

Let's take a look at one of Kabir's poems, "Tell me, O Swan, your ancient tale," now:

Tell me, O Swan, your ancient tale.

From what land do you come,

O Swan? to what shore will you fly?

Where would you take your rest,

O Swan, and what do you seek?

Even this morning, O Swan, awake, arise, follow me!

There is a land where no doubt nor sorrow have rule:

where the terror of Death is no more.

There the woods of spring are a-bloom,

and the fragrant scent "He is I" is borne on the wind:

There the bee of the heart is deeply immersed,

and desires no other joy.

Background Information about the Poet:

Kabir often explores themes—or central ideas—of life, death, and mortality in his poetry. In "Tell me, O Swan, your ancient tale," for example, he describes the harshness and fleetingness of life and the beauty and permanence of the afterlife. Throughout the poem, he uses words like "doubt," "sorrow," and "the terror of Death," to describe life. Conversely, he uses words like "fragrant" and "joy" to describe the afterlife. These words and phrases are all connotatively charged, meaning that most people associate them with powerful, evocative ideas and images. Many people associate the word "joy," for instance, with a feeling of happiness so great that it is often used to describe highly religious or spiritual experiences. Although Kabir didn't subscribe completely to Hinduism, Islam, or any other religion present in India during his lifetime, he was a deeply religious, spiritual man. As such, it should come as no surprise that Kabir chose to explore themes relating to the importance of religion and spirituality. These themes are usually closely connected to the themes relating to life, death, and mortality, which many of his works explore. These themes, coupled with the connotatively charged language he uses to convey them, often imbue Kabir's works with a pious, reverential tone, or authorial attitude. For this reason, Kabir's work is still highly regarded by many pious Hindu and Islamic men and women.