



The Bijak of Kabir, translated into English

By Ahmad Shah

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PREFACE.

The Bijak of Kabir is written mostly in the Hindi of the Mirzapuri dialect, though some of the hymns show traces also of the Gorakhpuri dialect, which is due, perhaps, to the fact that Kabir spent his last days in Maghadr in the Gorakh-pur district.

I have seen several manuscripts of the Bijak, all written in the Kaithi character with the words not separated. Among these manuscripts, some were quite complete, agreeing with the arrangement of the Raja of Rewah's edition, but without any commentary ; some had only a portion of the Bijak.

The oldest printed edition of the Bijak is dated 1868, and was printed at Benares, but it contains only the following portions of the book :—

Ad Mangal, 84 Ramainis, 12 Kahras, 12 Basants, Ohauntisi, 2 Belis, 2 Ohancharis, 3 Hindolas, Birhuli, 383 Sakhis. To these hymns a commentary is added which is said to have been dictated by Kabir Sahib to the Raja of Bhagel Bansa. In the frontispiece the Raja and Kabir are seated face to face: Kabir is explaining the Bijak and the Raja is listening attentively. The commentary in this edition is on the basis of what is called sngun upasna, the belief in the incarnate Guru.

The second printed edition of the Bijak, which was printed in Calcutta in 1890, was edited by Rev. Prem Ohand, of the Baptist Mission of Monghyr. This is a neat little pocket edition ; the words are separated, but in some places wrongly. The order of the hymns in this edition is peculiar and does not agree with any of the editions published by Kabir Pan til is themselveR, It has 55 more sahhifi than other editions; but their arrangement is so confused that it is diflQcult to compare it with others. There are some valuable foot-notes. Its contents are as follows :—

84 Ramainis, 113 Shabdas, Ohauntisi, Bipramatishi, 2 Ohancharis, Birhuli, 2 Belis, 3 Hindolas, 12 Kahras, 12 Basants, 364 Sakhis, 60 supplementary Sakhis.

The third edition of the Bijak is that printed by the Newal Kishore Press, at Lucknow, in 1898. It is a complete Bijak with commentary by Raja Visliu Nath Singh of Rewah.

The fourth printed edition was issued at Allahabad in 1905. It is called the Bijak, with commentary of Puran Dass of Burhaupur. In this the words are separated, but in places the separation is marked by mistakes and in many places the editor has tried to polish and shape the words into their modern forms, which from a literary standpoint is very unwise. The commentary is what is called nirguu upasna. It has 115 Shahclcis, while other editions have only 113. But these two extra shahdas do not convey any fresh idea, but only what is embodied in the Ad MangaL It has a few saldiis which are not found in the edition of the Raja, but there are some missing in tliis which are found in the Raja's. It contains as follows:

Pritham Anusar, 84 Ramainis, 115 Siiabdas, Chauntisi, Bipramatisi, 12 Kahras, 12 Basants, 2 Ohancharis, 2 Belis, Birhuli, 3 Hindolas, 353 Sakhis.

The last printed edition is tliat from Bombay printed in Samhat 1961 (1906 A. D.). This is the Raja of Rewah's edition, similar to that of the Newal Kishore Press, Lucknow, but it has a life of Kabir in verse and at the end Sayar Pad Bijolc and a genealogy and history of the Bhagel Bansha, and Mul RamainL It has some fresh sahhis and contains an imaginary picture of Kabir and also a likeness of the Raja of Bhagel Bansha. In this edition many mistakes have crept in and in some places the text is spoiled, but it has preserved the original beauty of the language.

After going through all these printed editions as well as some of the available manuscripts, particularly one which I saw in Chunar with Pundit Bhan Partap Tiwari, I tried my best to present the public with a text as accurate as possible in my Hindi Text published in 1911. It is a pity that no ancient MSS. can be consulted. I have separated the words in their proper form and have added foot-notes to show where a foreign word is used. I left the form of the foreign word as it is in

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