The Kabir Project

Bangalore and Mumbai (India)

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Abstract:

The Kabir Project (K.P.) was born in Bangalore, India, in 2002, after the Gujarat pogrom, which occurred in the same year. In the context of increasing divisions in Indian society, defined by religion, social class, caste and gender, this research explores how this initiative, through live concerts and documentary films, spreads the folk music traditions of the 15th century mystic poet Kabir along with his messages of unity and understanding between confronted identity groups.

This study presents the context of violence between Muslims and Hindus since the Indian Partition and the reasons for gendered violence in the conflict. It focuses also on the connections between globalization and minorities’ prosecution in liberal democracies; on the colonial roots and socioeconomic reasons which led to the Gujarat massacre in 2002; and the social role of the mystic as bridging cultural and religious differences.

Through two complementary methods: in-depth interviews to audiences and organizers at the K. P. festivals in Bangalore and survey questionnaires distributed to the Kabir Festival Mumbai audiences, this study tries to answer the following questions:

What is the potential for social change of the K. P. in the world-views of today's Indian citizens? Are the messages presented by films and folk music capable of generating positive attitudes towards dialogue between confronted identity categories? In which ways?

The research reveals the success of the K. P. to challenge audiences’ minds through communication for development events, whose objectives are reached by spreading Kabir values through artistic forms, and by creating shared spaces between confronted identity sections. Festivals in rural areas help to diminish the distance between those antagonized communities. In addition, urban festivals also generate positive attitudes in elites towards dialogue and coexistence, since that is the social profile of the audience.

Keywords: Kabir Project, arts for peace building, folk music, oral traditions, poetry, Gujarat 2002, identity, Kabir festival Mumbai, Bangalore, India.
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1. The Kabir Project

India has been a theatre of conflict between communities on the basis of caste, ethnic group, language, religion and the like (Jayaram & Saberwal, 2011, cited in Jayaram, 2012, p. 46), being the past two decades the worst, marked by two pogroms against the Muslim community. The first began with the destruction of the Babri Mosque in 1992 in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, followed by a violence wave in the whole country, and the second was developed in Gujarat ten years later (Bajpai, 2013).

In the context of these growing polarisations defined by religion, identity, gender and borders that led to the Gujarat massacre in 2002, the Kabir Project was born that year at the Srishti School of Arts in Bangalore, with the aim to seek for social change by putting into question the meaning of identities.

The filmmaker Shabnam Virmani discovered a healing voice in Kabir, the Indian 15th century saint-poet, who combined harmoniously the spiritual and the socio-political. She produced four documentary films, trying to find the space between the dualities of Hindu-Muslim, sacred-secular, classical and traditional, and East and West. And during a six-year journey she documented the poetry and philosophy of the saint, which remained alive in different Indian regions through folk music traditions, with its democratic and inclusive spirit. As part of the Project, several audio CDs of folk musicians who sing Kabir verses were recorded, and also books compiling his works were published (Virmani, 2010; Abhinav, 2009).

The Kabir Project had its climax in 2009, with the organisation of a large festival of Kabir in February-March in Bangalore, celebrating all Kabir traditions, where the four documentary films, core elements of the initiative, were officially presented.

In the context of growing jingoistic mood in India, four months after the Mumbai terror attacks, the Kabit Project succeeded in providing visas to the Pakistani singers, so they could join other Kabir singers from Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Karnataka at the festival, to recall the voice of Kabir as a shared cultural heritage across the nation’s borders (Virmani, 2010).
The final concert was performed by the Pakistani musician Fariduddin Ayaz in a 1350-seat auditorium. When he sang the Rajasthani folk song ‘Come to my country’, he said: ‘let us go to that undivided land, that country beyond India and Pakistan, that undivided mind space where we all belong, where Kabir is calling us’, moving audiences (cited in Virmani, 2010).

Kabir Project books, CDs and documentary films in the Kabir Festival Mumbai.

**Documentary films**

Each film shows two poles of a duality. *Had-Anhad* (which means Bounded, Boundless in English) probes the divides created by religion and nationalism, and explores the Hindu-Muslim and the Indo-Pakistani divide. From the point of view of intercultural dialogue, it reminds audiences of their shared past with the Muslim neighbor country, and of “bonds that are deeper than blood” (Virmani, 2010).

*Chalo Hamara Des* (Come to my country) evokes a cross-cultural friendship between Prahlad Tipanya, a rural dalit folk singer from Madhya Pradesh, and Linda Hess, an American scholar-translator who practices Zen Buddhism. Tipanya, admired by many, “carries his insights with lightness and shares them with a playful ease and deeply inclusive humility that appeals to audiences deeply” (Virmani, 2010).

*Kabira Khada Bazaar Mein* (In the Market Stands Kabir) skirts with the tension between sacred and secular appropriations of Kabir. The film tracks the opposing pulls
of the individual and the collective, the spiritual and the social, through the life practice of Prahlad Tipanya as a cleric of the Kabit Panth sect and as a politician.

*Koi Sunta Hai* (Someone is Listening) weaves between urban, classical domains of knowledge and the rural, folk, oral traditions of Kabir. Moreover, it probes the boundaries existing in the realms of knowledge, art and music and shows how the prestigious singer Kumar Gandharva had the humility and openness to learn from folk musicians (*The Films*, n.d.). “This kind of radical action is equally needed in the realm of social conflict and politics — to be able to walk over to ‘other’ sides, with the capacity to listen, absorb and through that experience, transform oneself” explains Virmani (2010).

Thereby, the documentary films try to drive from “self-righteousness” towards an “empowering ambiguity”; “an arrival into the present moment, feeling a profound connectedness with all things and beings” (Virmani, cited in Abhinav, 2009).

**Festivals**

The first festival and the four documentary films inspired and motivated many other people to organise urban and rural festivals of Kabir all over the country, along with the creation of Kabir communities around the events.

The rural festivals are called *yatras*, which means ‘trip’ in Hindi. The *yatras* are journeys of many days in which musicians move together in a bus from one village to another where they perform in the evening. While the urban festivals include well defined programs, events and timetables, which are carried out in auditoriums and other urban spaces, the *yatras* give participants the chance of sharing the journey with artists, and the events can last the whole night.

These Kabir festivals are an extension of the Kabir Project developed in Bangalore, but independent from it, offering film screenings and live folk music concerts. Thereby, by January 2013, the Kabir festivals have been organised in Mussoorie, Chennai, Pondicherry, Delhi, Pune, Ahmedabad, Vadodara (Baroda), Ujjain, Indore, Bikaner, villages of Malwa and Rajasthan, and also in Kathmandu (Nepal), Canada and the USA. And some of them have become annual events: in Auroville and Chandigarh, with two editions, and in Mumbai, with three.
The musicians who participated in the Bangalore festival in 2009, belonging to different regions and portrayers of the different Kabir traditions, usually perform in the different festivals, and offer workshops where they share their knowledge of Kabir with audiences.

Through music concerts, film screenings and workshops, festivals do not offer a temporary escape from reality. Instead, they try to bring the socio-political, material world, together with the spiritual world, the meditative stillness and the insights of self-knowledge (Virmani, 2010).

Social change

Virmani’s documentary films have had a key role in the spread of the Kabir Project initiative. As described by Halloran (in Cottle et al, 1998), they have operated “at societal levels by creating social ethos and climates of opinion”, providing meanings, conferring status by approving and disproving, offering models for identification, defining problems, suggesting remedies and offering selected guidelines. And finally, they move and appeal audiences and promote social change (pp. 17, 18).

Their focus is on religious divisions, but they also deal, “in subtle but positively affirming ways”, with the issues of gender and caste. “The identity of woman or dalit too beyond a point shouldn’t be hardened or consolidated in our consciousness to such
an extent that we don’t or can’t step out of it”, Virmani says (cited in Abhinav, 2009). This sensitive focus on the dalit is especially significant as underlined by Béteille (2012, cited in Jayaram, 2012,) for both individuals and communities to which they belong, as “caste has been a tenacious and persistent signifier of identity in India” (p.53).

I will introduce the concept of Dalit (also known as Untouchables or Scheduled Castes), which is essential to understand Indian social divisions. This term designs a group that has historically been poor, deprived of basic human rights, and treated as social inferiors, and still face economic, social, cultural, and political discrimination in the name of caste (Kethineni, S., & Humiston, G., 2010, p.100) in India. This perpetuated discrimination, which has dominated Indian society for over 3,000 years, was developed by the Brahmins (Hindu priests) to maintain their superiority over the less educated and less skilled. It resulted not only in Dalits being most of the poor in India, but also in the creation of numerous other obstacles that hamper Dalit’s ability to change their situation (Artis, Doobay, & Lyons, 2003, cited in Kethineni, S., & Humiston, G., 2010, p.100-101).

The caste system was formalized into four distinct classes: at the top of the hierarchy are the Brahmins, arbiters in matters of learning, teaching and religion. Next in line are the Kshatriyas, warriors and administrators. The third category is Vaisyas, who belong to the artisan and commercial class. Finally, the Sudras (Backward Caste) are farmers and peasants. These four castes are said to have divine origination as they came from different parts of the Hindu god Brahma, the creator. The Brahmins came from the mouth of Brahma; the Kshatriyas, from his arms; the Vaisyas, from his thighs, and Sudras, from his feet (Izzo, 2005, cited in Kethineni, S., & Humiston, G., 2010, p. 101). Beneath the four classes, there is a fifth group, formed by human beings literally untouchable for the rest of the castes and excluded of the caste system. Gandhi gave them the name of Dalit in order to restore their human dignity.

**Kabir: the saint, the poet**

Kabir was born in Varanasi in the 15th century in a family of weavers who had recently converted to Islam. He learned the family craft, studied meditative and devotional practices with a Hindu master, and developed into a teacher and poet, unique in his autonomy, strength and abrasiveness. He is generally assumed to have been illiterate;
therefore his verses were composed orally and collected by disciples and admirers after varying periods of circulation (Hess, 2002, p.3).

Kabir’s poetry urges human beings to rise above identity politics and to seek an essence; but not a relinquishing of all identity markers, all cultural reference points. Rather, he invites us to be free enough to enjoy and celebrate the multiple manifestations of the essence that have taken shape all around them (Virmani, cited in Abhinav, 2009).

He aimed to show how we ‘other’ multiple categories of people in order to consolidate our identity and how this ‘othering’ keeps us locked in dualistic ways of perceiving ourselves and the world (Virmani, 2010). Thereby, in the violent episodes of recent Indian history, these mental processes unfolded into massacres against the whole Muslim community to defend the collective Hindu identity as a symbol of religion, nation and masculinity.

