

Singing Oneness

Poems for a Fractured World



*An Anthology inspired by
India's Oral Traditions of Mystical Poetry*



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Singing Oneness: Poems for a Fractured World

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We Are Meant to Sing as One

Bhakti-Sufi Poetry
for a Fractured World

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Sarakpur

Vibhav Kapoor

Introduction

From 'H' were born the Hindus,
And from 'M' came the Muslims.
Only when 'H' and 'M' were woven one,
Did I realise they form the single *Hum*!¹

| *Hum* in Hindustani means 'We' or 'Us' |

A Fractured World. It appears in conversations. The quick sorting of people into categories. The suspicion that attaches itself to names, clothes, accents, inheritances and the like. It shapes public language and private instincts. The world breaks loudly. And sometimes not so loudly and divides through habits so familiar that they pass unnoticed.

The poems gathered here emerge from within that condition. They come from different regions, religions, languages, memories and interior worlds. Some speak in the words of devotional traditions, others arise from classrooms, streets, family histories, digital feeds or moments of solitude. They do not share a single voice or method. What they share is an attentiveness to the question of how one lives meaningfully with difference. How one encounters another without reducing them to a label.

For centuries, Bhakti and Sufi mystic poets have returned to this question with unusual persistence. They spoke in vernacular tongues, addressed listeners across social boundaries and treated song as a way of testing *Truth* (of unity and oneness) in lived experience. Many of the poems in this collection stand in conversation with that inheritance, whether directly or by echo. They pray, doubt, protest, remember, question, confess, accept, refuse, etc. A grandmother invokes three names for the divine while holding her family together. A speaker logs

¹English translation by Raghav Dua of the opening lines of the song 'Allah Elohim' by Shye Ben Tzur, Jonny Greenwood & The Rajasthan Express (2015, *Junun*).

out of a world of *performed belief* to search for honesty. A lover longs for a language in which borders lose their authority. A poet looks at water and sees something that no walls can contain.

To read this anthology is less like following an argument or train of thought and more like moving through a wondrous space. One poem may sharpen what another softens or one voice may disturb what another comforts. Meaning can lie in individual poems or in the relations that exist between them. If you stay long enough, patterns might begin to appear: the recurrence of breath, of hands, of earth, of names, of listening, etc.

Nothing here demands agreement. What is asked for is patience. The undramatic kind that allows unfamiliar voices to become legible over time. In such attention, something subtle occurs: distance fades away. What seemed separate reveals a point of contact and what sounded foreign begins to feel personal.

The poems do not claim to repair the world. They instead offer another way of inhabiting it: one in which the presence of many voices is not a problem to be solved but a condition to be enjoyed and witnessed. Somewhere there, the possibility of *Hum* exists.

Singing Oneness

Raghav Dua

You wear a thousand names
and call them true,
'Hindu', 'Muslim',
'I' and 'You'.

When you say 'I',
Do you mean only 'You'?
All this colour,
Who painted who?

Before man named Him,
To whom did he confess?
Allah? Krishna? *Or*
Was it all,
Singing Oneness?

इकतारा

राघव दुआ | Raghav Dua

मैं ढूँढन गया कन्हैया को
मस्जिद की दीवारों में,
खुसरो की पुकारों में,
कबीरा की तानों में।
वहाँ बैठा एक सूफी,
जिसकी साँसें थी ऐसी,
जैसे गीता और कुरान
मिल गई एक ही धुन में।
फिर चला अल्लाह को पूजन मैं
मंदिर के अंगने तक,
जहाँ झूमता एक दरवेश था
मुरली की धुन में।
और बाज़ार में सरमद का नूर था छाया,
मिटे सब भेद, दाया व बाया,
वंशी की धुन में भी झूमी थीं सरहदे सारी,
मिटी प्रेम की सुरधुन में बारी-बारी।

There is but One Well

K A B I R

Translation by Raghav Dua

There is but *One* well Kabira,
Many draw its water.
Though the vessels may *differ*,
But the *same* spring flows within all.

Original Hindi²

कबीरा कुआँ एक है,
पानी भरें अनेक ।
भाँडे ही में भेद है,
पानी सब में एक ।

²Text from *Ajab Shahar* archive's '*Maula Maula Laakh Pukaare*' & '*Bhala Hua Mori Gagri Phooti*' sung by Farid Ayaz & Abu Mohammad.

God Alone is the Essence of Man

BULLEH SHAH
Translation by Raghav Dua

God alone is the essence of man,
Same as cotton is to cloth since time began.
Hidden in plain sight in the woven fold,
So is He who dwells in every soul.
He speaks to Himself in a melodious rhyme,
He calls unto Himself throughout space and time,
He Himself sings the mystical chime,
The eternal Hun Hun of the Divine.

Original Punjabi
Transcribed in Devanagari

रब्ब बन्दे दी जात इक्को,
जिवें कपड़े दी जात है रूँ ।
कपड़े विच जिवें रूँ है लुकेया,
यूं बन्दे विच तू ।
आपे बोले, आप बुलावें,
आप करे हूँ हूँ ।



Instructions for Crossing a Broken World

Pravy Jha

Do not ask the river
which god it belongs to.
Drink.

Do not demand proof
before holding a hand.
Hold it.

When someone tells you
their pain in a language you do not know,
listen with your body.

Unlearn the borders
taught to you
as lullabies.

Pray like this:
feed someone first.
Then speak.

If you must build a temple,
build it out of days
you did not turn away.

Remember
the divine is not offended easily.
It survives
even our worst translations.

The Hymn to the Supreme Oneness

Swarnali Nath

I fell in love
in a hundred timelines,
I learned its secrets
from a hundred alchemies;
I tasted its sweetness
in a hundred flavors—
sometimes raw,
sometimes dissolved in a drop of madness,
sometimes in the nectar of the divine ecstasy.

Yet

It was my soul
that longed to taste the elixir of Your love.

I kept looking for your light,
In everyone I met
on the road of my pilgrimage.

Then the moment came
When I saw You in me
Dancing
Whirling
Unravelling
You, Yourself from within.

Slowly,
My heart became a stage for the Dervish's dance:

I saw the union in my heart—
Two lovers became one
at the center of the circle,
and around them
a hundred dervishes dancing,
Whirling in the madness
twirling without end.
In a moment, like a sculpture of love
But then disappearing into the mist
leaving no trace
Dissolving into the light of eternity.

When we became One,
The light circled us.

Time loosened its grip—
As we entered the dimension of nothingness.

I rested my head on Your chest
and heard the whisper of Your breath
chanting my name.
The divine touch of love
Woke me
from a hundred years of sleep.

I had been longing to see a glimpse of You,
Dancing, singing, like a wandering minstrel,
until Your grace fell—
like the first shower of monsoon
drenching my parched soul.

Liberation—
Is what Love feels
When the souls are released
From the cage of time, name, and boundaries
Unshackled,
flying
into the land of the Infinite.

And in that meeting
We remember:
we were never apart.
We lived inside each other all along,
Making our love a perfect circle—
no beginning,
no end,
Only a journey from One to One.

