if we search in his Bāni he instructs or shows a pathway to realize God. There are certain points (presumptions) which we have to accept. They are:

1) God Exists
2) One God
3) Creator of the World
4) He has two main aspects i.e.
   i. Sagunatva
   ii. Nirgunatva
      a) Absolute Being (without any attributes)
      b) Nām
5) Realisation of God through grace of Guru, total surrender and love

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36 SGGS, p.343
37 Kabir, Bijak, Ramaini - 27
38 SGGS, p.343
God Exists

The existence of God has been the subject matter of arguments for a long time. This is not the same with reference to ‘existence of God’ in Indian or western philosophy. According to Dr. Talghatti ‘In Indian cultural tradition ‘Dharma’ (not the same as ‘religion’ in western philosophy) and philosophy go hand in hand and hence Indian and western philosophy are diverse in their definition of what comprises religion and philosophy. This brought about a great change in the idea of the existence of God. In the Indian context God it is not only the Ultimate Reality or Essence of the world but also the entity to be worshiped.39 Speaking strictly in the Indian context, I can quote Prof. M. Chinchore’s article, .... ‘Really speaking in the Indian context, there are no theories or conceptions of God, which could be considered strictly to be theistic, deistic, pantheistic or pane-theistic. Nor does one notice a controversy whether god is transcendent alone; immanent alone or both transcendent as well as immanent. Characteristically speaking, one does not find any creed of theology-revealed, rational, dogmatic, systematic, existential or otherwise-either. Similarly, one hardly encounters any indigenous universal religion, a prophet, religious cannon or scripture as in the Semitic religion.40 The Indian conception of God is vast and wide in its sense of understanding and accepting 'God' as the entity of worship, supreme power, divine entity etc. instead of merely accepting as a Being or Ultimate Reality.

As my subject of study is about Sant Kabir's philosophy we will discuss his idea of existence of God.

Investigation in the existence of God

Sant Kabir investigates deeply and interestingly into existence of God. He says ‘The sky attached to what? Only the one who will search will come to know about Him. How many stars are there in the sky? Who made all this? Whatever you see is not that. It is unknowable and unseen.41 Sant Kabir says

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39 S. Talghatti, Santanche Tattvajgyan, Mrs. Veena S. Talghatti, Pune, 2013
40 M. Chinchore, Truth and Value, Ed. Raghunath Ghose, New Bharatiya Book Corporation, Delhi, India.
41 Kabir, Kabir Granthâwali, pada – 141
'recognize or know your creator who is not in this world which is made out of five elements, what you see.' Sant Kabir in Ramaini of Bijak says 'Tell me the address of God and the form of His clothing? Where does He travel and where does He live? Sant Kabir puts a question to the seeker of the God, tell me what burns, the wood or the fire? If fire is in the air, than where is air? Is it in Sabda or in space or in air? Sant Kabir says that with intense thinking the one discovers in sesame seed a mountain (the Meru Mountain). Sant Kabir says 'when I started my journey into the search of God and thinking on the self realization I became without enmity, the anger and lust vanished. I saw the absolute being in all.' Sant Kabir says 'is there anybody who knows Rām Nām? The thing which is inaccessible, show me. Everyone praises Rām Nām without knowing the core of the Rām Nām. I don't like to talk on the surface, I want to see it, sing it then only will I be happy. Says Kabir, 'I am speechless without experience, one cannot get to the secret of It.' Sant Kabir says, 'the path is without foot and no one dwells in that area. The puruṣa is without body.' Sant Kabir says 'it speaks, discusses, listens thinks and gets knowledge. It's like a conglutination of fire and air, like a quivering mind. Says Kabir, guru have shown me the ultimate being, the supreme lord. I saw that who never die or burn.'

Thus in many ways Sant Kabir put forward questions for investigation into the pathway of God realization. He talks about many aspects of God which are abstract and also attributeless.

**Aspects of God**

Sant Kabir describes the existence of God with different words and terms. He says that God is Ultimate परम्, Transcendent Reality निर्बल्म सत्ता, Nirguna (without attributes), Sant Kabir says God is without any motion, without any attributes

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42 Kabir, *Kabir Granthawali*, Nijkarta ko Anga – 11
43 Note: here *Sabda* means the Absolute or Ultimate Being.
44 Kabir, *Kabir Granthawali*, pada – 174
45 ibid – 183
46 ibid – 218
47 ibid, *Parichaya ko Anga* – 17
48 ibid, pada – 42
what can I give a Name to Him? Timeless, Boundless, Formless, Ever existent, Immutable, Ineffable, Sant Kabir says God is indescribable I cannot describe Him as I have limitations. All by Himself, Sant Kabir says God is not less or more He is even in all. The one who sees Him far, He is far for him but the one who sees Him near He is near to him.