Kabir, who was very critic and controversial, even against religious practices, is considered a saint by many coexisting religions in India, such as Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism. For instance, he was against the caste system and sought for understanding in a society marked by great divisions. His argument was that without powerful personal experience and critical self knowledge, humans can at best take refuge onto scripture, ritual and community as ways to secure their insecure egos and identities. Then all these become meaningless enactments that can strengthen social exploitation and divisiveness. For Kabir, the inner body realization of human fundamental connection with the cosmos was also the realization of the worthlessness of all social divisions. “Kabir himself is the perfect icon to reflect this, because he inhabits many cultures and opposing social paradigms, and yet refuses to be contained or defined by any one of them” (Virmani, 2010).

Kabir verses emphasize that all social, spiritual, moral action begins with the individual. But the authentic spiritual quest of an individual would simultaneously connect her or him to the community (Virmani, 2010).
The folk Kabir traditions

Religious "literature" in medieval India was sung. It spread across the country on the lips of devotees and ascetics who walked from region to region or met in "holy men" conventions, where a chief activity was bhajan, or devotional singing. This oral tradition is still flourishing today, so that it is possible to move among groups of singers in villages and transcribe songs by Kabir in different local languages. In Kabir's case there are three major collections, put together by sects in three widely separated regions of North India: the states of Punjab in the West, Rajasthan in the Midwest, and Uttar Pradesh/Bihar in the East. The best-known translations in the West are Tagore's English renditions of one hundred songs, published in 1915, and Robert Bly's new versions adapted from Tagore, both based on verses originally brought together by a Bengali collector who compiled them from oral and written sources in the early 1900s (Hess, 2002, p.6).

Kabir, as a poet, is studied in some Indian regions at school, so that in those places the population knows his teachings very well. But what I discovered while interviewing my informants for this research during the methods testing, was that they did not know some inclusive aspects of this historical figure, like the fact that he was a saint for different religions. In this direction, the Kabir Project is an effort towards experiencing Kabir in an integrated way, without fragmentation.

Research question

In order to conduct this research, I have focused on the potential for social change of the 15th century Kabir mediated messages on the world-views of today’s Indian citizens, exposed to the films and folk music through the Kabir Project and related events. Then, I have explored their power to generate positive attitudes towards dialogue between confronted identity categories, such as religion, gender, social class or caste on their audiences in Bangalore, the economically developed city where it was born, in the Southern province of Karnataka; and in the Kabir Festival of the cosmopolitan and huge city of Mumbai, in the central province of Maharashtra.

My premise for this research is that culture and development are a matter of interrogating culture as a terrain of power, as ideology (Pieterse, 2009, pp.64, 77), and
that identity is a culturally constructed category, whose meanings associated are historically produced within particular cultural languages (Hall, 1997, pp. 296-301).

Discourse creates differences between people on the basis of a certain representation of their differences, which reflect the power relations subjected to some classification and those promoting them. But these representations as the ‘other’ can be challenged and reversed. And the translation of difference creates new concepts, values and ideas that can be communicated through understanding and interpretation. In this case, the poet, through the filmmaker and folk singers, are ‘involved in the creation of myth and are the holders of symbolic power’ as cultural producers who seek to demolish artificial boundaries between people belonging to different identity groups (Hall, 1997, pp.172, 191, 164, 179).

Furthermore, thinking about the reception of the messages (Cottle et al, 1998, p 20), even if it is limiting to look at Kabir only as an icon of Hindu-Muslim unity (Mukhopadhay, 2011), he is considered a holy man by different religious groups, and his authority might generate a positive attitude in the audience (Virmani, 2010).
2. Literature review

The Indian anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (2006) explores the fear of minorities in the context of globalization in his book *Fear of small numbers*. The creation of collective ‘others’ is based on stereotyping and identity contrast to set boundaries. The ‘other’ is a society’s scapegoat, presented as ‘evil’ and persecuted by those who have the power and want to distract from the real problems to protect their privileged position and preserve the inequalities in a community (pp.50-51).

Indian society, like many others in South Asian countries, is marked by fear of small cultural differences, being cultural wars the origin of the aforementioned violence waves since Partition. This fact is related to India’s lack of individual rights and protection from a liberal democratic perspective. Instead, Indians are “attached to their communities and consider the rights of collectives to be above the rights of individuals”. In this context, the only hope to heal the wounds produced by this sort of conflicts and to prevent violence in the future, “might be prudent, sensible patient acts of resistance and counter-protest, civic and civil organisation” (Bajpaj, 2013). The Kabir Project can be considered as one of these healing efforts.

The true enemy

In *Faces of the Enemy* (1991), the North American social psychologist and writer Sam Keen, posits that the best way to avoid violence and war is to deconstruct the ‘otherization’ processes and to understand the ways our mind works to create enemies. Even if the causes change, the images we use to de-humanize our enemies have always remained the same through history and in spite of distant geographies. How does this process work? The group identity depends on the division between insiders and outsiders, ‘us’ and ‘them’, and on the assumption that an outside power is conspiring against the community. In the language of rhetoric, war is a battle between good and evil. By identifying the enemy as evil, the guilt associated with murder is transformed into pride; and compassion, into indifference. In addition, the enemies are portrayed as dumb, cruel and subhuman people and as culture destroyers. The necessity to demean our enemies is caused by the human instinct for compassion, which is strong and makes difficult to kill others whom we fully recognize as human beings. But social powers
find the way of overcoming this moral imperative that forbids humans to kill. Even so, the effort is successful only for a few people (pp.71-75).

Keen concludes that “our true war is our struggle against the antagonistic mind” and “our true enemy is our propensity to make enemies”. Kabir urges us to seek for self-knowledge, which introduces self-doubt into our minds. And “self-doubt is a healthy counterbalance to the dogmatic, self-righteous certainty that governs political rhetoric and behavior; it is, therefore, the beginning of compassion” (Keen, 1991, p.75).

Globalised minorities

Appadurai (2006) coined the term ‘predatory identity’ to define a kind of social identity that perceives itself as threatened by another one by its mere existence. It emerges when majority’s identity is identified with the notion of purity in the context of national identity. Thereby, minorities would represent the obstacle between majorities and total purity. The anthropologist describes this sort of liberal majorities as “seeds of genocide”, because they claim to be inclusive but are related to ideas of “singularity and complete ethnos” (pp. 50-57).

In the 80s and 90s, India, like many other nation-states, had to negotiate two pressures derived from globalization: to open up markets for foreign investment and to manage the capacity of cultural minorities of using the United Nations human rights discourse
to argue for their claims for cultural dignity and recognition. In the 90s, this dual pressure produced a crisis in many countries for “the sense of national boundaries, national sovereignty and the purity of the national ethnos”, directly responsible for the growth of racism in societies as diverse as India (ibid, p. 65).

The Indian nation state was formed in 1947 through the political partition that produced the new nation state of Pakistan as a political home for the Muslim who lived in Britain’s Indian colonial empire. From a postcolonial perspective, it was the final consequence of a series of institutional changes sponsored by the British in colonial India, like religious counts in the 19th century censuses, separating electorates for Hindus and Muslims in the early 20th century, or strategies for ‘divide and rule’ that provoked the painful birth of two nations (ibid, pp.66; 111).

Hinduism and its political brand evolved a cultural politics in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. Moreover, the birth of Pakistan created a link between the Hindu identity and the rise of a major Hindu political coalition power in the 90s. Furthermore, the partition generated a permanent state of war between both countries and the crisis in the Northern state of Kashmir, along with a perfect alibi for the identification of India’s Muslim citizens with Pakistan, its major cross-border enemy. This panorama laid the groundwork for India’s current crisis of secularism (ibid, p.66).

The two main pogroms against Muslims since the massacres of the partition occurred in this period: in 1992, the destruction of the 16th-century Babri Mosque in Uttar Pradesh, and the related wave of genocidal riots throughout India, and those developed in Gujarat in 2002.

In the decade bracketed between both events, a national public opinion was formed against the inclusive and secularist ideals of Indian Constitution, supported by the majority of the population, including the better educated middle classes. A coalition of grassroots movements and political parties called Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in English, Indian People’s Party, campaigned to create links between the Hindu humiliations by the pre-British Muslim rulers of India, the suspicion against the patriotism of India’s Muslim citizens, the wish of Pakistan to destroy India militarily, and the militant actions by Muslim terrorists in Kashmir. Thereby, in 40 years, the
world’s largest democracy born with a Constitution paying special attention to religious inclusion, secular tolerance for religious diversity and concern with protecting society’s weak groups, was turned into “an aggressively Hinduized polity, systematically sought to identify India with Hindus and patriotism with Hinduness” (ibid, pp.67-68).

**Terror in Gujarat 2002**

Harsh Mander, in his book *Fear and Forgiveness* (2009), explores the Gujarat massacre. In 2002, about 2,000 Muslim people, most of them young women, were murdered, often burned alive after being gang raped, and more than 200,000 people lost their homes, plundered and destroyed by their neighbors. Mander (2009) describes this violence period as a ‘state-sponsored pogrom, planned and executed by right wing religious fundamentalists’ (pp. ix-x).

In the later decades of India’s struggle for freedom from British colonial rule, Gandhi and his vision for the new India as a secular nation with equal rights of citizenship for everyone, independently of their faith, caste, gender, class or race, were supported by the masses. It is true that extremist Muslim and Hindu opposed Gandhi’s inclusive Hinduism and nationalism. I will clarify that secularism in India does not mean a denial of faith in the public sphere, as it does in Europe, but equal respect for all faiths, including the absence of it. This understanding of secularism can be found in the practice and teachings of tolerance of Kabir, the Sufi traditions and Bhakti reformers, Buddha or Akbar. A meaningful remark is that many of those who supported a secular democratic India were devout practitioners of their religious faiths, what reveals that the battle in this field was not between the teachings of any religion, but about power and political interests. Therefore, it was a political decision if the new India would be based on identity and divisions or in acceptance of and respect for diversity. In this sense, Mander understands the demolition in 1992 of the Babri Mosque as “an assault on the idea of secular democratic India itself” (ibid, pp. 1-3).