As we burned ourselves in the blazing fire,
The saintly radiance wrapped us
Singing the glory of the Divine.

Lost in a speck of eternity,
We uttered a prayer—
not in words
But in silence
and surrender.

Chanting the hymn to the Supreme Oneness.

रहनुमाई

शाइना अरोड़ा | Shaina Arora

मैं तो खड़ा भरे बाज़ार में,
यहाँ लगे नाम के दाम,
नानक! नाम एक है,
जान सके तो जान।

इश्क़-ए-हकीक़ी किसे कहते हैं?
मैंने तो पहना मज़हब का भेष,
बुल्लैया, मैं भटका दर-दरवाज़े,
अनेक हैं उसके प्रवेश।

पैरों में मेरी ज़ंजीरें हैं,
और नज़रिया दुनियादारी,
अलिफ़, खूब अर्चनाएँ हैं,
अलिफ़, खूब अर्चनाएँ हैं,
सुबह जाऊँ मंदिर, शाम मस्जिद,
मैं तलाशूँ खुद-आगाही।

ये टूटी धरती मज़हब की किरपान से,
हर दिल में एक दीवार है,
चार साहिबज़ादे मिट्टी में सोए,
पर हममें अब भी तक़रार है।

कोई मंदिर से नफ़रत सीखे,
कोई मस्जिद तोड़ने पर सवार,
हार गया वो जिसने समझा,
शस्त्र उत्तर है संसार।

तो मैं पढ़ूँ गीता, मैं सँवारूँ कुरान,
मैं जाऊँ तीर्थ, मैं सुनूँ अज़ान,

नानक, फ़रमान तो एक ही है,
ये कैसे करूँ बयान ।

फिर गाऊँ नानक तुझे मैं,
तेरी बानी में दिन-रैन नूर पाऊँ,
“एक ओंकार सतनाम” सुनकर,
मैं खुद में तुझको पाऊँ ।

ज़रिए अनेक हैं,
उस मंज़िल एक के,
प्रेम से सब मिल जाएँ,
“एक ओंकार” नाम में प्रेम सदा अध्याय ।

वो गले से मुझे लगाए,
वो तो मुझ में समाए,
उसका सिमरन मेरी मोहब्बत,
मुझे मुझसे रिहाये ।

ये किस दरवाज़े पर आ खड़ा हूँ,
मेरी ज़ार, मेरी रूह हैरान,
मैंने रब को हर कोने में ढूँढा,
खुद में ढूँढ न पाया ।

ओ बुल्लैया, मैंने सब सुना,
ओ बुल्लैया, मैंने सब जाना,
बस खुद को जान न पाया ।

अब जाना है,
अब जाना है,
तो पाई मैंने रहनुमाई,
ना कोई हिन्दू, ना कोई मुसलमान,
ना कोई हिन्दू, ना कोई मुसलमान,
हर दिल में बसती खुदाई ।

Reverence

Vishesh Kumar Anil

I bow to myself
For I may never know
Myself

I talk to myself
For who else is there

I rejoice in myself
For what else is there

Timeless

Vishesh Kumar Anil

Where am I in time,
If I know the future
Yet I am not in the past?

Where am I in space,
If I dance here—
While they sing praise of me there?

A Religion for Men

Agnibarathi

If walls make temples
then build them with doors
wide and open
so none may be barred.

If chants please gods
then sing songs of love
like letters you send
to a worried parent.

If faith gives bliss
then make it just a moment
of mad ecstasy
in a life of banal strife.

If some sage finds wisdom
then let him not share it
unless corrupted by
the lies of art.

If god be alive
then let him live far away
shining on us all
like a bright unconcerned sun.

I've Come to Know, Tara

RAMDULAL NANDI 'DIWAN'

Translation by Aadrit

I've come to know, Tara,
I've come to know,
You know all tricks—o—hacks.
In any form who calls you ever,
You agree—and appear—so, Maa.

Arakanese say Pharātārā; God, say all Europeans, Mother,
And Khoda, call the Moguls, Pathans, Saiyyads, Kazis.
Shaktas say you are Shakti; You're Shiva, say the Saivas, Maa.

Sauryas say you're the sun; Radhika-ji of the Vairagis.
Ganpatyas call you Ganesh; Yakshas say you're Dhanesh, Mother.
Artists call you Viswakarma; And boatmen say Bodor, the saint.

Sri Ramdulal says this isn't tricks or hacks you play,

Thinking the one Infinite
as many-divided,
My heart is the true trickster instead!

Original Bengali³

জেনেছি জেনেছি তারা, তুমি জান ভোজের বাজি,
যে তোমায় যে ভাবে ডাকে, তাতে তুমি হও মা রাজী।
মগে বলে ফরাতারা, গড় বলে ফিরিঙ্গী যারা মা,
খোদা বলে ডাকে তোমায় মোগল পাঠান সৈয়দ কাজী।
শাক্তে বলে তুমি শক্তি, শিব তুমি শৈবের উক্তি মা,
সৌর বলে সূর্য তুমি, বৈরাগী কয় রাধিকাজি ॥
গাণপত্য বলে গণেশ, যক্ষ বলে তুমি ধনেশ মা,
শিল্পী বলে বিশ্বকর্মা, বদর বলে নায়ের মাঝি।
শ্রীরামদুলাল বলে, বাজি নয় এ জেনো ফলে,
এক ব্রহ্ম দ্বিধা ভেবে, মন আমার হয়েছে পাঞ্জি ॥

³Text sourced from the online archive of Shibamouli Lahiri. Available at:
shibamoulilahiri.github.io

The Lover Within

Abhilasha

In loving the sky
The bird found out how incapable she was of love
She was a bird in a cage residing inside an abandoned house
She was so fond of the cage she started calling it home
One day the cage fell out of the window inside a living garden
For the first time she saw a glimpse of the sky
That moment a caged bird fell in love with the sky
She wanted to fly like a mad woman running to meet her lost lover
The courageous passion in her heart made her break the cage
The cage kept calling her names but that silly bird broke tradition
and
fell in love with the
Infinite

While she was flying through the forest a hunter shot at her
She fell down

The bird started crying
Please let me meet my lover

He asked
O bird how your lover looks

She replied
He neither has a face nor wings
He neither has eyes nor name

The hunter asked
Is he a bird or a human

She said
It doesn't matter

The hunter laughed
You little bird you have gone mad you will die

The little bird sang
My friend I will die but you are already dead

Listening to this the hunter threw away the gun
She started flying with bleeding wings
crossed a desert and fell near an oasis
She saw her reflection

The reflection started speaking
There was no separation
You never looked within

The bird jumped into the oasis
In meeting the sky
the lover drowned but love remains

As a Matter of Fact, I Trust His Sight Upon Me!

Bhawana Vij Arora

When God couldn't be everywhere,
he made mothers,
but mothers couldn't come for long,
he made *a tender heart*.

When the winds dust you in the rubble of disbelief,
bones crack in trembling despair,
trust the tender-heart,
for the wings of *his* clouds

immune you
from the wrath of skies

Trust *him*,
when he handpicks
the architect,
of your destiny

a faint scaffold
to your selfhood

Silent, sober, serene.

