

WALKING WITH “OTHERS”: THE MYSTICAL POETRY OF KABIR

A performance lecture by Shabnam Virmani



Kabir was a 15th-century mystic from India, whose poems and songs have deeply influenced both Hindu and Sikh religions. Although he was born in a Muslim family, he was deeply critical of Islam, Hinduism, and indeed all forms of religion that stress meaningless, external rituals. Instead, Kabir taught that God is truly with and in that person who considers all the creatures of the world to be his own self. His poems teach us that conflict between religions or communities is a kind of collective egotism, which can be “cured” by focusing on God, who is present in our own hearts. In this performance/lecture, Shabnam Virmani will introduce us to the songs of Kabir, and illustrate their continuing relevance for current problems of war, racism, sexism, and religious prejudice.

As he writes,

*Meraa mujh mein kuchch naheen
Jo kuchch hai so teraa
Teraa tujh ko saunp dun
Kyaa laage hai meraa?*

There is nothing in me that's mine
All that is – is yours
I offer to you what's already yours
What can I say is mine?

About the artist: Shabnam Virmani is a filmmaker and singer from India and director of the Kabir Project at the Srishti design institute in Bangalore. Stung by religious riots in her country in 2002, she set out on a series of journeys in quest of the 15th century mystic poet Kabir, exploring how his songs speak to questions of identity, religion, nationalism, impermanence and orality. Struck by the power and contemporary relevance of the poetry of Kabir and other mystics, Sufis and Bauls - the Kabir Project team has now been working for over 14 years in curating it through films, music CDs, books, festivals, workshops and an upcoming web archive. Inspired by the inclusive spirit of folk music, Shabnam took up playing the 5-stringed *tumbura* herself and performs a wide repertoire of folk songs of mystic poets.

Place: Peterskirche, Plöck 70, Heidelberg
Date: 1 November 2017, 7 p.m.

Entry: Free. A donation to cover our costs is welcome.