Ten years later, the pogrom in Gujarat began with mass campaigns periodically organized by Hindu fundamentalist organizations. The trigger event was a train burning, which caused almost 60 deaths, being many of them radical Hindu. According to humanitarian sources, the fire was most probably the result of an accident, but the Gujarat government version was a Muslim terrorist conspiracy. Anyway, this tragedy
was used to ignite hatred against Muslims and justify crimes against humanity (ibid, pp. 3-4).

A main aspect when exploring the origins of violence in the aforementioned crimes between the Hindu and Muslim communities since Partition is brutality and rage against women (Butalia, 1998, p. 131). This aspect is not a specificity of India, but characteristic of other contemporary wars against minorities, such as Rwanda or Bosnia. But surprisingly, the specific reasons for this gendered violence are not addressed by Appadurai (2006), when he explores thoroughly the reasons for violence in ‘glocal’ contexts from many other perspectives.

The bodies of women were considered as property of the hatred ‘other’ and as symbols of their honor, becoming the target of the attacks in order “to humiliate the men who ‘owned’ them and help break their spirit” (Mander, 2009, p.). Sadly, many Hindu women supported the mass sexual violence against Muslim women, unaware that they could have been the target of the same horrendous attacks. Furthermore, feminist observers perceived a worsening in violence against women in Gujarat, not only towards Muslim but Hindu women as well, as one more fatal consequence of the brutally gendered violence occurred in 2002, including the increase in the trafficking of women and girls (p. 15).

With the aim of throwing some light on the issue, I will present briefly Klaus Theweleit’s theories in Male fantasies (1987). He explores the duality between the woman-mother and the ‘other’ woman: “a kind of distillation of sexuality, threatening to engulf the male in a whirlpool of bodily and emotional ecstasy, (…) because she endangered his identity, his sense of self as a fixed and bounded being”. Through this representation, she is ‘otherized’ and becomes a target for violence (cited in Robinson, 1987).

Moreover, the Indian researcher Urvashi Butalia, in The Other Side of Silence (1998), points at a set of symbolisms at the Partition period, which connected nationalism, manliness and women’s bodies. During the Partition, about 100,000 women were abducted from both sides of the border. Within the Hindu political discourse, those crimes challenged Hindu manhood
and Indian nationalism. Hindu women were represented as pious mothers and sisters, victims of Muslim men, in sharp contrast with the aggressive and dangerous Muslim woman. But, regrettably, Hindu men were responsible of violence, not only towards Muslim women, but also against ‘their own’ women (p.193).

Within Hindu nationalist discourse, the ‘pure’ body of women was crucial for the Indian state’s self-legitimation. As Butalia describes, the birth of Pakistan became a metaphor for the violation of India, as the body of the ‘pure’ Hindu women. Abducted women were, almost all, bearers of the honor of the nation and of its men, instead of human beings deserving compassion and justice. Therefore, it was important to reestablish the purity of abducted women and to relocate them into the family and community, even against their will (ibid, pp.183-8). “Only then would the purity of ‘mother India’ be restored and the weakened manhood of the Hindu male be vindicated” (ibid, p.190).

The Gujarat government, who had not provided security and assured basic human rights for the population in 2002, was reelected after the massacre in 2002 and 2007, and refused to reach out resources and support to victims, subverting the judicial system to deny justice to survivors. The consent for silence in the aftermath of the massacre was imposed as a form of deceitful reconciliation. As a consequence, there was an enforced social acceptance of fear and a second-class citizenship was born, along with the creation of ghettoes where they lived without the most basic services and dignified conditions (Mander, 2009, pp. 6; 15).

**Cultural fiction and violence**

In order to analyze the true origin of this massacre, the key question is who was interested in promoting these horrendous crimes? In other words: who had the most to gain from the violent episodes considered above? Fear towards the Muslim ‘other’ was a strategy inflicted by the Hindu privileged minority, as “the Hindu majority hides the numerical minority of upper caste” in Indian society (Basu, 1994, cited by Appadurai, 2006, p.74). Thereby, the religious division was a ‘cultural fiction’, conceived and spread by this Hindu privileged minority.
In the context of the Hinduization of Indian politics, Muslims were portrayed and perceived as a mark for Muslims as a powerful and threatening global majority. A relevant point highlighted by Appadurai (2006) is that the debate about minorities’ rights can unsettle relevant issues when connected to larger ones, like the role of state, the limits of religion or the nature of civil rights as matters of legitimate cultural difference (pp. 69-74).

Appadurai (2006) also puts the Gujarat pogrom in the frame of the global war on terror announced by the USA after the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York. The “sense of uncertainty about the enemy within and the anxiety about the incomplete project of national purity”, in the form of this globalised image of the Muslim terrorist, was spread through news media, the Internet and political speeches and messages, which probably helped the BJP to campaign and sponsor the massive ethnocide in Gujarat against the Muslim minority (pp.95; 100; 110).

In the contexts of Partition and the Gujarat pogrom, the Indian state abandoned all their prospects of securing justice as guaranteed under the Constitution for all citizens, in a capitulation by a disempowered section of society through fear, boycott and violence (Butalia, 1998, pp.69-71), instead of seeking for reconciliation in the sense of restoration of trust and goodwill. But “forgiveness is authentic only if the person who forgives has the option not to forgive” (Mander, 2009, p.112). A modern pluralist democracy is based in the ethico-political principles of liberty and equity for all (Mouffe, 2002, p. 11). Then, considering the continued failure of the Indian state to punish the main perpetrators of the crimes against humanity committed during the Gujarat pogroms, can India be considered a democratic state? And in that case, what is the meaning of democracy?

The path to justice
The real construction of peace requires the healing of remorse and compassion and the demonstration of justice done, but neither of these has been reached in Gujarat after the pogroms. “Instead of acknowledgement, there remains active denial and the blame of victims; instead of remorse, there is pride for communal enmity; instead of reparation, there is economic boycott and state denial of rehabilitation; and instead of justice, there is active subversion of process of law” (Mander, 2009, p.35).
In this context, how can a peaceful future be constructed and developed? Hamber and Kelly (2004, cited in Mander, 2009) underline an essential condition to any process of reconciliation: “developing a shared vision of an independent, just, equitable, open and diverse society” (p. 18). Through reconciliation, the wave of suspicion, fear, mistrust and violence is broken down and opportunities and space in which people share their perspectives and experiences are created. It requires building positive relations while addressing issues of trust, prejudice and intolerance in order to embrace commonalities and differences, and to accept and engage with those who are different from us (Mander, 2009, p. 18).

But no systematic structured official or significant non-official process of this kind was developed, even if the pogroms between Muslim and Hindu had a result of 25,628 deaths. Therefore, “hate was retained and nurtured, stereotypes remained and selective memory and lies were perpetuated in relation to a demonized ‘other’”. Mander (2009) points at the ‘truth and reconciliation’ processes developed in South Africa as an accurate model to follow (pp. 8-14).

Then, the author started working in the Nyayagrah campaign, created to fight for justice and accountability, by documenting types of social and economic boycott experienced by survivors on the ground through site visits and in-depth interviews. The project is a mass community based effort, mostly relied on community justice workers drawn from the affected communities, often themselves survivors. They have fought a long battle for just compensation and rehabilitation in the Supreme Court to challenge the closure without trial of more than 2000 cases registered after the Gujarat carnage. Thanks to Nyayagrah, in January 2006, the Gujarat government ordered the reopening of 22 closed cases (Aman Bidari).

**The social role of the mystic**

I will finish this chapter with a brief note about a book on mystic traditions by the Indian scholar Susan Viswanathan. In her work, entitled *Friendship, Interiority and Mysticism: Essays in Dialogue* (2007), she suggests that mystics often stand in between cultures as a consequence of some confusion in their own identities. For instance, the Spanish mystic St. Teresa of Avila, may have had Jewish cultural links. Her image of
the Interior Castle could point back to an image which is found in the Midrashic tradition (a group of Jewish commentaries on the Hebrew Scriptures compiled between a.d. 400 and 1200), which also appears in both St. John's Gospel and St. Paul's letters. It speaks of God's house having many mansions. The same image emerges in Kabir's understanding of the "Ajab Mahal" or "Ajab Shehr", meaning a wondrous palace, or wondrous city, and referring to the mystical and undiscovered dimensions of the “inner self” (J. Sahi, personal communication, March 24, 2013).

I will explore the origin of the role of the mystic Kabir as bridging not only cultural, but also religious differences. Kabir was born in a household of Muslim weavers in Varanasi. But to be a Muslim in North India in the 15th century often meant to be ‘still half a Hindu’. For several centuries, Muslims had been establishing a strong political and cultural presence in North India. Large groups of local people—usually low-caste Hindus, often laborers and craftspeople—found it convenient to convert to the religion of the rulers, but this did not mean that they forsook their former gods and practices.

Thereby, many different religious influences are evident in Kabir, who more than any other poet-saint of the period reflects the unruly, rich conglomerate of religious life that flourished around him, such as Hinduism, Hindu and Buddhist tantraism, the tantric teaching of the Nath yogis or the Islam. But he always declared his independence from the major religions of his country. Instead, he asserted that the individual must find the truth in his own body and mind, in ways that “the line between ‘him’ and ‘it’ disappears” (Hess, 2002, pp. 4-7).

Finally, he persistently evaded any attempt to define or explain him, being the impossibility of ascertaining the basic facts about his religious life part of his legacy of teaching (Hess, 2002, pp.5-6).
Workshop in Fort by the folk musician P. Tipaniya. Kabir Festival Mumbai.

B. Malini and V. Bharadwaj at Nariman Point. Kabir Festival Mumbai.
3. Theory and methodology

The research of social sciences is the study of “how and why people behave as they do, both as individuals and in groups within society”, which should employ a systematic and disciplined method of acquiring knowledge and be verifiable (Cottle et al, 1998, p.12). For this, a holistic approach to a study of social sciences, which reflects social reality as “multi-faceted”, allows this complex reality to be reflected through the application of various and complementary methods (Cottle et al, 1998, pp.12-29).

I consider that the main method to achieve the objectives of this research must be qualitative, due to the culturally constructed and complex nature of identity, which requires a deep analysis of individual worldviews and is the concept challenged by the Kabir Project and related events. But the incorporation of a quantitative complementary method can also be used to test the general applicability and representativeness of the in-depth interviews and provide “a more legitimate basis for extrapolating implications beyond the particular” (Pickering, 2008, p.101). In turn, “the broad data obtained from surveys can be supported by more qualitative information which would give depth to bold figures” (Cottle et al, 1998, p 233).