When we, a little drunk
on the liquor of pomp
and scorn,

go hesitant,
trust him in his sanctuary,
that shields from the rains
of misfortune.
Trust him when he builds
cords of warmth,
never letting you
branch off from
the blueprint of life's tree.
A thanking heart
dilates to receive more,
for gratitude could be
two stanzas of unsung, unlaced prayer; unnoted
to a thousand wizards,
forgotten perhaps;
But as a matter of fact,
I trust his sight upon me.

גִּלְגּוּלִים | Incarnations

מיכל ארליך | Michal Erlich

יְהוּדִיָּה
עִם גִּנִּים עֲרָבִיִּים וְאִירוֹפֵּאִיִּים
וְאַהֲבָה הִנְדוּאִית
אֶחָת
שֶׁסּוֹחֶבֶת אֵינְסָפֶר שׁוֹשְׁלוֹת מְעָלִי
אֶחָת
שֶׁהִתְפַּצְּלָה בְּגִלְגּוּל הַזֶּה אֵינְסָפֶר
פְּעָמִים
חֶלֶק מֵתוֹ. חֶלֶק שָׁרְדוּ.
הַלֵּב הָאֶחָד שְׁלִי כָּבֵד מְזֻמָּן
פּוֹעֵם בְּגוּפִים רַבִּים.

A Jewish woman
with Arab and European genes
and a Hindu love
one
who carries countless lineages
upon me
one
who split, in this incarnation,
countless times
some died. some survived.
my single heart
has long been beating
in many bodies.

Editorial Note

This poem appears here in both Hebrew and English as written by the poet herself. Hebrew is not a language commonly encountered in our immediate literary landscape. We have chosen to present the poem in its original script alongside the poet's own English rendering so that readers may experience both its visual music and its carried meaning. Unlike translated works in this anthology, where language travels through another interpreter, this poem crosses its linguistic threshold with the poet's own voice intact. The English version is therefore not a substitute for the Hebrew, but its companion. Its presence in these pages reflects the spirit of the anthology: to hold many tongues, many inheritances and many crossings at once.

What I Learned from Islam

Nashrah Tanvir

When Hagar could survive
Footsteps from Safa to Marwa
With nothing but muttered prayer on her lips,
Her footsteps started Arab civilization,
I, child of depression and anxiety,
can make my way in twenty-first century.

If Mariam can turn up with Isa—an unexplained baby,
And refused to speak for three days,
I learnt women and gender minorities
don't owe explanations to society.
I can do whatever I want,
And explain to no one but God.

Khadija, after being divorced thrice,
Proposed to Muhammad
I learnt women can settle with
Whoever they want
Whenever they want
With whatever circumstance they want.
I may not have her wits or her money,
But like she was first muslim,
I'm first queer, Indian, neurodivergent, muslim woman,
And I can be as independent as her,
And as brave as her when it comes to saying I love you(s).

When I read Surah Baqra–Chapter of Cow,
I learnt saving one human from breaking apart
saves entire humanity,
But what if one human I save is myself
What if the one human we save is ourselves,
Will there be anyone left?

When I read Surah Takathur–Chapter of Abundance,
I learnt takathur is deviance
And kept as little baggage as possible
I left some in therapy
And I gave away all the things I didn't need as Sadaka.

I learned that time can be a friend
When I read Surah Asr–Chapter of Evening,
Time shall embrace if you're honest and patient and mindful,
And I'm on a mission to crack them all.

These stories play in my mind over and over again,
Islam kept me company when people refused,
I've found heart-warming power in these metaphors.
World can be extremely unkind;
They'd call "terrorists", "backward", and more,
So I tuck my tongue in the basement of my tongue,
And smile instead 'cause it's Sunnah,
There's power in being kind.

Meera writes back after being told
Love is Dangerous

Pravy Jha

They warned me
love ruins women,
turns saints into spectacles,
burns houses down.

They were right
about the fire.

But tell me,
what is a house worth
if it cannot hold a song?

I loved it until my name dissolved.
I loved until the mirror forgot me.
I loved until even fear
lost its teeth.

They wanted me obedient,
quiet as a closed temple.
Instead, I became the bell.

I did not choose God
over the world.
I chose love
over fear.

If that is sin,
let heaven remain locked.
I have already entered
through longing.

My Pir, My Beparwah

Raina Bhattacharya

Rest, my Beloved
You have fought for too long
Let me tend to your cracked heels
and kiss your tired, piercing eyes.
Let me soothe your tangled hair,
and place my hand, on your heaving chest
I feel the marbled texture of your skin,
and your throbbing, resolute heart
that refuses to bow down
to this binary, constrained world.

They call you Khwaji-i-Sira, in your homeland
You are Aravani in mine
I see you – fiery, feisty, vulnerable,
beaming with loud joyous laughter
As if your sheer mirth would dissolve the hate,
and our shared laughs and boisterous joy
would rip apart the depths of
abominable, unnatural constructs.

My Beloved,
I have found in You, my Pir,
The worshipper has found her worshipped,
and the Deewani her detached Beparwah,
and in ecstatic joy, she has sipped the wine
offered by her gracious Saki;
For you, I may deck myself in flowers and finery
And mark my eyes with kohl,
only to be arrested by your gaze
when I finally see You.

You have bestowed upon me
your gaze of compassion.
But have not offered me the Cup of Love
from which oozes the intoxicants
of beauty, desire and annihilation.

But a worshipper is doomed,
to endless longing
with no recourse towards a union,
she learns to love, for just the sake of loving.

Does our queer, imperfect, broken love
have a place in this world?
Can I lie in ecstasy, staring westward
hoping for a day where borders will break down...
Does my longing have power?
Will words like cis-, trans-, sex, gender,
breakdown and disappear into the ether,
where dormant and redundant words see their End?
A queer woman finding her refuge in a transwoman,
Amir Khusro must be whirling in Jannat!

My Nani's Hands

Harnoor Kaur Uppal

i touched my nani's hands and they were soft and frail,
and long and weathered
the folds of her fingers carried years of
compassion and care, and nurture given away—
gifted to others, without a thought to herself.

i held my nani's hands as she invoked the Almighty
rosary clutched tightly as she prayed du'a for my nana
hoping that his soul is at rest and that
he knows his madhu is cared for still.

i caressed her hands and felt her ache
marrying into a faith she never knew,
but as every dawn bows to her gentle smile
and honey melts into her evening tea
so do i, my nani, so do I.

i kneaded our fingers and smelt the blood
in the spring of '79 as she fled the riots, kids in hand,
away from the men who shouted hate
while she called the One with the two names she knew—
names the men with torches never learned.

i still hold her hand as i speak, the hand that stitched three faiths in
one,
each name of God resting easy in her laugh—
the life shaped by a foreign faith,
her feet worn by the roads she's crossed.

the years have taken her memory,
but not the way she loves,
not the names of her gods,
nor the warmth of her hands.