Even unknown in His entirety, Sant Kabir says even if I make ink of seven seas and the forests pen, the whole earth as paper, even then also it is not possible for me to describe God in his fullness. He says when it pleases God; He becomes Saguna (with attribute) and manifests Himself in creation. Sant Kabir says that whatever I wanted to say I said it. Now there is nothing to say. The one which was there has gone and the other went like a wave merges in the ocean. Sant Kabir says God has no birth and He is without death. He is only the Lord of the World. God is different from sound and sperm. He is inaccessible and unknowable. He is not made up of these five elements or of three gunas. He is limitless. We cannot dimities Him in a particular space. He is all pervading. Sant Kabir says It is formless, without any face. It is not the case that it has no identity or face. It is the one who is even more settled than fragrance of flower. It is that awesome, incomparable element.

Sant Kabir says God is that who made the world and It is not that which is made by the world. Sant Kabir says God is one who never goes anywhere. He is still. Sant Kabir says It is without vigor (prāṇa) and without body. It does not breathe nor It has five elements or twenty five extraction (prakriti) not even three gunas.
It is not Incarnations of Deities

In early Vedic period there was no concept of incarnation as such. It started with Soot's glorifying and making praises (Stuti/Sukta) and as a result it was so glorified that incarnation of gods came into existence. Slowly, within an era, the concept of God became so rigid in socio-religious context. Sant Kabir says "No one accepted the instructions of the others. He (God) is Himself God and Himself the Offering; He is Himself the Clan and the Caste. He Himself resides in all beings in the world. He is Himself the Master and the Abode of Bliss. I have been saying this for four yugas;" Sant Kabir says, 'They believe in ten incarnations or Avatar; but no Avatar can be the Infinite Spirit, for he suffers the results of his Deeds. The Supreme One must be other than this.' The consequences of acceptance of incarnation and its rejection with the help of Sant Kabir Bāni are as follows:-

1) Icon of supremacy of Caste/Class

Unknowingly or may be intentionally it became a custom that the incarnated god should belong to a special lineage, should be of special class/caste etc. It was persuasively followed by so called leaders of that religion. As a result of this only those few so called leaders of religion began to dampen down other members of the society/religion. In this context Sant Kabir says that 'who do not take birth or dies, who do not come to this trouble, His name is Niranjan. The God of Das Kabir who does not have mother or father.'

2) Humanization of God

It was the period where humanization of god became a normal routine for that god who is incarnated in human forms. To reject this humanization of god, Sant Kabir says that 'creator is not that who is sold in the hands of karma.'

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60 Kabir, Bijak, Ramaini – 14
62 Ibid
63 Kabir, Kabir Graṃthāwali, (Digit, NAMAMI), pada - 158, p. 388
3) Rise of Untouchability
Division on the basis of class and caste were handcuffs for both people and god. The tradition of untouchability started and god became so secret that the lower class people could not touch or see it, to an extent that they could not even touch those who were around that god. Thus to escape this, one common idea of God was required, which could be accepted by all members of the society, without any discrimination. "Social God" was the concept which worked magically. He says about untouchability 'First, Allah created the Light; then, by His Creative Power, He made all mortal beings. From the One Light, the entire universe welled up. So who is good, and who is bad? O people, O Siblings of Destiny, do not wander deluded by doubt. The Creation is in the Creator, and the Creator is in the Creation, totally pervading and permeating all places. The clay is the same, but the Fashioner has fashioned it in various ways. There is nothing wrong with the pot of clay - there is nothing wrong with the Potter. The One True Lord abides in all; by His making, everything is made.\(^{64}\)

4) Genderless and formlessness
Sant Kabir rejected the gender of God. Asserting any gender will cause humanization of the concept of God. Gender is a socio-cultural concept and has some fixed attributes and meanings which delimit God's entire pervading concept.

