

# Poems of Kabir

*(Translated by Dr. J. Das)*

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## 1. Kabir – The Mystic Master (by J. Das)

A poor weaver was he,  
Whose name was Kabir,  
Found abandoned among lotus flowers,  
By young Muslim weavers of tender heart;  
Trained to ply his humble trade,  
Heart piercing poems did he compose.  
To comply with prevailing custom,  
A Hindu saint he took as guru;  
Grown in mature spiritual wisdom,  
Hypocrisies in religions he decried;  
Ritualism of little value he taught,  
Was not the way to salvation.  
Reaching the true depth of his being,  
And tasting the nectar of immortality,  
He fearlessly taught the true doctrine:  
“Meditate and find Divinity within,  
With pure heart, realize His omnipresence;  
And dedicate yourself day and night,  
In uttering His Name with feeling”;  
Fearlessly he preached to all humanity,  
Heeding not their caste or breeding.  
Fearless before kings and priests,  
Not bowing to their temporal power.  
Only to God did he pay obeisance,  
And taught his disciples the pure path;  
Depending on no one for his needs,  
He taught selfless service to all alike.  
Many devotees heeding his teaching,  
In equality, they found true meaning;  
For life’s a journey quite unpredictable,  
But the Divine hand gives true guidance  
To all those filled with love unending.  
Humility he taught was pre-requisite,  
To scale the ladder to the Eternal Abode.  
Ego robs your heart of true devotion,

And greed brings grief in abundance.  
Anger robs you of logical reasoning,  
And lust drives you to perdition.  
Such passions must be subdued,  
By a mind disciplined and steady.  
The rewards will be great serenity,  
To be enjoyed as your true destiny.  
Be not fooled by presumed piety,  
Of those who deceive the gullible.  
Be wise your intellect to use,  
And see the straight path to Divinity.  
Let your heart be your trusted guide,  
Free from illusion and religious strife.  
God dwells in you and you in God,  
For this is the Divine Union,  
Of which enlightened masters speak.  
Sell yourself not short ignorantly,  
But see the Divine Spark inwardly.  
Attune yourself to this Pure Light,  
Which shines as your eternal soul.  
Life has no greater undertaking,  
Than to be masters of your destiny.  
Entangled in the web of mundane life,  
Will keep you in bondage unending.  
Look to the farther beckoning shore,  
Where the nectar of bliss is flowing.  
Let God be the expert boatman,  
Plying deftly the oars to salvation.  
So did Guru Kabir teach years ago –  
A teaching resonant to this day.  
Hearken to his divine instruction,  
If your spiritual welfare you cherish.  
You alone have the magic power,  
To bid Heaven's Gate open for you.  
Taste the nectar of divine bliss,  
And your life will be truly blessed.

Having perfected yourself in this life,  
Bid farewell with flowers of love.

## 2. Intoxication with God's love

*(haman hai ishka mastana)*

I am intoxicated with God's love!  
I have no need for cleverness,  
Since I am a free being in this world.  
I do not have any need to court  
The friendship of the worldly ones!  
He who is separated from the lover,  
Wanders longingly from door to door.  
But my dearly Beloved is in me,  
So I do not have to keep looking for Him.  
People everywhere struggle for name and fame,  
And they endure much suffering.  
But I am replete with the Lord's wisdom,  
And have no need for such vainglory!  
My Beloved is never away from me.  
And I am surely never separated from Him!  
If such is my deep love for Him always  
What need do I have for restless longing?  
Kabir says, "I am united with my Beloved.  
I have given up duality from the heart!  
This is indeed a most delicate path,  
And I traverse it without a burden of sins".

## 3. Wasting this Life

*(tai birtha janamu gawayaya re)*

Foolishly you are wasting this life!  
You are not contemplating wisdom!  
Your eyes become tired from looking!  
And your ears from listening.  
Your beautiful body also becomes tired.  
Even birth and death become tired,  
Seeing that you are mired in illusion.