I hold her other hand and still feel her peace
soft and tender, and calm and serene
where Jesus, Allah and Waheguru
all join her for her evening tea
and her hands, though trembling, still pour for each.

A Shoe's Religion

Ananya Aneja

Outside the Masjid, I see a pool of footwear, and therefore
I recall the feet of men and women in them.
The grey boots belong to Hasan, the barber
who told me Mandir and Masjid both have six letters,
but Hindi and Urdu do not.
But if Hindi would drape a hijab around her skull,
wouldn't you too mistake it to be Urdu as well?

I see pink sandals of Najma,
the professor at Madrasa next block,
Who follows a weird ritual of inaugurating
each of her semester with a question—
“I always wanted to ask Osama Bin Laden
that if he worshiped massacres then
why didn't he carry bombs in his chest pocket?”

The dust leaden loafers with toe holes belong
to Kareem cobbler, who often sings
a decaying ballad that goes something like—
“If a man had guns in lieu of hands,
his beloved target would be his lover.”

Someone skims through the newspaper
and I read the headlines with a side eye,
Another mob lynching reported
in the name of communal tensions.
I quietly wonder to myself—
if God walked in this city
disguised as an ordinary fellow,
Maybe he too shall be lynched
in the uncertainty of his religion.
For aren't we the children of love
defying these warfares in temples and mosques,
Godliness too is a sin if it is dipped in blood
and commemorated with funerals.

I snap out and begin to cross the lane,
while watching heralding rag pickers from nearby slums,
Hopeless urchins casting a footprint of sorrow,
As they march while stealing mismatched pairs of shoes.
The Maulana comes out screaming in rage,
while they run bare feet as if pleading
to the rocks to bend their heads down.

The spectator in me asks,
“How do they learn to distinguish between
a Muslim’s shoe and a Hindu’s shoe?”
For you may be clad in saffron to please your Ram
and I may cup a taqiyah over my head in the praise of Allah.
For you may join your hands
and I may stick my crescent palms together,
For you may fast in lieu of Navratri
and I may starve in the honour of Roza.
For you may and I may
but we shall both still bow down
in the madness of the Supreme.

We sing songs of the creator
who carved our bodies without divide.
Because you and I both were born
with same two hands to pray and worship,
And never butcher each other in the fate of faiths.

I happened to pass by the same slums next week,
I saw Irfan postmorteming the rags again—
As if maybe in a never-ending quest of finding
gold amidst sprawling trash.
He was wearing Hasan’s stolen grey boot in one foot
and Arnab’s chappal in another.

A poor man is not Religious, Pious or Cultivated.
A poor man is just Hungry, Needy and Free on bail.
For the privilege of divisions is for the rich only,
Empty stomachs cannot understand the taste of hatred.

The poor would happily feed on
a Muslim’s bread and a Hindu’s water—
Hatred and hunger are like wildfire,
You can only carry them along
until they start leaching onto your entire being.

Therefore it is only the cuisine of love
that can simmer down (h)ate,
For manufacturing religions fuming
with venom is a sin of its own kind.

A whirling sufi dervish
and a content brahmin priest,
Swap each of their hearts and ask them—
if their gods have changed sides too?

Dilli

Raghav Dua

Evening near Nizamuddin.
Oil on the steps.
The unsettling winter.
Someone washing plates
with cold water.

A boy carries roses.
Does not count them.

The Qawwal clears his throat,
Khrr...khrr...
He misses the first note.
Nobody minds.

A man asks for directions,
Someone gives him food instead.

He rides the river soon after,
but the river refuses him.
His boat knows how to float.

He is frustrated: *It just won't sink!!!*

He calls out loudly:
Help me! Help me sink!
I know, you know how!

Well! Can't blame him!
This city does know the Secret.

Come walk barefoot
and keep walking.

You think you will leave.

You probably will.

But somewhere else,
When you speak of Love,
Your voice will bend.

That bend *is*
Dilli.

My Kabir longs from afar:

“Oh, the land of Dilli
is utterly beautiful!
There resides my Beloved
Khusrau says, to such a land
I surrender my body and heart!”⁴

⁴Traditional verse invoking Amir Khusrau, heard in the voice of Farid Ayaz, through whom Kabir first came alive for the poet.



Satara

Vibhav Kapoor

Paani Sabka Hai

Jharna Choudhury

We have tried our best to make water behave,
bend flows, choose mouths.

Paani sabka hai.
Water is for everybody.

Then why is a river, a well, a glass,
held out like a verdict?
If water has no caste.
Why do we ask rivers to wait outside
the body while women menstruate?
If water knows no shame.

Water doesn't carry a passport;
it trails through countries,
enters forbidden courtyards, empties villages
like the soul empties the body.

Water is a door;
it resets our intentions while we live;
grain to grain, it gathers the dead.

To poison the fishes, we poison the water,
to kill the people, we make water thirsty;
we sell crystal water to some,
for some we leave the litter to grow.
We feed oil to water and ask water to clean us.

Somewhere, too much water is too much blood;
too less water is too much blood.

And we cheat children on the roads,
with water that has no trace of water.

“Paani sabka hai,
Water is for everybody”,
we whisper, like *Ashwatthama hatah*.

Water is *fana*, we forget,
we can never know water by its name.

Verified Account

Athin B Paul

I searched for God
but all versions were already authenticated.

Blue ticks on belief,
followers counting faith,
truth edited into reels.

God trended today,
hash-tagged in anger,
sold in slogans,
wrapped in flags.

They told me
click here to be saved,
subscribe to righteousness,
mute the ones who ask why.

I saw prayers live-streamed,
tears sponsored,
silence monetized.

Temples became stages.
Mosques became headlines.
And God
became content.

I asked the algorithm,
where does God live?

It showed me
debates louder than hunger,
greater identities than compassion,
faith safer when weaponized.

Then a fading voice was heard to cut the noise, unverified,
unbranded:

If God needed witnesses,
would love be silent?
If truth needed volume,
would conscience whisper?

You clean your profile daily,
but shall you ever exonerate the self?
You defend God online,
but ignore the human offline.

God does not trend in furiousness.
Not in curated devotion.
God lives where
ego collapses
and kindness remains unseen.

I logged out.
For the first time,
I was present.