Therefore, the research methods that I have conducted for this research are in-depth interviews along with survey. They can be combined to good effect, as survey can unveil some aspects that can be missed in interview analysis, like the relevance of viewer’s education, age, gender or social class (Deacon et al, 1999, p. 71).

In-depth interviews

In qualitative research, interviews are employed as some form of ‘conversation with a purpose’ (Burgess 1984, cited in Mason, 2002, p.225). The in-depth interview is an accurate qualitative method to provide information about why and how the relationships between beliefs, attitudes and behaviour are produced and to explore ways in which the participants perceive abstract contemporary issues (Cottle et al, 1998, pp. 233, 257) like identities.

The method has its roots in theoretical and epistemological traditions that privilege the narratives of social actors or subjects as data sources, and consider talk as a core
element in our ways of knowing about the social world. Its main characteristic is the flexibility of its conversational style, whose purpose is achieved through the interaction of interviewer and interviewee around relevant issues and experiences during the interview (Mason, 2002, p.225).

Criticisms of this method point to the unreliability of interviewees’ accounts due to memory, selectivity and truth related issues, and to main differences between informants in fluency and linguistic codes. In addition, it is important to observe that the nature of language, who uses it, its potential and meaning, are not neutral, but the result of power relations (O’Brien and Harris 1999, cited in Mason, 2002, p.237). Therefore, it would not be suitable to interpret interviewees’ accounts as mere descriptions of social experience. Instead, it is important to recognise that the narrative itself is a cultural form or genre with its own structural conventions, rather than a neutral medium for the gathering of data and facts (Mason, 2002, p.237; Chamberlain and Thompson 1997, cited in Mason, 2002, p.232).

**The construction of knowledge**

The interview is a process of knowledge construction, where interviewee and interviewer co-participate. Then the objective is to work out how to organize the asking and the listening in order to create the best conditions for the construction of meaningful knowledge (Mason, 2002, p.226-7).

It is relevant to consider that the types of questions interviewers ask, and the way they listen to and interpret the answers they are given, help to shape the nature of the knowledge produced. Indeed, in interpreting data, sometimes what an interviewee says is not the straightforward answer to the interviewer’s question. That’s why they should be receptive to what interviewees answer, and to their ways of understanding, being this aspect one of the main criticisms to in-depth interviews when compared to the more structured interview methods in survey (Mason, 2002, p. 231).

When conceiving the questions, it is useful to give concrete contexts and frames in order to help respondents to give meaningful answers. General and abstract questions do not make immediate sense to them, who often ask for clarification as they find it difficult to answer (Finch and Mason 1993, 2000; Mason 2000, cited in Mason, 2001, p. 228). In these cases, the answers often appear clichéd and empty of grounded
meaning and the knowledge produced may be limited when seen in the context of the overall theoretical project. Therefore, the choice of specific questions about people’s own experiences is more suitable (Mason, 2002, pp.227-30).

Another meaningful factor is the structure or framework for the dialogue. A sequence of questions too rigid and devised in advance lacks the flexibility and sensitivity to context and particularity required to appreciate the ways of interpreting the world. The point here is how to, and how far to, structure an interview. The solutions would depend upon the theoretical orientations of the researcher. Most qualitative researchers try to structure interviews in ways which are meaningful to interviewees and relevant to the research, while many others try to minimize their role in the process of structuring and in the sequencing of the dialogue (Mason, 2002, p. 231). In the interviews I did, I tried to combine both perspectives.

When conducting this method, building rapport is fundamental in order to get interviewees to cooperate (Cottle et al, 1998, p. 67). In this research, all of them opened themselves and were willing to explain to me how their experiences in relation to the Kabir Project and related festivals had changed them in many ways.

In relation to the language used in the interviews, 11 out of 13 were conducted in English. In the case of the other two, while interviewing two of the main musicians involved in the Kabir Project, from Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, one of the volunteers working for the festival in Mumbai helped me with the translation from Hindi to English.

Finally, I tried to focus less on my research’ key concepts and more on wider or looser ones, being open even to oppositional ones (Mason, 2002, p.234-6) and letting the conversation flow in order to obtain revealing data.

**Identification of sampling frame**

Research populations must be defined by the specific research objectives. Sampling techniques used in analyzing people and institutions can be broadly divided in two categories: random or probability sampling and non-random sampling (Deacon et al., 1999, p.41).
The key difference between qualitative and quantitative methods, when considering the sampling frame, is that in the qualitative tradition, samples tend to be seen as illustrative of broader social and cultural processes, rather than representative. Thereby, their concern in many cases is not that much in generating an extensive perspective by producing findings that can be generalized more widely, than in providing intensive insights into complex phenomena in highly specific circumstances (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, cited in Deacon et al., 1999, p.43). And this is my aim with the research.

As a consequence, qualitative studies tend to use comparatively small samples which are generated more informally and organically than those typically used in quantitative research (Deacon et al, 1999, p.43). For this reason, in qualitative studies, researchers stop gathering information once data collection stops revealing new things and their evidence starts to repeat itself. To accomplish this thesis, I followed Lincoln and Guba’s (1985, cited in Deacon et al., 1999, p.43) advice and I interviewed 13 people to attain the saturation point in the collection of data. I could not interview all of them in the same depth: in fact, this question depended more on the interviewee’s availability than on my research objectives. Three of them were artists participating in the Mumbai Kabir Festival, and the other 10, had attended many events related to the Kabir Project and were able to give signifying testimonies.

I contacted some of them in Mumbai, during the festival, and some of them in Bangalore, through the Kabir Project’s manager, who sent a request by e mail to the whole Kabir community in Bangalore asking for volunteers to participate in my research.

As identified by Wren-Lewis (1983), it is important to be careful when defining the sample, as the “design of the selection process may inadvertently shape the nature of the conclusions reached” (cited in Deacon et al., 1999, p.56).

Even if my population was formed by Indian people exposed to the Kabir Project and other urban related events in Bangalore and Mumbai, the questionnaires revealed that they only reach a section of Indian society that could be considered an elite (see pp. 46-48). As a consequence, it is a mirror of one of the countries in the world with the biggest social divides between rich and poor. Thereby, all my interviewees and survey
questionnaire respondents belong to well-off families and have college degrees; in other words, they belong to Indian middle and upper-classes. In this sense, it could be considered too limited. But this is not caused by a sample error, as the values from the sample did not differ from the actual values of the population (Deacon et al., 1999, p. 41). Instead, this is the true profile of the audience in the Kabir Project and related urban events. And for this reason, I had no access to low-class audiences, who participate in the yatra: the folk music events where different populations interact in villages.

Unfortunately, I had no chance of attending the yatra. On the one hand, it could have been a great opportunity to witness the processes that are experienced in them, and on the other, not speaking any local language would have hindered me to engage with the humble sector. The fact of requiring the essential role of a translator to conduct most of the interviews would have been too time consuming for a volunteer and too demanding for one of the participants in the event. In addition, having an intermediary could have hampered me to build rapport with them. Those problems would have been the same in the case of the survey questionnaires, not only due to the language problem, but also to the illiteracy which is common in rural areas.

In order to overcome the lack of a main group of Indian society in my research, and therefore, of an important perspective, through these intellectual urban populations attending the events, I have tried to analyse indirectly the interactions that are lived in the yatra by these two different groups of people. Their accounts have revealed them to be one of the most interesting communication for development results of the whole Kabir Project and its related festivals, by the way boundaries are broken and communication and understanding emerge between both groups by creating common spaces.

I recognise the fact that having access to these events only through the interviews to one of both sectors of the population is a constraint, but at the same time, the information that I obtained from them about the yatra completes and improves my research in a meaningful way.
Interviewer and interview guide

I was both the interviewer and the researcher, which ensured that the dialogue was pertinent for the objectives of the study, but at the same time, it implied a danger of steering responses in the directions which fit my preconceived expectations for the research (Cottle et al, 1998, p. 273). In this sense, I tried to be open to new subjects and perspectives, and to seek out inconsistencies just as much as consistencies in the interview questions to avoid limiting and determining the results of the research. For instance, I had not considered the study of the *yatra* previously, but through the in-depth interviews, I discovered the interest and relevance of this sort of events as places where deep and meaningful transformations take place within the privileged group towards their relation with the unprivileged.

The interview outline is a menu of topics, issues and thematic areas to be covered, which should also give the sequence of the conversation. For setting it, I raised a standardised set of issues, ensuring a degree of comparability across interviewees (Cottle et al, 1998, p. 274, 5). But I was flexible and adapted it to every interview context and according to the specificities of every dialogue (Halloran in Cottle et al, 1998, p. 19).

I tried to approximate the natural flow of conversation, starting by general, unthreatening and easy questions to make people feel at ease and relaxed, to follow with more personal, complex or problematic matters, such as violence, once they felt more confident in the situation and were more committed to answer in a detailed and accurate way (Deacon et al, 1999, p.74).

In relation to the interviewer control of the order of questions, it entails the risk of witting or unwitting bias, such as encouraging certain types of responses. Moreover, the non-standardized nature of the delivery intensifies concerns about the validity of comparisons (ibid, pp.66-69). But in less structured questioning techniques, the interviewer can rephrase the questions when necessary to ensure they have been properly understood.
Survey
Quantitative evidence and statistics are important due to their rhetorical power, as numbers are believed to be more objective and scientific than other kinds of evidence (Deacon et al., 2007, p. 82). But statistics should never be taken at face value: their objectivity relies on the legitimacy of the questions asked (Gadamer, 1975, cited in Deacon et al., 2007, p. 83). And it is necessary to acknowledge their constructed nature (Pickering, 2008, p.100). Their validity depends on “the competence of its conceptualization, the meticulousness of its collation and the rigor in its interpretation” (Deacon et al., 2007, p. 81-2).

In addition, quantitative methods are adequate to address questions of power, central to many development researches. Theoretical and methodological orientation exclusively focused on “micro agency and complexity can easily lead to a negation of the structural forces and inequalities that circumscribe these activities” (Ferguson and Golding, cited in Pickering, 2008, p.101).

Design of the questionnaire
Survey questionnaires are mainly divided between open-answer and closed-answer formats. The first one is accurate when it is required to study a particular topic deeply, and it is necessary when beginning work in a new area, in order to explore all its related aspects (Sudman & Bradburn, 1983, p. 150). For these two reasons I considered this format as the most appropriate for my research.