5) Rejection of Blind Faiths
Sant Kabir in Bijak speaks about the name of God or the spirit of God that is beyond all externalities. It is beyond day or night, beyond religions, doctrines and scriptures, beyond mosques and temples, and beyond the prophets and sages. He is also beyond heaven and hell. From the point of view of the spirit, all the external manifestations and observances are artificial, and created by people according to their own understanding, beliefs, and practices. They are not the finality. Sant Kabir points out that those who have created all the external observances or artificialities, have robbed the human spirit, and bound it by the

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\(^{64}\) SGGS, p. 1349
pursuit of external observances. God never made a rule that we must sacrifice animals to please Him and hope to get to heaven. God never made it a rule that worshipping in one way or another takes precedence over realizing His spirit that dwells in all beings. The more people get involved in the externalities of religion, the farther away they move from the spirit of God, and the farther they are from liberation.65

With the above discussion we can say, in Sant Kabir's word, 'In that way one should pray the Lord, which cleans the doubts of the minds. .... pure you mind and find Govind there. The God is without any gender, the method of praying to Him is not by any prayer or by any chanting, without performing any ritual, He is not brother or not mother or not father (without humanizing It), It is without any attributes and characteristics, He is formless, shapeless and He is by Himself. Says Kabir with the help of the teachings of Guru, one can reach the state of Jivanmukta.66

**God dwells in us and not outside**

Sant Kabir in his Bānī says 'My Lord is dwelling in each and every heart; not a single place is empty. But that heart is great where God manifests His qualities.'67 Sant Kabir says 'Musk is in the navel of the musk deer, but the deer searches for its fragrance everywhere in the forest. In the same way, God dwells in every heart, but people search for Him elsewhere, and do not find Him.'68 He says 'O Almighty! Your power dwells in every heart but is invisible. It is just as red as the color that resides in the green mehendi leaves and is invisible.'69 Sant Kabir says, as the tree is in the seed, as the fire is in the fire stone, as fragrance is in the flower, as pot is in the mud the same way God is in us. Because of the veil of doubts we cannot perceive It. Sant Kabir says, 'O My heart! the Supreme Spirit, the great Master, is near you. Wake, oh wake! Run to the feet of your Beloved; for your Lord stands near to your

65 Kabir, Bijak, Šabda – 98
66 Kabir, Kabir Granthāwallī. (Digital, NAMAMI), pada - 123, p. 369
67 Kabir, Sākhi Granth, Sakshibhot ko Anga – 2
68 ibid, Vyapak ko Anga –12
69 ibid, Sakshibhot ko Anga –8
This is the reason why in the philosophy of Sant Kabir the body is appraised not by birth, gender or beauty but only by the love for God and respect for other fellow beings.

**Concept of Social God**

Society and Religion are intimately related. Religion is not a social theory like the theories of Marxism, Democracy, Communism, Socialism etc. Religion does not only guide its followers in the pathway of religious activities but it also guides them to lead a perfect social, economic and ethical life. Thus, religion affects society and gives it a particular shape. Regarding India, there is a long history which shows us that society and religion go hand in hand. Besides this, in India, religion has always overruled society, its pattern of behavior and social mind as well. The leaders of the nation are under pressure and are influenced by one or another religion. The main reason behind this is that the social structure of India is always formed on a religious pattern. It was never in the history of Indian society that it is religion-less society. Now a day, our country is known as a secular country. The meaning of secularism for us is that everyone has the right to follow his religion without any legal obstacles as long as it does not create any violence or does not harm anyone or somebody's feelings. To achieve this stage our country struggled a lot. History shows us that when a king had adopted any religion, he made every possible attempt to boost that religion in his kingdom. This caused discriminations and struggles among religions, which made society a worst place to live in. In the medieval period there were not only native religions but also foreign religions when rulers conquered India and Indian society. The native religions of India became very rigid and this stopped their development. This led to a condition where for the followers of religion and for a layman it became difficult to lead normal life. To overcome this situation saints from all walks and levels of the society came forward to reform both, society and religion. This was a great revolution which is well-known as 'Bhakti Movement'. This movement not only changed the social mind and life of the layman but it led to a re-thinking of the philosophies as well. This was a big

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push back to ritual based religions and their supremacy over minds. This caused man to stand strongly in his position and to respond back to the sever of narrow blind metaphysical concepts. These concepts were the concept of God, world, man, religion, nature, and society. To make God free from rigid religion, saints, specially, in this chapter where we are talking about Sant Kabir, came forward with a unique idea of 'Social God'.

Theological Aspects

Experience

'God exists' means we should experience It by seeing or having experiences of Him. The question now arises is whether this experience is universal or personal. And how does one define it? Furthermore, the evidences of the existence of God are totally a private experience i.e. it is individualistic in nature. We cannot universalize it. Sant Kabir says that "To describe the experience of God's love is impossible. One can understand it only when he experiences it. No amount of description (as in scriptures) can make one experience something." Actually, it causes change in the entire life of the believer. Is it not a proof in itself? The basic concept of God of a person plays an important role in the building of his personality as moral -a moral, generous-non generous and the like.