At a Snail's Pace

Godavar

Fret not that you live life at a snail's pace
one journeys to meaning at a snail's pace

Hold on! this is but a temporary halt
let your heart beat awhile at a snail's pace

Yes, keep patience, and sip slowly this wine
intoxication - best at a snail's pace!

no use being hasty about secrets
this reveal must take place at a snail's pace

Do you seek admission to divine grace?
Those hallowed gates open but at a snail's pace

what know I of Kashi, Ka'aba, or Christ
I too come to knowledge at a snail's pace

ਨਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਪਰੇ | Beyond Names

ਤਨਵੀ ਗੋਇਲ | Tanvi Goyal

ਮੰਦਰ ਮਸੀਦ ਦੇ ਝਗੜਿਆਂ ਵਿਚ,
ਰੱਬ ਕਦੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਮਿਲਿਆ।
ਜਿੱਥੇ ਦਿਲ ਨੇ ਦਿਲ ਨੂੰ ਮੰਨ ਲਿਆ,
ਓਥੇ ਰੱਬ ਖੁਦ ਆ ਮਿਲਿਆ।
ਵਾਰਿਸ ਆਖੇ, ਇਸ਼ਕ ਨੇ ਸਿਖਾਇਆ,
ਸਭ ਰੂਹਾਂ ਇਕ ਸਾਂਸ।
ਟੁੱਟੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਓਦੋਂ ਜੁੜ ਜਾਂਦੀ,
ਜਦ ਮੁੱਕ ਜਾਵੇ ਫ਼ਾਸਲਾ ਖਾਸ।

Amid disputes of temples and mosques,
God was never truly found.
Where one heart accepted another,
There, God arrived of His own accord.
Waris Shah says love reveals this truth:
All souls share the same breath.
A fractured world begins to mend
When every distance finally dissolves.

Editorial Note

This poem is presented in Punjabi in its original script along with an English rendering by the poet herself. The accompanying version is included to allow readers to move between the two texts as they read, each retaining the texture and cadence of its own language.

राम करावै

यश शुक्ला | Yash Shukla

राम करै और राम करावै,
फिर क्यूँ नाम हमारे आवै ?

उलटी करनी सीधी भाषा,
हर काँटे पर फूल सुहावै ।

जाती उमर, निखरती माया,
जो आवै सो नाम कहावै ।

भूरे-भूरे गाल पै तितली,
नीले-पीले रंग खिलावै ।

सच की राहें काँटों वाली,
झूठ पथिक का ध्यान भुलावै ।

छोटे-मोटे गीत सुना कर,
हम दुनिया का मन बहलावै ।

'दास' कहे हर नाम निराला,
जो गावे सो पार लगावै ।



The Sin of Sameness

Harini K

Have I sinned, that I did not reminisce about you?
But is it even a sin,
if you and I are the same?
Yet oh Ram, yet oh Allah
Where and how did I build this wall?

I kept away,
fearing it was too late...

For all I ever had to do
was utter thy divine name
in whichever, whatever form
and thou wouldst come running.

Darshan Deejo

Bhawna Vij Arora

Is this some child's play
that you hide behind
attics of clouds
bench below the ground
among the council of crows
in the seeds of my thoughts,
endless horizons,
mountains, oceans, skies
you seem everywhere
yet where are you?
if raindrops bloom
tiny buds
when will you drench
my soils,
sullied,
I await my rains,
you become me, I become you
there is no duality

Balance

Jayana Roy

Death is unity
So is the fleeting warmth of touch
Even evil, in its quiet persistence

This is the perfect poise of neutrality
The universe does not judge, it accepts, and it expands
Who are we to judge this balance?

Is it not true
The endless cycle of forgiveness that follows
For moving through this world as if it were not alive
Forgiveness is all we know,
And yet it is forgiveness that we lack

If the earth is divine
Who are we to question it?
Does the Muslim not return to the soil
As the Hindu dissolves into the sea?

We live and breathe each other
The ashes find the waters
Both return as one

Look, O Farid! The Earth lies bare!

F A R I D

Translation by Raghav Dua

Look, O Farid!
The Earth lies bare!
And it is this,
Scattered everywhere.

Earth that laughs,
Earth that cries,
Earth that lives,
Earth that dies.

In the end,
When all is done,
Earth to Earth,
We are One!

You sweet fool!
Don't boast, or
Make foolish claims,
Nothing here, really
bears our names.

Don't cry "mine, mine"
in this fleeting fair,
Four quick days,
And soon,
You'll be Earth and Air.

So don't shuffle tricks
on this small stage,
No clever turns,
No pious rage!

Do not deceive,
The waiting Earth,
She lent you breath,
She lent you birth.

You are Earth.
Your caste is Earth.
Your borrowed pride,
Has very little worth.

So, speak not of "high,"
Nor spit on "low,"
All that talk
is a shit show.

Only that One
stands truly high,
All else sinks
beneath the sky.

Earth to Earth,
Be quiet and fair,
Its only Earth...
Everywhere!

Original Punjabi⁵
Transcribed in Devanagari

वेख फरीदा मिट्टी खुल्ली,
मिट्टी उत्ते मिट्टी डुल्ली।
मिट्टी हस्से, मिट्टी रोवे,
अन्त मिट्टी दा मिट्टी होवे।

नां कर बंदेया मेरी मेरी,
नां एह तेरी नां एह मेरी,
चार दिनां दा मेला दुनिया,
फेर मिट्टी दी बन गई ढेरी,
ना कर एत्थे हेरा फेरी।

मिट्टी नाल न धोखा कर तू,
तू वी मिट्टी, मैं वी मिट्टी।
जात-पात दी गल ना कर तू,
जात वी मिट्टी, पात वी मिट्टी।

जात सिर्फ खुदा दी ऊच्ची,
बाकी सब कुछ मिट्टी, मिट्टी।

⁵This text follows the version presented in the song 'Jugni,' performed by Tochi Raina.

Allah Elohim

Shye Ben Tzur

Who is the one who through my eyes sees?
Who is the one who in my step springs?
Who is the one who with my love burns?
Who is the one who is wearing my self?

You, who lives in my heart,
In you, my faith originates,
I within you, you within me.

Allah Elohim

To the infidels, I'm religious,
to religious law – an outlaw.
My Lord's house is within me
and I have my temple in his heart.

To Jews I am a Jew, to Muslims – a Muslim,
In any tongue I speak
My language is one!⁶

⁶Translated from Hebrew by Shlomtzion Kinan.



Kasauli

Vibhav Kapoor

Quanta of Sufi

Sudip Patra

Seeing is creating
So seeing is destroying; seeing
Like a Rumi is called enjoying; when
Rumi left for searching, his lover, he
Traversed the infinite world within, but
How many infinities you saw o Rumi?
Do they hang in anxiety over the abyss? Do
They whisper to you 'continuum' hypothesis,
Drinking the nectar of silence—
Dancing in glee, you cross the sea—
You breathe in waves, and
Breathe out particles of divine
Insanity

Moon walking across the Ganges, by the
Thames, and through the Mississippi—
Do you see life unfolding—
And enfolding endlessly? Science—
Some may call, yet some call it poetry, but
What do we do with this knowledge? As
A Mayetree of Upanishads questioned, or
A pensive Oedipus wondered knowing death as it is,
Or O Rumi you transcend pleasure and sorrow alike,
And see quantum immortality...

Love's Mad Wine

N A W A B K H A D I M H A S A N

Translation by Raghav Dua

To the one you poured Love's mad wine,
You set apart from all creation to shine,
To the one you poured Love's mad wine!

From the flame you summoned the moths to play,
Then consumed them whole in *that very* ray!
That radiance of your Love brought me life,
And gutted the unreal with your sacred Knife!
And just as that one was drawn to fire,
In your Love you melted my desire!
When servant's pure Love
was nowhere to see,
Hidden in the heart
You let the Friend's gift be!