Open and closed versions of the same questions have been found to typically generate quite different response distributions (Schuman & Presser, 1979a, cited in Foddy, 1993, p.151) but it is not obvious which format produces the most valid data. In the case of open questions, respondents are allowed to wander from the topic, which is an endemic problem of this modality (Campbell, 1945; Dohrenwend, 1965, cited in Foody, 1993, p.151). In addition, answers are often less complete than those corresponding closed questions. But the central issue in relation to both formats is whether respondents are told what kind of answers the researcher requires (Foody, 1993, pp.151-2).

In the case of closed-answer formats, the respondent is given alternatives which use precoded question answers, along with the topic and the dimensions in which they are
wanted, so that they make the task easier for them. But pretesting is essential, because if the questions are not well formulated, it can lead to biases in the answers. Precoding appears to guarantee comparability of responses across individuals, but in fact, questions can be interpreted differently by respondents or the categories could not be congenial to them (Sudman & Bradburn, 1983, p.153-4).

The most important claims that have been made regarding open questions are that they do not suggest answers and indicate what is salient for respondents, being a prerequisite for the proper development of sets of response options for closed questions. But many observations can be made to these assumptions. For instance, respondents can forget appropriate answers, and there is little evidence that they mention the things that are most important to them first (Foddy, 1993, p.131).

Along with the tendency of respondents to stray from the topic, other open questions main problems are probing inadequate answers, great individual variation caused by carelessness and verbal facility of respondents and incomplete answers or not detailed or specific enough, so that they are not meaningful for the research. Some of them could be solved by some probing from an interviewer, but in this case, the risk of conditioning the answers might increase, as already pointed out in relation to the closed format, unless the interviewer interventions were not directive at all, which is not an easy task (William Foddy, 1993, pp. 128-38).

For this research, I have elaborated and distributed questionnaires to be self-completed, which are a convenient and cost-effective means of questioning large populations if compared to face-to-face questioning. The fact that there is no personal contact limits the opportunities to persuade people to participate, so when using this method, it is important to think of ways to maximize the chances for people to complete and return the questionnaires. Besides, in terms of comprehension, it is not possible to rephrase the questions to ensure they have been properly understood or to adapt its content and wording depending on any variable, which constitutes a relevant disadvantage. Therefore, the pre-test of the questionnaire is very important in order to identify and rectify glaring problems with terminology and design (Deacon et al., 1999, p.66-7). After testing my initial version of the questionnaire, I realized that I had to modify my focus to a smaller extent and leave it more open-ended to explore what the responses and feelings were between those people attending the Kabir Project activities. The
subject could not be addressed in a direct and obvious way, so I opted to ask open questions and tried to let respondents explain in their own words their impressions and feelings in relation to the events.

With both, open and closed formats, respondents can misunderstand the questions, but in the open, the inconvenient might be bigger, as a frame of responses is not given and the required kinds of answers are not specified. So they increase the risk of receiving such a variety of responses that they might be too difficult to compare and to codify (ibid, p.138).

When analysing relevant amounts of responses, a computer program may be used, as recommended by Cottle et al. (1999). But it can only deal with figures, not with statements or opinions, so a coding system is necessary for the analysis. It is important that the coding was clear so that no answer could be included under more than one code or that more than two codes refer to a similar answer (ibid, p.252-4).

Open-answer formats take longer to respondents to answer and to researchers to elaborate the coding pre-response materials for statistical use, by reducing it into simple categories. Moreover, this coding process increases the risk of coding error (Sudman & Bradburn, 1983, pp.150-1) as it is supposed to be more subjective and determined by the researcher.

**Sampling**

The population of my sample for this part of the research were audiences at the Kabir Festival in Mumbai.

From the 9th until the 13th January 2013, I attended the festival in the economic capital of India, which offered 20 events, all free and most of them open to the general public. The sessions were developed in different areas of the city, in order to reach different audiences, from the morning until the night. I tried to attend as much events as possible, considering that some of them took place at the same time, and all were carried out in very distant neighbourhoods of a huge city. I could attend ten of them, two by day, and I distributed a total amount of 150 questionnaires to be self-completed.
by the respondents during the sessions. Not all of them were given back to me properly filled by respondents, but a total amount of 130.

At the beginning, I thought of using the quota sampling frame: a non random sampling method mainly used by qualitative studies (Deacon et al., 1999, pp.50-1), as I wanted my sample to be representative. But I realised that I would not have information about the characteristics of my population, as it was a spontaneous gathering of people at every event, so it was not possible. Then, the sampling frame that I defined for this thesis is convenience sampling: a non-random qualitative kind, in which the selection of the sample is not directed by the research agenda; instead, it is “the product of expediency, chance and opportunity more than of deliberate intent”. Thereby, “sampling focuses around natural clusters of social groups and individuals”, in this case, because people attending the events were assembled in precise times and places, giving me the chance of researching their reactions and feelings (ibid, p.54).

Distribution of the questionnaires
The sort of question, respondents’ interpretation of the researcher’s goals and the contexts in which questions are asked condition the answers (Foddy, 1993, p.192). Sometimes audiences were in a hurry to attend the next event and had no time or interest in filling the form. But in some occasions, I could present my research to the audience and it was receptive, as the film screenings at the Digital Academy in Andheri
East or in the folk music workshop at the Music School in Juhu. In both cases, there was a break where the audience was relaxed and able to answer my questions, which influenced in their positive attitude to collaborate. In addition, the events were developed in the afternoon and in the morning, so that people were not in a hurry to come back home, like it happened in the case of the evening concerts.

Another event where the audience was helpful was the concert and film screening at the Sofia Communication College. But the fact that the attendance was compulsory for the students as part of their learning itinerary decreased the quality of the answers because their interest in the events was very low. In this case, I found some problems, as one of the professors was offended by my presence there and the fact that I was collecting information from the students without official permission from the University. She underlined that I was distributing questionnaires in a private institution, but it was an open to the public event, and part of a broad festival in which many institutions were involved. I showed her the questionnaire, which asked no personal information or contact details. Nevertheless, the respondents, as university students, were more than 18 years old, so I never thought that it could be a problem. This incident made me think about the cultural differences between Europe and India in this respect.

**The coding process**

Coding is a vital part of the research (Cottle et al, 1998, p.254). As underlined by Foddy (1993), researchers impose their own view of reality, or their guesses about their respondents’ views of reality, upon their respondents’ answers. The core issue is how conscious they are about this and how they specify the perspective that should be employed (p.189).

To codify the questionnaire answers, I have followed the premise that a good coding schema can be formulated by reading the responses several times to get a sense of the sort of categories the respondents have given (Silvey, 1975; Montgomery and Crittendon, 1977; Mostyn, 1985, cited in Foddy, 1993, p.138). Thereby, in order to be able to compare the answers, I read carefully all of them and took notes about the most repeated ideas, to create different categories in which I could classify most of the answers.

4. Analysis

Interviews

I will present an extract of the main statements and arguments which emerged in the interviews, classified in relation to the research questions and other meaningful subjects which were revealed unexpectedly through them.

Interviews generate topics and frames that can be new but are focused around topics determined by the research. The first step to be done is categorizing them and analyzing the types of responses in a systematic fashion. First come the theme and subthemes defined by the research, often combined with new additional categories presented in the interviews. And also, at a more detailed level, the classification will be concerned with causes and evaluations (Cottle et al., 1999, pp.279-80).

1. Potential for social change of Kabir mediated messages in the world-views of today’s Indian citizens exposed to the Kabir Project and related events in Mumbai and Bangalore.

Interviewees point out a personal transformation, introspection and self-knowledge in which they discover violence and hypocrisy; which makes them see the world differently and be fearless, boundless; losing control and opening themselves to the world; letting egos, boundaries and identities left behind, and feeling fulfillment, joy and stillness. Some of them explain specifically how they are more open to different people and to engage in a dialogue with them. Another relevant fact they mention is the sense of belonging to a community.

Moreover, many of the interviewees believe strongly in the potential of Kabir verses to make people aware and appeal to the inner conscience against violence and divisions such as caste, gender, religion or poverty.

I will quote some relevant testimonies that illustrate these questions.
In one of the interviewee’s opinion, violence and divisions need more than legal measures: “an appeal to your conscience: that is where Kabir comes in 100%. I believe his voice can benefit society and I would like it to be given in bigger publicity: at school, university, politicians and bureaucrats. (...) Kabir is the need of today, today is more relevant than it was when alive”, he claims. For him, Kabir’s most important message is the search for “self reflection, introspection, self belief (...). Kabir can make people aware, but the change can be only done by them”, he concludes.

Two of the interviewees, who are married, attended together the Rajasthan Kabir yatra in February 2012 in the Bikaner district, visiting five villages. It was their first real experience with Kabir. “We were moving in 3 or 4 buses with about 150 people from other regions, even foreign, even school children from Kashmir, to 70 years old people. (...) In the concerts, everybody tries to come, local organizations are also involved. There is a lot of interest in villagers (...). The concerts are in the open until 2 or 3 a.m. They start singing Kabir while brushing the teeth; that is the best thing: it is no formal”, he explains.

For her, “the yatra was the way to Kabir. It has changed us. Before, we, my husband and me, were isolated. Now we are more open. We mix with different people more than before: with all kind of people”, she affirms. In the yatra, they met participants from all over the country. “We forgot everything: we had no proper bed, no food, no hot water, but everything was fine because of Kabir. It started changing the way we think; we were not able to grasp everything, we were very new in relation to religion or spirituality. We used to give more importance to external and outside things instead of internal things, before our relation with Kabir”, she assures. “All human beings are themselves divine, happy, pure, love; we need no look for happiness outside. You have to learn how to manifest that”, she concludes.

After the yatra, they went to ashrams and joined the Kabir community in Bangalore: “every week, there is a charity program in somebody’s home”, they explain.

“Distance between the other members of the community is vanishing: rich, poor, Indian, Spanish, if you live in a beautiful home... are not important things, because God is the same in everybody. The thought ‘I cannot mix with you’ disappears”, she explains. “It changed our thinking pattern. The negative thinking is going away: only
more thoughts come. Distances are narrowing between our family members, our office colleagues, our servants, our neighbors. Our perspective, how we think and look at the situation of the person, is different now. (…) Other people told us same”, he adds.

They also attended the Kabir festival in Auroville, Pondicherry, where accommodation was good, the place was comfortable, but there were “just events, in one place in the ashram, while participants exchanged thoughts about Kabir. The audience was educated, with a lot of foreigners, intellectuals; and there were talks in the afternoon, questions and answers sessions and films discussions”, she explains.

