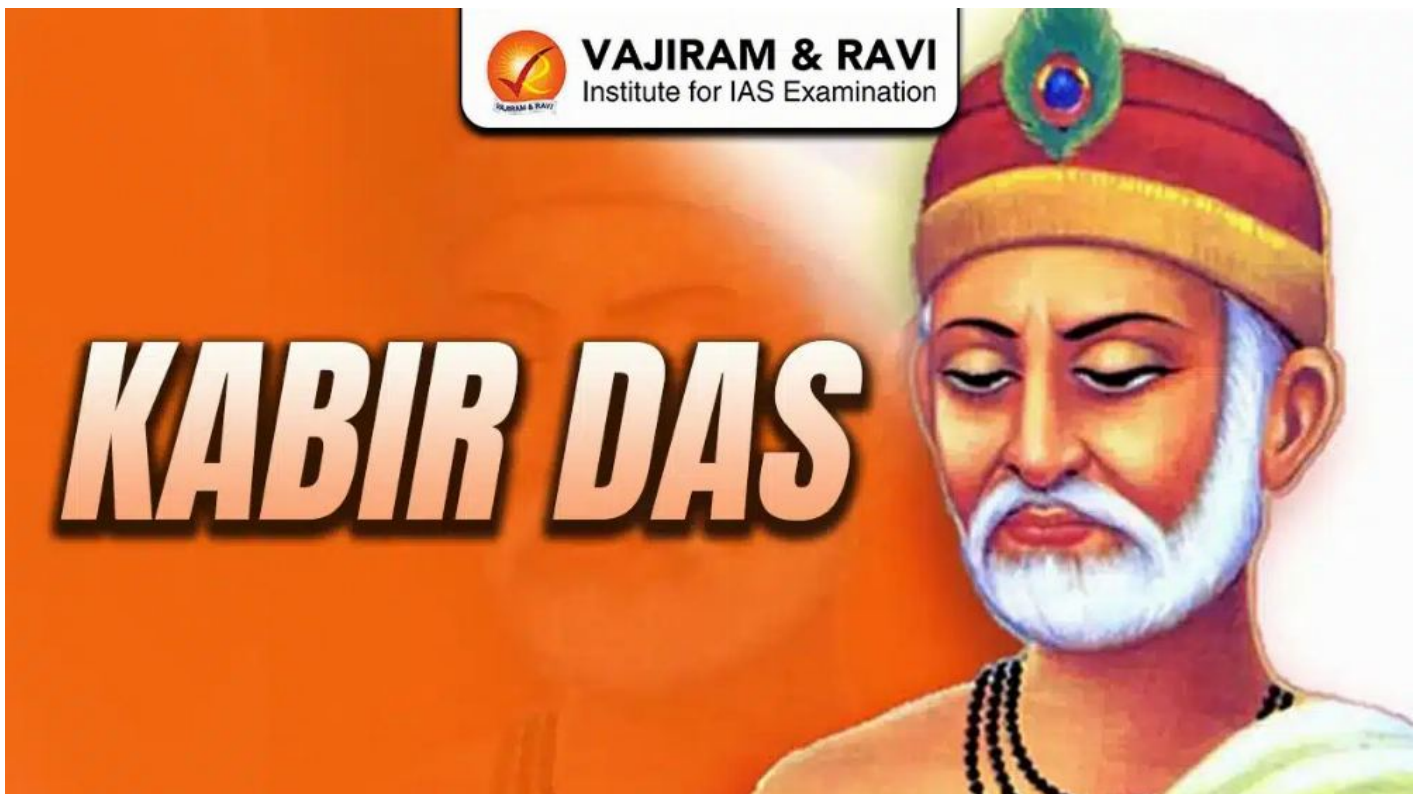


Kabir Das, Early Life, Teachings, Bhakti Movement, Literary Works

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Kabir Das was a **mystic poet and a popular Bhakti saint of medieval India**. He is regarded as **one of the most influential figures of the Bhakti movement**, which sought to bring religion closer to the common people through devotion, ethical living, and social reform.

Kabir Das Early Life and Background

While the exact details of Kabir's birth remain unclear, he is believed to have **lived between 1440 and 1518**. He was **born** in the city of **Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh**, with some stories suggesting he was born to a Brahmin mother but raised by a Muslim weaver.

Though he didn't receive any formal education but from an early age, he was deeply drawn to spiritual inquiry. In his quest for spiritual enquiry, he became a **disciple of Saint Ramananda**, a prominent Hindu Bhakti saint of medieval India.

Kabir and the Bhakti Movement

The Bhakti movement was a **religious and cultural movement in India** that **emphasized personal devotion over caste, rituals, and orthodoxy**. It **promoted equality, religious harmony, and devotion as the path to salvation**. It **began in the 7th century in South India** and began to spread across north India in the 14th and the 15th centuries.

One school within the **Bhakti movement** was the **Nirguni tradition** and Kabir Das was a prominent member of it. In this tradition, **God was understood to be a universal and formless being**.

Kabir Das Teachings

Kabir Das' teachings were secular and universal and therefore he was **respected across different religious traditions**. Sikhs regard him as a precursor to **Guru Nanak**, Muslims associate him with Sufi lineages, and Hindus venerate him as a Nirguna saint.

His teachings are as follows:

- **Monotheism:** There is only one God (Nirguna), who is formless and resides within the heart of every living being.
- **Rejection of Rituals:** Kabir rejected formal worship, idolatry, scriptural knowledge and emphasised on personal spiritual experience as the true path to knowledge.
- **Social Equality:** He opposed the caste system and other forms of discrimination. For Kabir, the divine (Brahman) and truth (Satya) exist in all living beings (jiva), and therefore humans must transcend the divisions of "me" and "you".
- **Simple living:** He believed in simple living as a householder and rejected severe asceticism.

Kabir Das preached his teachings in simple vernacular language like Awadhi, Bhojpuri, and Braj, making his ideas accessible to common people.

After his death, his teachings were carried forward by his followers, who formed the **Kabir Panth**, a community that believes in devotion to a formless God, rejecting idol worship and caste distinctions. Two major centres emerged -Kabir Chaura at Banaras, established by his disciple Surat Gopal, and Dham Khera in Chhattisgarh, founded by Dharamdas.

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Kabir Das Literary Works

Kabir Das writings were not composed as formal books but were orally transmitted and later compiled by his followers in works such as the **Bijak, Kabir Granthavali, and Anurag Sagar**. A large amount of Kabir's works were compiled by the fifth Sikh Guru, **Guru Arjan Dev**, and placed in the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib.

Sant Kabir Das used everyday metaphors, sharp satire, and paradoxes to criticise caste discrimination, ritualism, and religious hypocrisy in both Hinduism and Islam.

His **dohas, also known as shabad or sakhi**, played a major role in the growth of vernacular literature.

He employed a unique literary technique called **ulatbansi** (upside-down language) to convey deeper spiritual meanings.

Relevance of Kabir Das Teachings in Today's World

Kabir's ideas are highly relevant in contemporary society

- His rejection of caste is relevant in addressing social inequality
- Message of religious unity counters communalism and extremism
- Emphasis on inner ethics supports moral governance and integrity
- Simplicity and humanism align with constitutional values
- Encourages critical thinking against blind traditions

In an age of polarization, Kabir's teachings promote tolerance, harmony, and shared humanity.

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Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/kabir-das/>

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