At many places in Sant Kabir's Bāni we find him talking about his experience of God. Sant Kabir says, "As one experiences God, one goes beyond happiness and sorrow. He just becomes like an unwavering flame of a drawing. One gives up debates totally."

Not only this, he says that the one who has experience of God can be recognized by the other who has also experienced God. For that person Sant Kabir uses a term 'Bhedi' (चेदी) means who knows the secret or one who has the direct experience of God. Sant Kabir says Bhedi knows the prominent attributes of the one who does not know, Abhedi, does not know attributes of God. Either a disciple who is wounded with arrow of Śabda or a Bhedi will

71 Kabir, Sākhī Granth, Atamanubhav ko Anga –3
72 ibid –2
know. He says, “the heart in which God dwells, cannot be covered even if one tries to hide it forcefully. The heart in which God dwells shines with a divine light.”

The experience of God is not possible without revelation of God. Revelation is possible only with the grace of God.

**Revelation**

‘If a superior intelligent Being is, in fact, responsible for our existence, then such a god has in his power and in his ability, to remain unknown and unknowable should he so choose. Without revelation initiated by God we would know nothing about the nature of this Being.’ In the philosophy of Sant Kabir one should be well acquainted with God. This comes under *Paricaya ko Anga* (परिचय को अंग). It is possible only after experience of God. The one who has experience is able to understand the superpower of God. The understanding/revelation of the superpower comes under *Samarthāi ko Anga* (समर्थाइ को अंग). Both these parts are mentioned in the book ‘Sākhi-granth’.

Sant Kabir says that ‘I am not able to do anything my body is not capable of doing. Whatever is done/happened only because of God and that is the reason behind ‘Kabir’ is ‘Kabir’. Sant Kabir says that ‘you are great O God! You are able to do anything and everything. It is your incomparable method of being aloof while you owe and you are the creator of the world.’

**Reasoning**

‘Reason is a fallible human tool for discovering truth or grasping reality. Although reason aims at the truth, it may fall short. In addition, rationality is more a matter of *how* one believes than *what* one believes. This has relevance for a discussion of ‘Belief in God’ because “the rationality of religious belief” is typically discussed abstractly, independent of any particular believer and

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73 Kabir, *Sākhi Granth*, Bhed ko Anga – 2  
74 ibid, Shakshibhoto ko Anga –1  
75 http://www.ldolphin.org/reveln.html  
76 Kabir, *Sākhi Granth*, Samarthai ko Anga –5  
77 ibid – 11
often believed to be settled once and for all either positively or negatively
(say, by Aquinas or Hume respectively). The proper question should be, "Is
belief in God rational for this person in that time and place?"

In the philosophy of Sant Kabir we find him making people more rational by
putting questions directly on their beliefs and faith. He breaks through all
misconceptions, misbelieves and blind faiths. Sant Kabir says 'if by praying
to stone one can have realization of God then let me pray to a mountain. It's
better to have a grinding wheel stone than that a stone statue of God.' He
says by installing stone statues people started doing business. They made a
stone as world lord. It cannot speak even if you paid for it/you bought it.
He says 'You have gathered some pebbles and stones and made a mosque out
of it. Standing on it you give azan as if your Allah is deaf.'

Sant Kabir says 'Even if you reside on the bank of river Ganga, and drink its
pure water; you will not be liberated until you do Simran, chanting the Nām.'
Sant Kabir says that All prayer, services, rules and religious practices are like
playing with dolls; until you recognize the real/ultimate being and being
without any doubts.' Thus he compelled people to think of their beliefs
reasonably and rationally. He says 'it will be possible only when you start
thinking rationally and become doubtless. You will realize real God who
dwell in your heart.'

One God

God by himself is the one Ultimate, Transcendent Reality, Nirguna (without
attributes), Timeless, Boundless, Formless, Ever-existent, Immutable,
Ineffable, All-by Himself and even Unknowable in His entirety. The only
nomenclatures (a system of naming things, especially in a branch of science)
that can rightly be applied to Him in this state of Sunn (Sanskrit, Sunya or

78 http://www.iep.utm.edu/relig-ep/
79 Kabir, Sākhi Granth, Bhram Vidhvansa ko Anga – 3
80 ibid – 6
81 ibid – 20
82 ibid – 30
83 ibid – 23
84 ibid – 58
void) are Brahman and Par-Brahman (Sanskrit Parbrahman) or the pronouns He and Thou.