He assures that, in the development sector, Kabir “can bring about the big change. Today we think that doing something external things will change: that is the big difference. We have to take out divides from our minds- we will come closer to everybody’s situation; it becomes very easy to implement and it is good”, he predicts.

In fact, here the word Kabir could be changed by the term ‘communication for development’. “We have to keep on, to strengthen; to bring his thought into our activities, and it should change our behavior to become better human beings”, he adds.

She, on her behalf, thinks that “change takes a lot of time; it’s very difficult to live”.

Finally, the best impact of the Kabir Project for Virmani was personal. “You understand yourself: how violent you are. It gave me new lens to understand myself and the world. The first gift was beginning to sing. And the stillness, joyful, not mind-driven body, as a media to share films and singing with people. I let it go through my own identity; lose my grip of me”, she says.

1.1 Capability of the Kabir Project of generating positive attitudes towards dialogue between confronted identities in Indian audiences exposed to the Kabir Project and related events in relation to religion. 1.1.1 In which ways?

Interviewees show their admiration and identification with Kabir in his role against Hindu and Muslim fundamental attitudes in relation to religion, as he rejected religious discrimination, promoted benevolence and non-violence and deplored social and religious man-made differences.
Some of them go for spirituality instead of for religion; some others think that people should strive for a place transcending Allah and Ram as they see spirituality, not religiosity, as something essential for human existence.

During the *yatra*, in villages, everybody, Hindu and Muslim, attend the events, which are spiritual rather than religious, they posit. In fact, one of the interviewees thinks that people go to the villages because Kabir talks no religion and helps them break away from idols and rituals.

1.2 Capability of the Kabir Project of generating positive attitudes towards dialogue between confronted identities in Indian audiences exposed to the Kabir Project and related events in relation to caste. 1.2.1 In which ways?

The *yatra* are especially attended by people from low castes because as interviewees describe them, there’s no discrimination. Instead, there is a big sense of communication and belonging, as the love for music and poetry from Kabir creates a sense of unity. One of the interviewees points out that in the *yatra*, people can change their minds in relation to caste because they are able to meet each other and diminish differences as they share a common physical and mental space. “Low class can become stronger and upper, softer”, she says.

And she describes how in the *yatra*, Kabir and his principles are alive; the artists are humble and accessible, and the events, very inclusive. She attended two: in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. “It was like a family wedding: we were excited to meet and see the artists”, she remembers. “We spent all night singing until 5 a.m. We woke up and interact with musicians: it was fun. Small villages in Malwa were overwhelmed. There were people even from 60 to 80 years old, with blankets, many dancing, some sleeping, clapping, (...). They are very warm and want to interact with you”, she explains. “In villages, they have an understanding of Kabir: it speaks to them, and they like it. The artists are not pretending. There is no discrimination (...). I think this is why people like it”, she explains.

Another interviewee volunteers in human rights in relation to caste and believes in social change in this respect. It was in the *yatra* that he got in touch with the reality of the caste system and he understood what it means. “I’ve taken a militant position in
issues of caste. I am very assertive about my beliefs, but not everybody is happy with me. The Kabir Project definitely sensitized me, but it is not responsible (...). Before, I had dealt with caste superficially. I learned how to engage the subject in a healthy, not aggressive way”, he explains. Then, he started asking difficult questions. “In the office there is an equal opportunities program, and I asked how many dalits had they hired. At home: why our servant vessels couldn’t be mixed with ours. Kabir said: what can happen to you? It’s possible to change”, he explains. “I was confused about a lot of issues: I found clarity. I said: now I have to engage it. I volunteer in human rights in relation to caste. Kabir is helpful to push the conviction”, he declares.

Another one assures that the Kabir community he joined through the *yatral* gave him a sense of belonging he was lacking since he left his upper class family due to ideological differences in relation to caste and rituals. The experience was so strong that he changed his life completely: left his job and the city where he was living to look for personal fulfillment. He highlights “the power of Kabir couplets to open you”.

1.3 Capability of the Kabir Project of generating positive attitudes towards dialogue between confronted identities in Indian audiences exposed to the Kabir Project and related events in relation to socioeconomic class? 1.3.1 In which ways?

Some interviewees think that the Kabir Project needs to spread deeper as the audiences of the urban festivals are formed by middle class people, and consider that organizers should take it to smaller towns and villages, like Prahlad Tipanya does. He is one of the folk musicians of the Kabir Project, who is already doing these efforts to reach lower classes also through the *yatral* in Malwa, in the state of Madhya Pradesh.

Some others think that it is fine if audiences are only formed by urban middle classes in the festivals, as *yatral* “are addressed to everyone”. Their argument is that in cities, the events are “like any other event because the messages cannot be direct”.

In one of the interviewee’s opinion, as government is the one who is corrupted, the message is needed “in the top”, because “if upper classes get the message right, it will reach the low classes” (...). There is a lack of education, proper administration, health care, etc. that results in frustration as people have no job, no money; so it is necessary to solve the basic needs first”, he says.
Another interviewee declares that he won’t go to an urban festival of Kabir, due to the cold relations which are generated if compared to the harmonious coexistence that flourishes in the *yatras*, and the unique profile of urban middle class audiences who attend this sort of events.

But the *yatras* allow different sorts of people to interact. This way, in the audience, different social classes are unified by the music and the Kabir verses. One of the interviewees, who attended the Malwa *yatras* in 2010, explains that “Prahlad Tipanya was doing it ahead. For the first time, it was joined by different people: it was the first effort to bring middle class and upper class together”. He, as many other interviewees, was impressed by the environment they found in the *yatras*, as they could recognize people living Kabir and “its unlimited, unconditional love”. And he describes how they “have no walls in Kabir”, and relate each other as ‘limitless’.

2. Why has the Kabir Project had such an impact and been spread all over the country?

One of the interviewees underlines that musicians explain the Kabir verses at the events, and “that helps to understand metaphors and old, ancient Hindi”. Another one explains how at school, she never felt attracted by Kabir verses, as they are “very philosophical, very high; but in the Kabir Project events, the musicians explain the meaning. Music and words are more powerful”, she says. For a third one, Virmani’s personality as a good organizer, and her mixture of different good human and professional qualities is a key factor in its success.

A new interviewee explains that, in the festivals, every session is different. “Attending one session we cannot comprehend. That is why I go again and again, strengthening my belief with a value addition. What the organizers present is not repetitive: they come out with something different. And they are also learning: they are not experts; they are gaining experience every day. Every time I go, I find a more redefined product”, he says.

In addition, he considers that the Kabir Project documentaries use different messengers who appeal different kind of people to good effect. For instance, Prahladi Tipanya, the
dalit musician, who has no education, appeals to ordinary people by his humility and integrity, while Virmani, who also appears in the films, appeals to an urban educated profile.

Anyway, in his opinion, what is really important is the message. For him, through audiovisual media, the messages of Kabir have much more impact: everyone in the audience can identify him or herself and apply the arguments to his or her own life, which “can help anyone to be a better human being”, he says. “Instead of teaching, through a sermon, entertainment messages are received better. Through documentaries and a variety of music by singers from different regions”, audiences “don’t get bored and want more. It is very simple; one doesn’t have to brain to understand it: the whole approach is different”, he remarks.

Shabnam Virmani, on her part, never anticipated the impact the Kabir Project had and its rapid spread. In her opinion, some factors are relevant in this sense: “people are in distress: there is a loss of meaning in our society; consumerism deep need; deep yearning to connect something larger than themselves”, she explains. “The spirit of Kabir makes feel less isolated. The Kabir communities are connected through satsaangs (which in Hindi means celebrations with spiritual music), workshops and concerts (...). Kabir voice is healing but challenges, and makes you interrogate yourself about who you are. (...) It is soothing, and it wakes you up”, she adds.

Another key factor in Virmani’s opinion is the “disillusion by mainstream religion: which is sectarian, divisive, fear-based, burdened with nonsense; and the voice of Kabir speaks to people”, she concludes.

3. Divisions and violence in Indian society. Causes.

One of the interviewees has been part of the core committee of the Kabir festival in Mumbai, which initiated the project. She points out that this initiative “is especially important today, when religion is tarnishing the peace in society, and there is need for communal harmony and peace”.

Another one attributes the cause of increasing violence in India, including the brutal attacks to women, to the disparity in income. “The divide is getting bigger, the imbalanced materialism and frustration can be the reasons”, he says. He also relates
violence to corruption in society. And so does another respondent. He also relates media to violence, as they are “not very constructive” in their representations of it and “only care about money”. “It is necessary to reduce the divide and rules created by the politicians and religious leaders; they should become more ethical and responsible”, he says. And he identifies fear of death and insecurity as the biggest problems that lead to violence. Finally, he believes that, through education, divisions in Indian society can be improved.

For another one, the main divisions in Indian society are caste, gender, religion, economic differences, the city and the village, and the education level. But “in the Kabir thought, all these things become meaningless and the happiness starts coming. (…) In villages people have time to think in relation to caste; in cities, the divisions are between rich and poor, educated and non educated”, he lists.
The true award

Shabnam Virmani initiated her activity as promoter of the Kabir Project in 2002, after the Gujarat pogrom. 10 years later, she admits that nothing has changed in Indian society. When asked whether Kabir voice could contribute to improve this fact and bring peace to the country, she gave me a revealing letter from Naran Bhai Siju, a village weaver from Bhujodi, in Gujarat, that she calls “the true award for the Kabir Project”. As the letter was handwritten in the local language, she translated it to English. I will share some extracts of the document below. The poems in italics are Kabir verses.

“To Shabnam ji,
Saheb! (...)
On the 30th of December 2007, in the Abhiyan Office Campus in Bhuj, quite suddenly without much forewarning, I came with Chaman Bhai (another weaver from Bhujodi) to watch the documentary film Had Anhad. At that point, I had no particular attachment to or knowledge of Kabir. To tell the truth, I actually had some contempt for Kabir. My spiritual understanding was quite poor. My mind was drawn to every god, every idol and every temple. But I couldn’t find stillness anywhere (...).

I was happy about the demolition of the Babri Masjid. I was aggrieved by the breaking of the Ram Setu. But when the "wound" of "Had Anhad" struck me, a new seed of spirituality was sown inside me. After that there was a lot of churning and thinking within me, which grew more and more powerful, and my narrow-minded ideas began to melt. I began to see Ram, Krishna, Allah, Akbar, Jesus within myself. Instead of only in temples and mosques I began to see God in everything. I began to witness Ram, Krishna and Shiv within my own body. (...)