As long as the breath of life persists,  
So long are you subject to illusion.  
Devotion departs from your heart,  
And your nature does not change.  
Go and dwell at the feet of the Lord!  
He who worships the Eternal wisely,  
Will never face destruction.  
Kabir says, "Throw the dice of life wisely,  
And you will never lose the game of life".

#### **4. Nothing separate from God**

*(sadho ram bina kachhu nahi)*

O holy man, there is nothing separate from God.  
God is in front and also behind.  
And it is God speaking through me.  
God is in the North and the South.  
He is also in the East and the West.  
God pervades Heaven, Hell and Earth,  
And He reposes in the universe.  
God is in your standing and sitting,  
And he is in your waking and sleeping.  
I see nothing but God everywhere.  
For He is immanent in His creation.  
God resides in all things that do not move,  
And in all beings that do move.  
Realize Him in the Word, full of love.  
God's existence is eternal,  
He is the universal speaker.  
Continuously devote yourself to Him,  
And always sing His glory.  
Kabir says, "God abolishes your ego".

#### **5. Sing the Glories of God**

*(nar ram sumir pachchitayega)*

O man! Sing the glories of God.  
Do not be remorseful later!  
The sinner is engrossed in greed,

But soon all will be lost.  
People waste their life in greed,  
Deceived by illusion and doubt.  
Do not be proud of wealth and youth.  
They dissolve as paper in water.  
Think of the God of Death,  
Clutching you by the hair.  
On that day you'll have no dwelling place.  
You refrained from reciting God's name,  
And stayed away from devotion.  
You banished compassion from your heart.  
Think of the slaps you'll endure,  
When the Upholder of Law checks your credentials.  
What face can you show Him?  
Kabir says, "Listen to me, dear brothers,  
Go in the company of holy people,  
And you will easily have liberation".

## 6. Beautiful Maiden, Wake Up

*(jagu piyari ab kya sowe)*

O beautiful maiden, wake up!  
Why are you now sleeping?  
The night has gone,  
Why sleep through the day?  
The one who stays awake,  
Gets the precious gem.  
You sleep, wasting your life.  
Only severe suffering will follow you.  
Your Beloved is truly wise,  
But you are indeed a foolish lady.  
Why did you not adorn  
The bed for your beloved?  
Wake up! Look!  
Your beloved is not in the bed!  
He departed early in the morning.  
He has abandoned you!  
Kabir says, "That lady wakes

Whose heart is pierced  
By the Master's Word!"

## 7. Recite God's Names

*(ihi tat ram japhahu re prani)*

O man! Recite God's Name!  
Realize the Absolute!  
Understand His indescribable glory!  
God's grace showered on you  
Will awaken you from the illusory world.  
The mind is verily trapped by illusion.  
The five senses quarrel,  
Wanting their special enjoyments.  
They make a loud noise.  
Cravings assail the body,  
That is the home of all desires.  
The mind is not destroying them.  
The world is burning  
With the fire of cravings,  
But the liberated soul rejoices.  
It's hunting the wild animals –  
Lust, anger, greed and egotism.  
Kabir says, "That person is knowledgeable  
Who understands this teaching.  
He obtains liberation and liberates others.  
I accept such a one as guru".

## 8. Dwelling amidst the waves of knowledge

*(avadhu gyan lahari dhuni mandi re)*

O renunciate! The devotee made his dwelling  
Amidst the waves of knowledge.  
In the divine unstruck melody  
He has purged his worldly cravings,  
And his soul ascended  
The mountain peak of meditation.  
He drinks the nectar of God's love,

And he becomes intoxicated,  
With the fruit of eternal knowledge.  
The fruit yielded without cultivation.  
The enlightened soul weaves a beautiful fabric,  
Using the thread of noble actions.  
On the peg of meditation  
The soul casts the warp and weft  
And makes the beautiful fabric.  
Kabir says, "Listen to me, dear brothers,  
The enlightened state is an experience  
That's unfathomable.  
By God's grace, the elephant-like mind  
Passes easily through the needle's eye".