It is in Šabda of seven days- (because our whole life is divided into 7 days, none of us have eight days to live). Sant Kabir describes the pathway to realize God step by step in a seven day period. In this there are some pre-requisites. They are one should sing the glorious praises of the Lord each and every day. (As in our normal life we have to take name of that which we want) Further, he says that, meeting with the Guru, you shall come to know the mystery of the Lord. So, singing the praises of Lord and meeting a Guru are pre-requisites. Now, the question arises ... what is God? How does one know His Nām? Sant Kabir says .... do not be asleep .... Wake-up and think about God. He says, if Lord Allah lives only in the mosque, then to whom does the rest of the world belong? According to the Hindus, the Lord's name abides in the idol, but there is no truth in either of these claims. .... So search in your heart - look deep into your heart of hearts; this is the home and the place where God lives. ... If someone has deception in his heart, what good is it for him to utter prayers? And what good is it for him to go on pilgrimage? You fashioned all these men and women, Lord. All these are Your Forms. Kabir is the child of God, Allah, Ram. This is a very important Šabda, because it sows the seed of a Social God. Here it is said that the almighty God does not belong to any particular religion, creed, society, man, class, caste, age, place, ritual, worship, methods of praying, scholar or any name. It is All, One and dwells in pure hearts. This was a revolutionary step during those days.

He dwells in all. Sant Kabir says that the God is without second. He is separate from the world still the world is within Him. God is distinguishable from the world but He has His identity. Creation, Sustenance and Demolition are the three aspects of God. These aspects we can see all the time in the world. Something is being created, something is in existence and something is being destroyed.

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85 SGGS, p. 344
86 Kabir, Kabir Granthawali, Sumiran ko Anga – 2
87 SGGS, p. 1349
God is not the totality of all things in the universe. That is, it is not that God is disintegrated and the parts are the universe that we can see and feel. But God is the One, He manifests Himself in the universe and still He is not bounded by any part or the universe as a whole. He transcends the universe.

'Even though God manifested Himself into particulars He remains One as whole. That God is non-dual, is only another way of saying that He is free absolutely; God is free to be One, not bound to be One. Even particulars are not full or not having fullness but they are the expressions of God. God’s expression of Himself in particular things neither add to His Being nor does it disintegrate Him.'

Dr. Nirbhai Singh explains that 'non-duality of God in another way by explaining the nature of non-dual Reality in terms of impersonal and personal unity. God as Kartā Purukh creates and manifests forms out of itself and within itself. What is not manifested is the Nirgun aspect of the Reality and the manifested one is the Sagun aspect of the Reality.'

In Sant Kabir’s Padawali, God is described as being both Nirgun and Saguna. 'He is both with and without attributes. God is Ajar, Amar and Alakha we cannot describe the attributes of God. We cannot describe the shape, color or form of God. He pervades all beings. Though it is said that He is in pinda, in each part of universe, in all bodies, but in the real sense He has no beginning and no end.'

Sagunatva

The word Sagun means with form or and with attributes. In the philosophy of Sant Kabir God is without form and attribute-less. He says in Kabir Granthawali - 'O God! No one knows your real form and they describe you as something else which is false. The Vedas and all four philosophies are produced only to introduce your real form. But they failed in doing so.’

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88 Kabir, Kabir Granthawali, Pivpichan ko Anga – 1 and 2
90 Kabir, Kabir Granthawali, pada – 180
91 ibid - 47
further states that, "Who can explain the form and outline of God? Who else
was there who saw Him? Who can explain His clan and secret? ... In that state
there is neither day, nor night. Tell me what clan and caste has He? If one
meditates with an empty and relaxed mind, a light manifests in Him. That
Puruṣa is great who is without support." He says, "There did not exist either
the qualified or the unqualified. The difficult path of duality didn't then exist
.... What introduction can be given of that altogether different and unknowable
Puruṣa who does not belong to any town, place or region? To be devoid of all
the three constituents (gunas) is to realize Him. Hence, how could He be
given any Nām?" When God became Sagun or manifest, He made Nature
wherein, He has His seat and is diffused everywhere, and in all directions, in
the form of love. In the philosophy of Sant Kabir God is not an abstraction, or
a mere moral forced but a personal Being, capable of being loved and
honored, yet, diffused all over creation. God has no incarnations; He does not
take birth, a father to all. He moulds people; he is the potter with human clay.
He is Truth, Beauty and eternal yearning of the heart after Truth. Sant Kabir
says, 'God is all pervading. It is each and every part of the world. The various
forms of the world is God only. People call it by different names but It cannot
be drenched by anyone nor could it be lit by any external light. It never goes
and comes from anywhere to anywhere.'