My experiences become more and more strong. My wife and 22-year-old son have also drawn a lot about Kabir's ideas from your documentary films and bhajan CDs. The films "Had Anhad" and "Koi Sunta Hai" struck a deep chord. (...).

It's an experience that is perhaps difficult to express through words. (...).
All bogus rites, rituals, blind faiths and superstitions are shedding themselves. Now it's only
My lord gave me such an intoxicating drink!
A redness descends in my eyes!

The redness of my Beloved is such,
wherever I look I see red!

Wherever I search, I find!

I have found an extraordinary peace. In the limitless universe, and within my body, I have seen Him only. In myself I have found Shiv and Shakti. I have seen my Kul Devi not in any temple, but in my mother, sister, daughter and in my wife. Awaiting your trip to Kutch in August,

Narayan M. Siju
Village Bhujodi, Taluka Bhuj, Kutch, Gujarat

In every swan-soul, Ram resides
There is no place without Ram

Looking in the world for evil
I found no evil one
I searched within my self
And found none as wicked as I’
**Survey**

**Sample characteristics:**

During the festival, I realised very soon that its audiences were not representative at all of the city population. To find out the reasons, I discussed about this aspect of the Kabir Project urban events with some of my interviewees and I will explore the reasons later.

![Audiences in Khar West, Kabir Festival Mumbai.](image)

Often, the most effective way of presenting quantitative data is visually. A well designed graphic can demonstrate the prominence of an attribute or the strength of a relationship far more dramatically and intuitively than plain statistics (Deacon et al, 2007, p.93). I will present the graphics that show the results of this survey by using pie charts.

My sample is formed by 48% of men and 52% of women. As the percentage of women in the province of Maharashtra, whose capital is Mumbai, is slightly smaller than the one of men (Census of India, 2001), it probably means that women attendance to the events is proportionally bigger than the one of men.
Mumbai is one of the largest cities in the world, with a population of 20,500,000 inhabitants, which receives domestic immigration from the whole country. Considering the place of birth, 60% of informants were born in Maharashtra, while 40% had come from other Indian provinces. Only three foreign people from Europe and Africa, out of 130 respondents, participated in the survey, so the amount is irrelevant.

In relation to their age, 27% of respondents are between 16 and 25 years old; 24%, between 26 and 35; 21%, between 36 and 45; 8%, between 46 and 55; and 20% are older than 55.

Religion
In India, 80% of the population is Hindu and 13%, Muslim (Census of India, 2001). In the case of this survey respondents: 62% are Hindu, including those following the Hindu sect Jainism; only 5%, Muslim; 14% belong to religious minorities as Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Sikhism and Buddhism, but also, many of them defined themselves as ‘human being’ or ‘free thinker’, while 19% did not answer.
The two last figures are especially revealing in a country like India, where the convivial coexistence of different religious groups is considered the equivalence of secularity in the Western world (Mander, 2009, p. 2). These sorts of answers would be common in Europe, where religion is supposed to be a private area, not necessarily manifested in the public sphere. But, as this is not the case in India, they might be related to the fact that Kabir was spiritual but did not ascribe himself to any particular religion. Instead, he believed in humanity and rejected temples and rituals, and above all, religious divisions and hypocrisy.

**Socioeconomic class and education**

Even if I was not looking for specific profiles, almost all of them belong to well-off classes, have college degrees and high qualified positions.

Considering the educational level of respondents, 92% are university graduates, when less than 4% (Census of India, 2001) of Indian population have college degrees, and only 4% have secondary studies or another kind of professional studies. Therefore, the socio-economic and educational background of the questionnaires respondents made my research question, involving the whole Indian society, difficult to answer.
And focusing on their occupation, 22% are students; 52% have a professional position for which college degrees are required; 11% work for NGOs or other sort of social services; and 8% are artists.

The Mumbai Festival is not consciously addressed to the elite of Indian society, but the fact is that only they attend these urban events.

During the in-depth interviews, I was informed that this imbalance happens in every urban Kabir related event all over the country.

One day, in Andheri East: a modest neighbourhood of Mumbai’s outskirts, I invited the school teacher of a tribal community that I had just met to come with me to the Digital Academy to attend one of the film screenings offered by the Kabir festival. I was very surprised when she told me that it was the first time she attended a festival event. When I asked her why, she replied that she thought this sort of events ‘were not for her’ and even that she did not feel they were addressed to people ‘like her’.
Anyway, the fact is that disadvantaged sections of society did not attend the events, and most probably, did not even know about them. As one of my interviewees says, poor and illiterate people do not read newspapers and therefore, they miss the advertisements where they are announced.

I have tried to reach a different section that participates in the *yatra*: the Kabir Project related events developed in villages, with the participation of these urban well-off groups, through their accounts during the interviews. Interaction between urban and rural population is very interesting, but unfortunately, I had no direct access to these events.

So I only have the chance of analyzing the impact of people attending Kabir Project related activities in urban spaces, through their audiences: well-off university graduates and university students.

For the first question: ‘*Why do you come to the Kabir Festival?*’ I defined the following set of categories: music; music & Kabir; Kabir/the Kabir Project; to connect with the self; curiosity; and other reasons.

28% of respondents went attracted by the music and Kabir; another 28%, only by Kabir verses; while 22% were attracted by the music. 10% went to the events seeking to
connect with themselves. This concrete expectation is interesting as Kabir identified the need of self-comprehension and self-confidence as the way to know and connect with the world without egos and insecurities, therefore with no boundaries between different identities that lead to violence. Finally, 6% attended the events driven by curiosity and 7%, for other different reasons.

For the second question: ‘What drew you here?’ I defined the following: friends/family; teachers; the Kabir poetry; compulsory activity; music and Kabir; the music; and the sense of belonging to the Kabir community.

26% were attracted by the music along with the Kabir verses; 25%, by Kabir; 14%, only by the music; 13% went to accompany friends or family, and 11%, following the recommendations of a teacher. 6% were seeking for the sense of belonging to the Kabir community; and for 5%, in the case of a concert and film screening developed at a university college, the activity was compulsory.
For the third: ‘What feelings arose in the festival?’ I found these recurrent answers: peace; harmony; joy/grace; brotherhood/togetherness; and others.

In relation to the feeling perceived by respondents during the events, 41% answered that joy and spiritual grace; 25%, peace; 6%, brotherhood and togetherness; 26% answered different options; and 2% did not answer.

So 31% of respondents of an open question like this one, without a given set of categories to choice, experienced and identified in the events of the festival peace and brotherhood: the opposite feeling to violence or division. Besides, 41% were feeling joy or grace, both states which are associated with wellbeing or harmony, the opposite to anger, frustration or rage which can generate violence. Instead, this sort of feelings is more associated with communication, openness to other individuals and to the world. In addition, no negative feelings were registered out of the total amount of 130
respondents, what is more relevant if considering that respondents were asked an open-answer question.

For the fourth: ‘What messages have you got from the events/music/films?’ I identified: inclusivity/oneness/no discrimination; self-knowledge/look within for answers; love; timeless messages; and others.

Interestingly, 32% of respondents got messages of inclusivity, oneness or no discrimination in relation to main divides in Indian society such as gender, borders, language, religion or caste. 15% got the message of the relevance of self-knowledge or looking within for answers; and 5% underlined one characteristic which, even if is not exactly the answer to the question, gives some relevant information: they consider Kabir messages as timeless. Another 5% did not answer. And 43% gave other answers, not relevant for the research, or not shared by the rest of respondents. In many cases, the answers were too general, and instead of giving concrete messages they had got from the events, as the questions specified, they just answered that they had got the philosophy or teachings from Kabir.
For the fifth: ‘What are you taking back from here?’ I identified: a new perspective; wish to learn more about Kabir; oneness through art, music and film; spiritual feeling; and others.

27% of respondents would like to learn more about Kabir; 20% took back a spiritual feeling; 14%, oneness of audiences through art, music and film screenings; and 9%, a new perspective. 6% did not answer; and 24 % gave different answers, not relevant for this research.

Then, almost 1/3 of respondents were willing to learn more about Kabir teachings, which means that after having attended the events, they were receptive and had a positive attitude towards his messages and values of tolerance and understanding between confronted identity categories and different sections of society.

The answers reflect the capability of the messages spread in the festival to change audience’s mind in the cases they took back a new perspective. This is not a massive answer in the questionnaires, but it is significant, even more if considering that the question was open. On its part, the sense of oneness through art is also a meaningful answer in the frame of this research, as it gives a sense of unity and belonging within audiences who do not know each other, underlining the capability of art, in the form of poetry, music and films, to tear down mental boundaries between human beings.
For the sixth: ‘Why do you keep coming back year after year (if you do)?’ I found the following categories: enjoy the music; learn about/experience Kabir; heart touching festival; first time; and others.

For 39% of respondents, it was their first time attending an event of the festival; 21% came back because they wanted to learn more about or experience Kabir; and 9% repeated their attendance because their hearts had been touched in previous years. 22% did not answer; and 9% did not give a relevant answer for the research or their answers were not shared by other members of the audience participating in the survey.

For the seventh question: ‘Why do you try to stay connected with the voice of Kabir’? I identified the following set of categories: the modern thinking of Kabir; that it brings a new perspective; spiritual feeling; oneness through art; wish to learn about Kabir; others; and na.
peace and love; the equality spread by his verses; for self-knowledge; oneness of mind, body and soul; to open his/her mind; others; and don't stay connected.

15% of respondents stay connected with the voice of Kabir because it brings them peace and love; 12%, because his modern thinking is timeless, everlasting and therefore useful for daily living; 10%, looking for self-knowledge; 5%, because they seek oneness of mind, body and soul; 5%, for opening their minds; and 2%, for the equality values spread in his philosophy. 5% recognised that they are not connected with the voice of Kabir; 17% did not answer; and 30% gave other kind of answer.

And finally, I used the eighth question: ‘Would you like to comment or add something else?’ to identify more possible answers to the rest of the questions, add nuances and any other relevant information for the research that respondents could give.
A gender perspective
One of the most meaningful elements of statistical analysis can be to consider how different variables interact with each other (Deacon et al, 2007, pp.88-9; Durant, Hansen and Bauer, 1996, cited in Cottle et al, 1998, p.266). Thereby, I will analyse the survey from a gender perspective.

It is relevant to highlight that 48% of women got the message of inclusivity, oneness and no discrimination in relation to women, borders, language, religion or caste, when only the 14% of men did it; and 57% of men gave answers not relevant for the research or not shared by the rest of respondents for the same question.