## 9. You are in the sleep of ignorance

*(Pade avidya men sone wale)*

O Sleeper! You are in the sleep of ignorance!  
How long will you sleep?  
How long will it be for your eyes to open?  
For how long you'll be engaged  
In only making preparations  
To seek the refuge of the Master.  
Your childhood days of play are gone,  
And your youth will be short-lived.  
In old age you'll endure suffering.  
For how long will you remain ignorant?  
You have a beautiful decorated home,  
And a beautiful wife.  
You have become intoxicated  
As your wealth increased.  
For how long will you remain lost?  
Ceremonies and rituals are fruitful  
Only for attaining temporary happiness.  
They cannot abolish your rebirths.  
For how long will you endure suffering?  
Kabir gives you instruction  
But to accept or not is your right.

Whether you listen or not,  
When will you contemplate truth?

## 10. Divine Nectar Flows

*(ras gagan guphaa mein ajar jharai)*

Divine nectar flows in the celestial cave.  
There, the music plays without instruments.  
You experience this in your meditation.  
There the lotus blooms without water.  
And the swan delights in frolicking there.  
There is moonlight without the moon,  
And wherever you look, you will see swans.  
At the tenth door there is clapping of hands,  
As you behold the Invisible Lord in meditation.  
Formidable death remains far from you,  
And lust, anger and egotism burn away.  
The thirst of age after age is quenched,  
And all karmas, doubts and sufferings disappear.  
Kabir says, "Listen, my dear brothers,  
You will attain immortality, never to die."

*(The swan metaphorically is the liberated soul. The tenth door is the state of transcending body consciousness [9 apertures: 2 eyes, 2 nostrils, 2 ears, mouth, anus, genital organ]. The apertures stand for the body. All the experiences Kabir mentions are those in Self or God realization – a state of liberation.)*

## 11. Who is there to hear my Request?

*(tum bin kown sunai prabhu mori)*

Other than you, O Lord!  
Who is there to hear my request?  
You, O Lord, are the support of all.  
Shower your grace on me!  
With folded hands I entreat you:  
Remove your servant's suffering!  
Whenever your devotees suffer,  
You quickly render assistance.

Who's been deficient and who's asleep?  
Whence did the servant Kabir tarry?  
O Master! I have come to your refuge.

## 12. O Lord! How will the days unfold?

*(kaise din biti ram)*

O Lord! How will the days unfold?  
Please continue to show the way!  
On this side is a river  
And on the other side is another.  
In between please erect my thatched hut!  
I'll tear my shawl  
And use it as paper,  
And I'll write what's in my heart!  
Listen to what Kabir says,  
"O Brother devotees!  
I'll take you by the arm  
And show you the way!"

*(rivers are birth and death)*

## 13. Offer your devotion to God, dear brother

*Bhajo re bhaiya*

Offer your devotion to God, dear brother.  
Really! It is quite easy!  
No need is there for recitation or penance,  
Nor for practising austerities.  
And no need is there for money!  
But you are seeking wealth and happiness,  
To appease your desires.  
You have verily forgotten your way!  
Kabir admonishes! "Not having God on your lips,  
You are fit for biting the dust!"

## 14. Without God there is nothing!

*(na kachchu ram bin re)*

Without God there is nothing! Absolutely nothing!  
Your body is truly a gift. Use it wisely,  
In the company of noble people.  
Ten months did God work  
To make the temple of the body.  
But in a moment you can destroy it.  
People are seeking illusive happiness,  
By engaging deeply in cunning pursuits.  
With a mind puffed up with pride,  
They relate to father, mother and son,  
And all other relations, and people.  
Kabir instructs: "Do not be foolish.  
Devote yourself to God,  
And remove all doubts."