The Saguna when adjoined with the word 'Bhakti' becomes 'Saguna-Bhakti'.
This type of Bhakti not knowledge or logic based. Saguna Bhakti implies: the
five senses dedicated to God, worshipping with ones heart, remembering God
with hymns. It is easy to follow, as we depend on God's blessings to worship
effectively. Reciting God's name or hymns (even without understanding the
meaning, as most of us do at present) is part of Saguna Bhakti. Sant Kabir
says in this context that 'you should devote yourself to Nirgun Rām i.e.
attributeless or formless God. Because no one knows the velocity of God....
those who have fully surrendered themselves to God only can know the
reality of God.'

92 Kabir, Bijak Ramaini - 6
93 ibid - 7
94 Kabir, Kabir Granthāwali, pada - 50
95 ibid - 49
He is the Creator of the World

In Sri Guru Granth Sahib Sant Kabir says 'the creator (khāliqu) is in all elements (purrahio) of the creation (khalq) and the creation (khalq) is in the creator (khāliqu).'

'The creative attribute of God is very often mentioned in Sant Kabir's Bani in terms of Nirguna, Brahman is sometime called Aparabrahman. By its free volition or it causes sapara Brahman to appear. The term para is another symbolic usage like sound or light and thus a new name for Logos. Para represent the first divine impulse or act, which we decide to associate with Satnām. Here, we see that Satnām cannot be equated with Nirguna Brahman. In terms of the tree tier description of Brahman, Satnām is either Nirguna-Nirankār and nor Saguna-Sākāra, but midway between the two, i.e. Saguna-Nirankār and Saguna-Sākāra. Thus it is kept in the region of para of first character, as well as its infinity and eternity. Its infinity implies that all the divine qualities that are manifested in the world are present in Satnām in a potential form; Satnām is thus the locus of possibilities. When some of its qualities become an actuality in manifestation, the world is created and beings evolve.

God, when actualizing such qualities, is called Karatāpurakha, when possessing them in their ideal form, differentiated from one another, it is called Satnām; when possessing them in their undifferentiated form which is the same thing as to say that he does not possess any qualities, it is called Oamkar. The inner meanings of Šābda, Nām, Satnām, Nirankār, Gurujoti, Gursabda are the same provided they are taken in their celestial aspect.'

Saguna Bhakti

Saguna Bhakti also includes idol worship, the worship of God in human form, which is the inevitable effect of vyakti-pujā. In those days the real meaning behind all these rituals has been lost. It was just a blind following as Sant Kabir says, 'Because of various desires and hopes you worship the stone. As

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96 SGGS, p. 1350
being a human and bowing down in front of inanimate object means you are blind. What is the use of worshiping the stone, which cannot ever answer? Sant Kabir says, 'Even Japa, tapa or pilgrimage all are false, essence less.'

**Man to God Relation**

Man to God relation is an essential point as man and God has special kind of relation. It is not just creator and creation relationship but it is further more of its own kind. There are some bases on which the relation with God can be discussed. They are –

a) Essentially there is no difference in the God – the supreme Self and an individual self. Sant Kabir says, 'The creature is in Brahma, and Brahma is in the creature they are ever distinct, yet ever united.'

b) Due to ignorance and ego the soul is departed or separated from God. And therefore after realizing this soul of devotee suffers from the suffering of separation. It is known as 'Virah' in Sant Kabir's philosophy.

c) All dualities like birth-death, merit-demerit, day-night, good-bad are for the soul and it does not extended to God. Because God is infinite Being. If we attach these dualities to God it will last forever.

d) Soul can merge with God with the grace of God and with the help of Satguru – the Śabda.

Relation between man and God is on two levels. The first is on the Abstract level and second is on Personal level. On the abstract level it is a relation between creator to the universe or with the creation. At the 'Personal level' the relation between man and God is of the existence of a person who is also a part of the creation. The relation at abstract level makes us feel the part of

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Greatness like a drop of ocean, image of God, spark of fire, and so on and so forth.

Abstract Level

Abstract level relation is on the basis of the very essence that soul and God shares. In the philosophy of Sant Kabir we find him talking about this as God is like fire and souls are like spark of that fire. He says 'Fire is Ram. It contains in all beings.' in the book by R. Tagore One Hundred Poems of Kabir it is in a poem ... "The Supreme Soul is seen within the soul, The Point is seen within the Supreme Soul, And within the Point, and the reflection is seen again." Sant Kabir uses the analogy of the relationship between seed and a tree. The relation is of Sun and light the word and meaning. Sant Kabir says, 'Because it has been named as wave, shall it no longer be considered as water? Within the Supreme Brahman, the worlds are being told like beads. Look upon that rosary with the eyes of wisdom.'