You are Love's first breath,
And Beauty's final sign,
The beginning of *the path*
And its farthest line.
Say no more now,
The Great Secret
stands bare:
I am You!
And
You are Everywhere!

All of this majesty is thine,
And
To the one you poured Love's mad wine!

जिसे जुनून-ए-मोहब्बत अता किया तूने,
तमाम खल्क में मुमताज़ कर दिया तूने,
जिसे जुनून-ए-मोहब्बत अता किया तूने ।

ज़िया-ए-शम्मा से परवानों को किया पैदा,
फिर उसको शम्मा की लौ से जला दिया तूने ।
जिसे जुनून-ए-मोहब्बत अता किया तूने ।

ज़िया-ए-इश्क से पैदा किया वजूद मेरा,
फिर अपने इश्क में मुझको फ़ना किया तूने ।
जिसे जुनून-ए-मोहब्बत अता किया तूने ।

कहीं भी जब न मिला दर्द-ए-इश्क-ए-खादिम,
अता-ए-दोस्त को दिल में छुपा लिया तूने ।
जिसे जुनून-ए-मोहब्बत अता किया तूने ।

इश्क की इब्तिदा भी तू,
हुस की इंतिहा भी तू ।
रहने दो राज़ खुल गया,
बंदे भी तू, खुदा भी तू ।

जिसे जुनून-ए-मोहब्बत अता किया तूने,
तमाम खल्क में मुमताज़ कर दिया तूने,
जिसे जुनून-ए-मोहब्बत अता किया तूने ।

⁷This text is an approximate rendering based on the version presented in the song 'Junun' from the album *Junun* (2015) performed by Shye Ben Tzur, Jonny Greenwood & The Rajasthan Express.

Take Me to That Land

M I R A B A I

Translation by Raghav Dua

God never turns from her,
I swear to God!
She who knows *the way*
Of loving the Beloved.
What's left for her in Kashi or Kaaba
To uncover?
She who has seen her Beloved,
And that was her Hajj like no other!

Take me to that land,
Where my Beloved stands!
Take me to that land,
Take me to that land.

You need only ask me,
And I will dye my saree
In colours so bright, or
Like a wandering monk,
Wear the saffron light.

You need only ask me,
I will part
my hair with pearls, or
Let it all fall loose,
As the wind unfurls.

Crowds after crowds
bolt to Mecca,
Let them!
My Ranjhan
is *my* Mecca.

Take me to that land,
Where my Beloved stands!
Take me to that land,
Take me to that land.

Bring back my estranged Beloved,
My Dear!
Those lost in world's loud din,
wander in fear!

Only who know the Self within
Break free,
Otherwise, it's all hell,
You'll see.

Better even, who see God
face to face, in their Guide.
Ecstatic!
These drops turn ocean-wide!

Meera's Lord is that Girdhar,
The One who lifted
Mount Govardhan!
And he has heard my cry,
Yes, he has heard my cry!

I am going to that land,
Where my Beloved stands!
I am going to that land,
Where my Beloved stands!

Original Punjabi⁸
Transcribed in Devanagari

हो ओहदा रब्ब नीं रुस्सदा, सों रब्ब दी,
हो जिन्हूँ यार मनाउण दा चज्ज होवे ।
हो ओनू लोड़ की काशी-काबैयाँ दी,
ते जीदा सज्जणा नूँ वेखिया हज्ज होवे ।

चालाँ वाही देस,
प्रीतम पावाँ,
चालाँ वाही देस,
चलाँ वाही देस ।

कहो तो कुसुमल साड़ी रंगावाँ,
कहो तो भगवा भेस ।

चालाँ वाही देस,
चलाँ वाही देस ।

कहो तो मोतियन माँग सजावा,
कहो छिरकावाँ केस ।

चालाँ वाही देस,
चलाँ वाही देस ।

हाजी लोक मक्के वल जांदे,
मेरा रांझण माही मक्का ।
रुठुड़े यार मिला दे रे अम्मिए,
माया करदा धंदा ।⁹

हो जिन्हां आपने आप नूँ जान लेया,
उह जग तों जुदा हो जांदे ।
हो जिन्हां मुरशिद नूँ रब जान लेया,
ओ बंदिया खुदा हो जांदे ने ।

मीरा के प्रभु गिरधर नागर,
सुण गयो बिड़द नरेस ।

चालाँ वाही देस,
चलाँ वाही देस ।

⁸This text is an approximate rendering based on the version presented in the song 'Chala Vahi Des' from the album *Junun* (2015) performed by Shye Ben Tzur, Jonny Greenwood & The Rajasthan Express.

⁹This portion comes from Bulleh Shah. The original reads “बाबल करदा धंदा.” The poet had long misheard it as “माया करदा धंदा,” and that version shaped the meaning of the verse for him. Even after learning the correct wording, he has retained the misheard line here, as it has come to hold a spiritual truth of its own.

Everywhere, The Mustard Blooms

A M I R K H U S R A U

Translation by Raghav Dua

Everywhere, the mustard blooms!
In every grove, the mustard blooms!

Mango trees burst into bud,
Tesu flowers bloom,
The koel sings, branch to branch,
And the Beloved adorns herself!

Everywhere, the mustard blooms!
In every grove, the mustard blooms!

The flower-gathering girls arrive,
With bracelets in their hands.

Everywhere, the mustard blooms!

Flowers bloom in many kinds,
And those flower-gathering girls, come
with garlands in their hands.

At the door of Nizamuddin,
Lovers arrive coloured in Love,
And years slip by,
Everywhere, the mustard blooms!

In every grove, the mustard blooms.



Sarakpur



Vibhav Kapoor

Original Hindi

सकल बन फूल रही सरसों,
बन-बन फूल रही सरसों ।

अम्बवा फूटे टेसू फूले,
कोयल बोले डार-डार,
और गोरी करत सिंगार ।
मलनियाँ गढ़वा ले आई कर सों,
सकल बन फूल रही सरसों ।

तरह-तरह के फूल खिलाए,
ले गढ़वा हाथन में आए,
निजामुद्दीन के दरवज्जे पर,
आवन कह गए आशिक रंग,
और बीत गए बरसों,
सकल बन फूल रही सरसों ।

A Hymn for Purpose

Agnibarathi

Great things are afoot, my love.

This grass under our feet
is holding hands with another
across the world stopping it from falling apart.

Slender rays of the sun are
diligently drinking up entire oceans.

The invisible wind is
deliberately herding clouds
to bluer pastures.

Birds smaller than a palm
are ushering in
distant momentous springs.

Even ants, my love, are lifting
universes many times their weight.

How are you, my love,
still asleep in your
mere human sleep?



Konkan

Vibhav Kapoor

Contributors

Aadrit

A queer artist, translator and researcher, Aadrit engages with desire, bodies, modes of healing and solidarities through his works. A postgraduate student in Delhi's St. Stephen's College, he runs a platform called *Hope and Humanity* (@hope_andhumanity on Instagram!) that seeks to imagine alternate radical futures using a Tagorean lens, in these present times of communal hate and violence.