### **15. Be devoted to God day and night!**

*(bhajan kar nisdin tute na tar)*

Be devoted to God day and night!  
Let the flow of devotion not cease!  
God is one, manifesting in the universe.  
Moment by moment, minute by minute,  
Be mindful of God's presence.  
Such mindfulness develops by devotion.  
Be immersed in the Divine Melody –  
The melody that says: "I am That."  
Day and night offer devotion to the Divine Master.  
In your body He is the Supreme Soul.  
Kabir utters, "O Brother devotees, listen to me!  
Without a realized Teacher  
There is no liberation for you."

### **16. Through what pride have you forgotten God's name?**

*(bisaryo hari namwa, kown magruri)*

Through what pride have you forgotten God's name?  
There is no cost to you – not even a cowrie!  
It does not take away your wealth  
That you have stashed away!

You have become lost as you peer  
At your decorated jewels and utensils,  
And your heap of belongings.  
You are enamoured by your beautiful skin.  
Realize that your wealth of animals,  
Vehicles and dwellings will be left behind.  
Kabir says, "Dear brothers, heed my words.  
One day the messenger of death will get you."

## 17. God appears in the heart of the devotee

*(Ab ghati pragat bhaye ram rai)*

God appears in the heart of the devotee –  
The devotee whose body is as good as gold!  
As with a testing stone  
The goldsmith tests the gold,  
The devotee tests his heart  
With the testing stone of devotion.  
And as his mind steadies,  
Divine Knowledge awakens in him!  
Having searched for God outside  
His life was wasted.  
Now his mind turned inward.  
He meditates.  
He has found God within.  
The body, as valueless as tin,  
Has been transformed.  
It is now valuable as pure gold.

## 18 When will you, O devotee

*(apne bichari asbari kijai)*

When will you, O devotee,  
Place your legs in the stirrups of union?  
When will you ride the horse  
Of Self Realization?  
Place the bit to control the mind,  
And turn away from sensual desires!

Ride speedily to your eternal destination!  
I will take you to God  
On the same horse I'll ride.  
If perchance the horse tires,  
I'll strike him with the whip of love.  
The rider of this horse, says Kabir,  
Will rise above the limitation of scriptures.

### **19. I do know my Self**

*(Apne mein rangi apanpo janun)*

I do know my Self.  
I'm absorbed  
In the color of my real Self.  
When I'm absorbed in the color of love  
People would say Kabir is mad.  
Those remaining ignorant  
Do not perceive the color of God's love.  
God's love colors the entire world.  
That color never vanishes, says Kabir,  
In that color of God's love  
I remain completely absorbed

### **20. O holy man, there is nothing apart from God!**

*(Sadho ram bina kachhu nahi)*

O holy man, there is nothing apart from God!  
God is in front and also behind.  
It is God speaking in me.  
God is in the North and the South;  
He is also in the West and the East.  
God pervades Heaven, Hell and Earth  
And He reposes in the universe.  
God is in the standing and sitting,  
And he manifests in the waking and sleeping.  
I see nothing but God everywhere.  
For all of creation is His work.  
God manifests in all things that do not move,  
And in all beings that move.

Be full of love. Realize Him in the Word.  
God's existence is eternal,  
He is the Universal Speaker.  
Continuously devote yourself to Him,  
And always sing His glory.  
Kabir advises: "Your ego vanishes  
When God touches you.

## 21. The fish in the water is thirsty

*(pani men meen piyasi)*

"The fish in the water is thirsty".  
Hearing this gives me laughter.  
Not knowing the soul, man wanders aimlessly,  
Searching in the holy cities – Mathura and Kashi,  
Just as the musk deer, with musk in the navel,  
Searches the forest sadly for the source.  
See the lotus in the water,  
And in the lotus, the bud;  
There the bee alights, gathering nectar.  
Let the same concentration be in the three worlds  
Even as the ascetics and renunciates do.  
He on whom Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva meditate,  
As do the countless renowned sages,  
He dwells in your own heart –  
He who is the Eternal Lord.  
At this moment, He is present with you,  
But you say He is far away,  
Sad is the heart accepting such words.  
Kabir says, "O brother devotees, listen to me!  
"Without a true guru your doubts remain".