Personal level

Personal level relation makes our insight more clear. As God pervades in all each and every part and parcel of the universe and fall in love with God leads to fall in love with each and every part in which It dwells. Thus a person develops a sense of intimate relationship with his surrounding and the feeling of love develops. The capacity of tolerance increases. The person starts serving not with any selfish motto but to express his love towards God. The feeling of gratitude comes when he thinks that God is master and giver of all. The feeling of humility comes when he thinks that God is master and he is a

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100 Kabir, Kabir Granthāwali, Sadha Sakhibhut ko Anga, Sākhi – 19  
101 ibid, Vichar ko Anga, Sākhi – 10  
102 Tagore R., One Hundred Poems of Kabir, The Macmillan Co. Of Canada, Ltd. Toronto  
103 ibid  
104 ibid  
105 ibid  
106 Tagore R., One Hundred Poems of Kabir, The Macmillan Co. Of Canada, Ltd. Toronto  
107 Kabir, Bijak, Šabda – 27
slave of Him\textsuperscript{108}. The feeling of intense love comes when he establish a relationship with God of a husband and wife\textsuperscript{109}. The feeling of fairmindedness comes when we consider God as justice or as a controller (क्रियान्वेंता) of the world and we are been controlled by Him\textsuperscript{110}. Thus one can follow the code of conduct without worrying about injustice done to him. When a personal level relationship is developed the feeling of near and dear comes. The person feels that God is not far but nearer\textsuperscript{111} to him like the breath. The relationship with God at personal level turns a person towards dealing with social affairs and not to run from worldly affairs. It is the relationship in which God comes near in the life of a person and person does not need to leave householder's life.

**Absolute Being**

'The English word, absolute, has come from the Middle French "absolute," which originated from Latin "absolutus," a past participle of "absolvo," a verb, meaning "to set free, end, and complete," and "detached, pure."\textsuperscript{112}

Absolute Being is the idea discussed by many philosophers. Here are some of the main ideas from the different religious views:

'Hinduism has an idea of 'Brahman' in the sense of the 'Absolute Being'. 'Brahman, as understood by the scriptures of Hinduism, as well as by the 'Ācaryas' of the Vedanta school, is a very specific conception of the Absolute. This is a unique conception of Hinduism. Thus, to even call this conception of Brahman "God" is, in a sense, somewhat imprecise. This is the case because Brahman does not refer to the anthropomorphic concept of God of the Abrahmaic religions. Brahman is neither the "old man in the sky" concept, nor the idea of the Absolute as even capable of being vengeful, fearful or engaging in choosing a favorite people from among Its creatures. Brahman is genderless. Rather it transcends all empirically discernable categories, limitations and dualities.

\textsuperscript{108} Kabir, *Kabir Padâwali*, pada – 113
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid, Râg Gaudi – 1
\textsuperscript{110} Kabir, *Bijak, Sâkhi* – 47
\textsuperscript{111} Kabir, *Kabir Padâwali*, pada – 8
\textsuperscript{112} http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Absolute_(philosophy)
In the 'Taittariya Upanishad' II.1, Brahman is described in the following manner: "satyamjnanamanantam brahma", "Brahman is of the nature of truth, knowledge and infinity." Infinite positive qualities and states have their existence secured solely by virtue of Brahman's very reality. Brahman is a necessary reality, eternal (i.e., beyond the purview of temporality), fully independent, non-contingent, and the source and ground of all things. Brahman is both immanently present in the realm of materiality, interpenetrating the whole of reality as the sustaining essence that gives it structure, meaning and existential being, yet Brahman is simultaneously the transcendent origin of all things thus, panentheistic.

As the primary causal substance of material reality (jagatkarana), Brahman does not arbitrarily will the coming into being of the non-Brahman metaphysical principles of matter and jivas (individuated consciousness), but rather they are manifest into being as a natural result of the overflowing of Brahman's grandeur, beauty, bliss and love. Brahman cannot but create abundant good in a similar manner to how Brahman cannot but exist. Both existence and overflowing abundance are as much necessary properties of Brahman as love and nurturing are necessary qualities of any virtuous and loving mother.\(^{113}\)

One can say that Brahman Itself (Him/Herself) constitutes the essential building material of all reality, being the antecedent primeval ontological substance from whence all things proceed. There is no \textit{ex nihilo} creation in Hinduism. Brahman does not create from nothing, but from the reality of Its own being. Thus Brahman is, in Aristotelian terms, both the Material Cause as well as the Efficient Cause of creation.\(^{114}\)