Abhilasha

Abhilasha grew up in the small town of Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh. She writes to understand herself and her place within the natural world. Her work is rooted in curiosity, observation and lots of unlearning!

Agnibarathi

Agnibarathi (formally, C S Sriram) is a poet and writer whose debut poetry collection, *Hymns for Longing*, is forthcoming from Red River Press. His work has appeared in *The Hindu*, *The Chakkar* and *Usawa Literary Review*. He is a reviewer for Muse India and a staff writer for Hemlock Journal. He is currently working to adapt Sangam Tamil poetry into an epic novel.

Ananya Aneja

Ananya is a young poetess who began writing at the age of eight, drawn to words the way a moth is drawn to the flame. She fervently believes that her ink shall remain far more indelible than her blood stains. A literature graduate with 30+ slam wins, guest performances and publications to her name, she calls poetry her mother tongue. A self-proclaimed lovechild of Kamala Das and Mahmoud Darwish, she writes to keep her inner fire ablaze!

Athin B Paul

Athin is a second-year Master's student in Diplomacy, Law and Business at the O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU). He is a Research Intern at Chintan Research Foundation and Centre Coordinator for the Centre for European Studies and the Centre for Intelligence and

Research Analyses at JGU. His interests lie in international relations, geopolitics and literature.

Bhawana Vij Arora

Bhawana is an Assistant Professor at the Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies (VIPS), Delhi. She writes poetry, essays and articles. Her debut poetry collection, *Dreams in My Lap*, was shortlisted for the Tagore Prize in 2023. Her poems have appeared in *The LiveWire*, *The Hoogly Review*, *The Punch Magazine*, *The Wise Owl Art*, *The Indian Periodical*, *Ensemble*, *Pena Magazine* and several anthologies. She was recently published in Princeton University's journal *Melange* and is the author of three books.

Godavar

Godavar (formally, Raghuram S Godavarthi) is a poet-playwright from southern India. He has previously published a collection of poems (*A Turn of Poetry*, 2013) and co-written a play (*A Case of Clairvoyance or Executing Miss K*) which was staged at India's National School of Drama in 2020.

Harini K

Harini is a Master's student in Diplomacy, Law and Business at the O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) with a background in visual communication. A dancer and storyteller, she seeks to bridge culture and politics, exploring how creativity, identity and strategic thought shape international affairs, with the long-term goal of contributing to the development sector.

Harnoor Kaur Uppal

Harnoor (she/her) is a Global Affairs student at the O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) and a student coordinator of *We Are Meant to Sing as One: Bhakti–Sufi Poetry for a Fractured World*. Her interests lie at the intersection of politics, performance and cultural studies. Her work engages with Bhakti–Sufi poetry, archival practices and the preservation of religious identities in India's Northeast and beyond.

Jasleen Kaur Shergill

Jasleen is a student of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) and a student coordinator of *We Are Meant to Sing as One: Bhakti–Sufi Poetry for a Fractured World*. Her intellectual pursuits are animated by a deep love for literature, philosophy and devotional expression. Drawn to the lyrical wisdom of Bhakti and Sufi traditions, she seeks in poetry a language of compassion, transcendence and shared human longing beyond borders and binaries.

Jayana Roy

Jayana is a third-year Liberal Arts and Humanities student at the O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) majoring in philosophy and political science. Poetry was an unexplored territory for most of her life, but she now turns to it as a way of becoming one with what she learns and discovering herself along the way.

Jharna Choudhury

Jharna (she/her) is the author of the Assamese poetry collection *Kaya* (2023) and the poetry chapbook *the mouth of a needle* (2025). A hand-embroidery artist from Assam, India, she works under Embroidery Stories, exploring textile, memory and the body. She teaches English at Dimoria College (Autonomous), Assam.

Joydeep Mukherjee

Joydeep is a digital artist at the O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) known for his keen eye for detail and creative flair. He has a knack for turning abstract ideas into striking visuals, bringing clarity and originality to every design he touches. He has been associated with *We Are Meant to Sing as One: Bhakti–Sufi Poetry for a Fractured World* since day one and is behind much of the project's creative panache.

Michal Erlich

Michal is an Associate Professor at the Jindal School of International Affairs (JSIA) and Deputy Director at the Jindal India Institute (JII) of O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU). She serves as faculty coordinator for *We Are Meant to Sing as One: Bhakti–Sufi Poetry for a Fractured*

World. Her research focuses on the interplay between lived religion and well-being in India's specific and dynamic contexts.

Nashrah Tanvir

Nashrah writes poems about mental health, feminism and Islam. Her poems have appeared in *The Hindustan Times*, *Fem Asia Magazine*, *Gulmohar Quarterly*, *Usawa Literary Review*, among others. She considers herself more of a reader than a writer. She lives with her rabbit-daughter Cupcake in Delhi.

Pravy Jha

Pravy is a student writer from Lucknow. She loves the works of Rumi, Khalil Gibran and Khaled Hosseini. She believes in slow mornings and stories that linger long after reading. She loves watching movies and the best thing about her is that she never gatekeeps the good ones.

Prerna Singh

Prerna is a Master's student in Diplomacy, Law and Business at the O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) with a background in engineering. She serves as a student coordinator for *We Are Meant to Sing as One: Bhakti–Sufi Poetry for a Fractured World*. She is deeply curious about people and the worlds they carry and approaches each interaction as a story waiting to unfold. She believes that meaningful connections are built through shared moments of listening, learning and quietly discovering one another.

Raghav Dua

Raghav is a Lecturer at the Jindal School of International Affairs (JSIA) and Programmes Lead at the Jindal India Institute (JII) of O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU). He serves as faculty coordinator for *We Are Meant to Sing as One: Bhakti–Sufi Poetry for a Fractured World*. He studies politics and strategy with literature, focusing on Sufi–Bhakti poetry as a lens into the human condition.

Raina Bhattacharya

Raina likes to think of herself as the first draft of a poem – messy, raw and unfiltered. She likes butterflies, cats and all things tiny and cute,

and longs for beauty, justice and friendship. Her dream is to be able to imagine and create a kinder, just and equal world through her work and writings. Raina is also an alumnus of the O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU).

Shaina Arora

Shaina is a postgraduate student of International Relations at the O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU). She writes poetry to understand the world and herself. She is drawn to artistic pursuits, seeks meaning in creation and hopes to keep writing – thoughtfully, earnestly and without end.

Shye Ben Tzur

Shye is a New York–born Israeli musician, poet and vocalist who works between India and Israel. He is known for creating original Sufi Qawwali compositions in Hebrew, Urdu and Hindi, bringing together North Indian musical traditions and Western influences. His work includes the internationally acclaimed project *Junun*, and he frequently collaborates with Rajasthan folk musicians.

Sudip Patra

Sudip is an Associate Professor at the Jindal School of Government and Public Policy (JSGP) and Fellow at the Jindal India Institute (JII) of O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU). His research work lies in quantum-like modelling with applications in economics and other social sciences.