'Being itself and the special sub-categories of it which follow, as well as those of logic in general, may be looked upon as definitions of the Absolute, or metaphysical definitions of God\(^{115}\)

\(^{113}\) http://hinduism.about.com/od/basics/a/brahman.htm
\(^{114}\) http://hinduism.about.com/od/basics/a/brahman.htm
\(^{115}\) https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/sl/sbeing.htm
Nam

Nam is the immanent aspect of God. The Immanent aspect indicates God’s love for His creation. In Sant Kabir’s philosophy the immanent aspect of God, which is called His Nam or Šabda, is of great importance. The Nam or Šabda gives direction and sanction to the entire moral and spiritual life of man. My mind remembers the Ram and it became Ram. Now mind and Ram became one, to who should I bow? My mind is contented with the Support of the Nam. God, the Lord and Master, is totally permeating the water and the land.

Nam can be defined as the Essence of the Universe. Sant Kabir says that Nam is the essence of the universe. Saints drink in the Lord’s Ambrosial Essence with their tongues. The Nam is not only the essence of the universe but it is the basic ingredient of you. The Nam is all goodness. Goodness is always inseparable from Truth and Beauty - the basic attributes of God.

The Nam is the only tool to be liberated, according to Sant Kabir. The chanting of the Nam leads to the pathway of realisation of God. Nam has the capacity to change physically. Sant Kabir says that ‘I tried all ways of life but like God (and His Nam) nothing else I can find. Even a little drop of that comes in body it has power to make the whole body gold.’ In the mind of the devotee, name creates a strong faith in God. The name is the cause and the immortal faith in God is the result. Sant Kabir says that my body is like a pādul (a type of flower which has an attractive red colour) in which my mind is like a fly staying there. This flower nourished by the Nam on which we get the fruit of faith. The Nam not only gives a strong and attractive personality but full faith in the God. It is through the experience of Nam that a man not only affirms his own individuality but also respects the individuality in others in actuality.

116 Kabir, Kabir Granthawali, Sumiran ko Anga – 8
117 Ibid – 9
118 Kabir, Bijak, Šabda – 11
119 Kabir, Kabir Granthawali, Chitavani ko Anga – 38
120 Ibid, Ras ko Anga – 8
121 Ibid, Bisbas ko Anga – 16
Dr. R. D. Ranade in his book ‘Pathway to God realisation in Hindi literature’ says that ‘In a Šabda of Sant Kabir जग-मय जोत निम्न मन्दिर में, the aspirant would be able to see the glittering light of God inside his heart. We should offer our body and mind and possessions as oblation on the Divine altar. It is the name, therefore, says Sant Kabir, which thus brings together the Self and God.’

Sant Kabir says only after hearing ‘Šabda’ or Nām the person gets the power of rational thinking. He can make decisions properly. The ‘Šabda’ or Nām is like a boat in the world which protects the devotee (a person who chants Nām) Nām has the capacity to protect from the vices. (kām, krodha, lobha, moha, and ahankar, and all other pains of the world).

‘Nām and Rupa are the two "attributes" of God. Thought and extension are the two attributes of substance but do not constitute the substance. Similarly Nām and Rupa do not constitute God, but they are the attributes of God. The double-aspect theory implies that Nām and Rupa are the obverse and the reverse sides of the same coin, or the two different facets of the same diamond, namely God.’

Conclusion

In the philosophy of Sant Kabir we find the development of idea of God is to realize God and for self-experience. Sant Kabir says that the one who has experience of God can be recognized by the other who has also experienced

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122 Dr. R. D. Ranade, Pathway to God realisation in Hindi literature, p.114
123 Kabir, Kabir Granthāwali, Nirguna ko Anga – 7
God. For that person Sant Kabir uses a term 'Bhedī' (बहेदी) means who knows the secret or one who has the direct experience of God. God is one. It is not the totality of whole. It is free to be One. It is non dual and absolute. Sant Kabir used local language and local names of God to convey his message.

The idea of God accepted by Sant Kabir is attributeless – Nirguna. In Sant Kabir’s philosophy the immanent aspect of God, which is called His Nām or Šabda, is of great importance. The Nām or Šabda gives direction and sanction to the entire moral and spiritual life of man. Nām as the idea of God is accepted by all members of the society- they may be man or woman, child or adult, old or young, strong or ill, literate or illiterate, rich or poor... and so on. Thus with the Nām-Simran, God realization becomes possible for all without any restrictions of following rigid ritualistic life. He wanted to lead all men to the love of the lord with devotion and live a righteous life, as well as a good moral and social life which is free from all blind faith.