Swarnali Nath

An author of four books, a co-author of several anthologies and a two-time winner of the prestigious Orange Flower Awards, Swarnali is a Kolkata-based poet, storyteller and researcher. She blogs at *The Blissful Storyteller*, runs *The Peace Stories Initiative* and hosts her podcast *Pause, Breathe, Reflect*. When not writing, she loves engaging with music, crafts and meditation. Get in touch with her on Instagram @blissfulstoryteller and Twitter @scarsandglory.

Tanvi Goyal

Tanvi is from Punjab and studies at the O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU). Her poetry draws inspiration from Waris Shah and Punjabi literary traditions, often reflecting on pure love and how it can bring people together. She believes that love has the power to unite the whole world.

Vibhav Kapoor

Vibhav is an artist working with photography and related media. He is an Assistant Professor of Practice and Assistant Director at the Centre for Culture, Heritage and Museum Studies of O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU). His research explores the phenomenon of darshan, beauty and essence through images and the wider field of visual culture. He is deeply interested in the economic, cultural and religious realities of India and their civilisational resonance today.

Vishesh Anil Kumar

Vishesh is a poet whose work is deeply rooted in Bhakti and Sufi traditions. His verses explore divine love, metaphysics and the dissolution of the Self. His poetry reflects his own journey of surrender and the transcendence of identity. Beyond poetry, Vishesh is also an entrepreneur and DJ.

Yash Shukla

Yash is an IT professional who writes Hindi–Urdu poetry. His poems move between Ghazal and Nazm, drawing from everyday life and classical imagery.



About the Project

We Are Meant to Sing as One: Bhakti–Sufi Poetry for a Fractured World

is an academic-creative initiative that engages the poetry of Bhakti and Sufi mystic poets such as Kabir, Nanak, Bulleh Shah, Mirabai, Shah Latif and others as a medium for fostering peace, unity and coexistence. It is shaped by convictions commonly articulated across Bhakti (Hindu devotionalism) and Sufism (Islamic mysticism): that the divine is One and it transcends all names and forms; that love is the highest form of worship; and that humanity is bound not by creed or custom but by the capacity to recognise and experience the sacred in one another.

Within this and related oral traditions of mystical poetry also resides the understanding that shared aesthetic experiences, especially communal singing and music, serve as spaces for reflection and exchange, where the *Truth* (of unity and oneness) is sung together and encountered as something lived and embodied. These experiences cultivate a fellowship that softens divisions and allows the self to expand beyond its ordinary boundaries. Crucially, this is not an isolated occurrence but a sensibility cultivated and sustained through practice over time and is especially vital in times marked by deep division and polarisation. Drawing on this approach, the project employs practices such as contemplation, deep listening, singing, recitation, poetry

writing, translation, performance and other creative responses to engage with questions of coexistence. “Singing Oneness” serves as both the project’s guiding idea and its call to action.

Led by Raghav Dua and Michal Erlich in collaboration with a student team that evolves with each phase of the project’s work, it is conceived as a pedagogical and participatory undertaking in which new cohorts learn through involvement in teaching, research, curation and creative production. The first group of collaborators included Harnoor Kaur Uppal, Jasleen Kaur Shergill and Perna Singh, whose contributions helped shape the project’s initial form and direction. Its activities are organised primarily across three interrelated spheres: public-facing events; a primary feature that anchors each phase of the project (in the present phase, this anthology of poems served as the central focus); and an Instagram campaign that extends the project’s reach into a digital environment that sustains participation and engagement beyond physical gatherings.

It emerged in 2025 as a participant project in the ‘Manara Youth Coexistence Initiative’ hosted by the Manara Center for Coexistence and Dialogue, Abu Dhabi, UAE. Manara’s work fosters dialogue and shared civic belonging around the world.

Acknowledgements

The foundational phase of this project, whose living centre is this anthology of poems, has been sustained by the encouragement and generosity of many individuals and communities, reminding us that no act of creation is ever solitary. Every voice that has supported this endeavour has become part of its texture and it is to this shared field of relations that we owe our deepest gratitude.

We begin by expressing our sincere thanks to Prof. (Dr.) C. Rajkumar, Vice Chancellor of the O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) and President of the Jindal India Institute, for his constant support of initiatives that bring scholarship and art into meaningful dialogue. We are equally grateful to Prof. (Dr.) Sreeram Chaulia, Director General of the Jindal India Institute, whose encouragement and confidence made it possible for this project to grow from a fragile idea into a living presence shaped by many hands and hearts.

We are deeply grateful to the Manara Center for Coexistence and Dialogue for its support and recognition through the *Manara Youth Coexistence Initiative 2025–26* out of which this project emerged. We are grateful as well to EdVenture Partners, and especially to Castalia Vidaaurri, whose support and guidance helped facilitate our participation in this initiative.

The spirit of this project draws deep inspiration from the work of Shabnam Virmani and the Kabir Project, and from their path-breaking engagement with India's oral traditions of mystical poetry that continue to inspire peace, unity and coexistence in meaningful ways throughout the subcontinent. We are also grateful to Anisha Baid from the Project team for her thoughtful engagement and for remaining in a supportive dialogue with us, especially during our formative months.

We extend heartfelt thanks to Dillipoetry, our main local partner, and its founder Rachit Sharma, whose practice of poetry as an embodied and de-pedestalised art informs the ethos of this project and has enriched it in vital ways. Our gratitude also goes to Joydeep Mukherjee, who has shaped the visual identity of the project with an unwavering commitment from its very beginning. We also wish to express our sincere appreciation to Vibhav Kapoor for the generous contribution of

his work to this volume, and to Dr. Sumeet Anand, who led one of our major public-facing events on Kabir and has generously shared his time, energy and remarkable voice with this undertaking.

Special gratitude is due to our student coordinators: Harnoor Kaur Uppal, Prerna Singh and Jasleen Kaur Shergill. Their dedication and care has sustained the project in ways both visible and unseen. We also wish to acknowledge with appreciation Vanshika Sirohi and Kanak Mohiley, Programme Coordinators at the Jindal India Institute, whose steady and thoughtful assistance has supported the project at every stage.

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We warmly thank all the poets and translators who entrusted us with their work. Our call for poems alone received 329 submissions across languages and forms. Each submission, whether published here or not, forms part of the shared creative field that made this endeavour possible.

We also wish to thank everyone from our immediate circles who lovingly reviewed poems in their respective languages: Gomti Dua and Mahendra Kumar for Hindi and Amarjit Kaur for Punjabi. Each of them generously shared expertise cultivated over many years and their attentive reading has strengthened this work in ways that matter more than can be easily said.

Finally, we thank the many students across JGU who attended our events and listened, sang, questioned, reflected and participated with their whole being, as well as the countless others across India and beyond whose overwhelming and deeply heartening response became our greatest source of motivation.

To all who walked, sang, wondered and wandered with us, thank you!

मस्ती में रहो,

Raghav Dua & Michal Erlich



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Bhakti-Sufi Poetry

for a Fractured World

 [singing.oneness](https://www.instagram.com/singing.oneness)