In this direction, 18% of women took back from the events the oneness of audiences through art, music and film screenings, while only 10% of men did; and 24% of women took back spirituality while only 16% of men did.

And when they were asked about their reasons for staying connected with the voice of Kabir, for 13% of men it was self-knowledge, while only half of this percentage (7%) of women stay connected for this reason.

I. Ancín, P. Tipaniya and P. Turakhia, the festival organiser, in Borivali West.
5. Conclusion

Kabir Project potential for social change

In relation to the potential for social change of the Kabir Project in the world-views of today’s Indian citizens exposed to the events in Mumbai and Bangalore, interviewees give meaningful testimonies of deep personal transformations. Through introspection and self-knowledge, they have discovered their own violence and hypocrisy; it makes them look at the world differently: fearless, boundless, opening themselves to the world and letting boundaries and identities behind, feeling fulfillment, joy and stillness. Some of them underline specifically how they are more open to different people and to engage in a dialogue with them.

Moreover, they believe strongly in the potential of Kabir verses to make people aware and appeal to the inner conscience against violence and divides such as caste, gender, religion or poverty and posit that Kabir values are needed today as they can benefit society.

What produced the deepest changes in audiences was their participation in the yatra. Interviewees talk about isolation and lack of belonging before they got in touch with Kabir communities. After their experience in these rural journeys, they became more open and started mixing with different people without prejudices. They changed the ways they think and look at the situation of other people, and differences between other members of their communities are not important, once they realized that God is the same in everybody. And finally, which is essential from a communication for development perspective: they have understood that these divides have to be overcome in the minds, and after that, the new ideals, put into practice to produce social change (Castells, 2009, p. 298).

In relation to the Kabir Project capability of generating interreligious dialogue in Indian audiences exposed to the events, in the yatra, everybody, Hindu and Muslim, attend the activities, which are spiritual rather than religious. Kabir talks no religion and helps audiences to break away from hypocrisy in relation to religion, encouraging them to strive for a place transcending every single faith.
As already discussed in the literature chapter, religious divisions in Indian society are, on the one hand, the consequence of colonial strategies to divide the country, and, on the other, of the manipulation of the Hindu privileged minority in order to distract the Hindu unprivileged majority from their real social and economic problems (Appadurai, 2006, pp. 111; 74-5). Therefore, the true divide has to be found between privileged and disadvantaged. The others: caste, gender or religion, are culturally constructed through dangerous ‘otherization’ processes that try to justify discrimination and violence.

But the aforementioned achievements are not attained in urban festivals, where the main divides in Indian society are put into question in theory, but remain unchallenged in practice.

Interviewees describe the *yatra* as inclusive events where people from all castes and social background meet and interact, and where the love for music and poetry from Kabir creates a sense of unity, communication and belonging. Their accountings show how, in the *yatra*, people can change their minds in relation to caste because they are able to meet each other, diminishing differences between them.

In this sense, while the *yatra* are shared spaces where the teachings of the saint become a reality, conducive for social change in relation to caste, festivals in urban spaces do not reach these interaction goals in practical ways, as audiences just belong to the privileged sociocultural minority.

But these middle and upper classes who join the Kabir communities through the urban events of the Project, can attend the *yatra* in the villages, where they have the chance to sympathise and therefore identify themselves with people from different castes. This approach enables them to understand what caste discrimination means, which has resulted in taking militant positions in this respect in some cases. So it can be said that the Kabir Project has real capability of sensitizing urban middle and upper classes about Indian socioeconomic divides through the aforementioned interaction with disadvantaged groups in rural areas.
The Mumbai Festival is not exclusively addressed to the elite. The events are free, which could make it easier to disadvantaged groups to attend, but the fact is that only socioeconomic and cultural elites do. During the in-depth interviews, I was informed that this imbalance usually happens in the urban Kabir festivals all over the country. Therefore, when considering the capability of the Kabir Project of generating dialogue between different socioeconomic sectors in Indian society, the key problem is that organizers do not involve disadvantaged groups.

It is true that, historically, elites have promoted hatred towards minorities; therefore, they are responsible for the massacres that took place in India in 1947, 1992 and 2002 (Appadurai, 2006, pp. 66-67; 74-5). Then, the messages might be needed “in the top”. But, at the same time, humble people welcoming urban middle classes in their villages should not be more relevant than well-off classes receiving villagers, or their disadvantaged neighbors, in their own urban spaces. Therefore, why should not they mix and interact in urban locations as well?

In villages, as interviewees explained to me, organizers go to the streets and markets to announce the events in order to invite all kind of audiences. But similar actions are not taken in the cities to reach all sectors of Indian society. In order to make disadvantaged people feel they would be welcome in this sort of events, and that they are actually addressed to them, bigger and different efforts might be undertaken. For instance, they
could be developed in the streets instead of in smart auditoriums where poor people could feel uncomfortable. It is true that some Kabir Festival events in Mumbai are developed in the open air, but not in modest neighborhoods, but in posh areas. Some others were developed in modest neighbourhoods’ music or cinema education centres, which did not attract poor and illiterate audiences.

The fact is that organizers do not succeed in inviting and encouraging the attendance of all the diverse groups that form Indian society. My recommendation, from an inclusive and social change perspective, is that they might look for places where disadvantaged groups could feel they belong to. Asking them and inviting them to join the organization could be good options to solve this problem.

As I only had the chance of analyzing the impact of the Kabir Project on well-off university graduates attending activities in urban spaces, a direct analysis of the yatra in the villages could be an interesting research in the future. It would allow comparing how these events are perceived and lived by both, privileged and disadvantaged communities in rural areas, where caste divisions are deeper than they are in urban communities.

**Reasons for the success of the Kabir Project**

The Kabir Project impact and its spread all over the country are related to many factors. In the festivals, every session is different, offering a variety of music by singers from multiple Indian regions. Musicians’ explanations about the Kabir verses help to understand metaphors and ancient Hindi in Kabir verses. And through artistic forms, such as folk music and documentaries, messages are stronger and their impact in audiences is bigger.

Moreover, the Project documentaries use messengers who appeal different kind of people to good effect. Thereby, the dalit musician appeals to ordinary people by his humility and integrity, while Virmani appeals to an urban educated profile, in ways that everyone in the audience can identify him or herself with one of them, and relate the arguments to their own lives.
In addition, some sociocultural factors are relevant for the success of the Kabir Project, like a loss of meaning in contemporary society; disillusion by mainstream religion, which is sectarian, divisive and fear-based; and a deep need of connecting to something larger than the individual. Finally, audiences get a sense of belonging in the Kabir communities.

**Divisions and violence in Indian society**

During the Kabir Festival Mumbai, 10% of the audiences went to the events seeking to connect with themselves. This expectation is interesting as Kabir identified the need of self-knowledge as the way to connect with the world without egos and insecurities, as insecure identities tend to protect themselves and delimit boundaries between different identity groups, even through violence.

In relation to the feelings perceived by respondents during the events, 31% of answers pointed peace and brotherhood: the opposite feeling to violence or division. It is quite revealing, taking into account that it was an open-answer question. Besides, 41% of respondents felt joy or grace, both states which are associated with wellbeing and harmony, the opposite of anger, frustration or rage, which can prejudice towards violence. Instead, this sort of feelings is more associated with communication, openness to other individuals and to the world.

It is also meaningful that 32% of respondents got messages of inclusivity, oneness or no discrimination in relation to main divides in Indian society, such as gender, borders, language, religion or caste. 15% got the message of the relevance of self-knowledge; and 5% underlined that they consider Kabir messages as timeless and useful for daily life.

Almost 1/3 of respondents were willing to learn more about Kabir teachings: after having attended the events, they were receptive and had a positive attitude towards his messages and values of tolerance and understanding between confronted identity categories and different sections of society.

The fact that 9% of respondents expressed that they took back a new perspective reflects the capability of the messages spread in the festival to change audience’s mind, which is significant if considering that the question was open.
On its part, 14% pointed at the sense of oneness created through art within audiences who do not know each other, underlining the capability of art, in the form of poetry, music and films to tear down mental boundaries between human beings.

**A gender perspective**

From a gender perspective, 48% of women got back from the events messages of inclusivity, oneness and no discrimination, when only 14% of men did it.

4. **What messages have you got from the events?**

And 18% of women took back from the events the oneness of audiences through art, music and film screenings, while only 10% of men did. These figures might be meaningful as women are categorised and discriminated more often than men, and are the specific target of horrendous crimes in Indian society.
5. What are you taking back from here?

The atrocious degree of violence against women that exists in India has been revealed through mainstream media and spread all over the world recently, since the end of 2012, with the case of gang rape and brutal murder of a young woman in a public bus in New Delhi ("Rape and murder...", 2013). But the only new thing about the case was the fact that middle classes felt in danger. Unfortunately, this violence is usually suffered by Indian women from disadvantaged minorities, without the social response that generated that horrendous crime. But this time, she was not a disempowered dalit or a Muslim, but a doctor, which reveals that the violence level that Indian society tolerates differs depending on the social, economic and cultural background of the victim. That is why many more efforts are necessary to diminish differences between social classes and other different groups.
Finally, the testimony of the Gujarati weaver who supported the destruction of the Babri Masjid and changed his mind after watching the documentary film *Had Anhad*, is an evidence of the Kabir Project communication for development power, which no doubt constitutes the true award of all its healing efforts.

Audiences at the Brahmakumari Garden. Kabir Festival Mumbai.

Musicians from Madhya Pradesh, after the last event. Kabir Festival Mumbai.
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http://www.amanbiradari.org/nyayagrah.html


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Appendix I:
Survey questionnaire

Kabir Project
Itziar Ancín: itziarancin@hotmail.com
Master in Communication for Development, Malmö University
10-1-2013 (last version)

Survey questionnaire:
1. Why do you come to the Kabir Festival?

2. What drew you here?

3. What feelings arose in the festival?

4. What messages have you got from the events/music/films?

5. What are you taking back from here?
6. Why do you keep coming back year after year (if you do)?

7. Why do you try to stay connected with the voice of Kabir?

8. Would you like to comment or add something else?

**Personal information:**

Age:  0-15  16-25  26-35  36-45  46-55  +55 (more than…)

Gender: Male  Female

Place of birth: City: _________________________

Region:________________________

Education: without studies  primary  secondary  professional  university

Religion:   ________________________

Occupation: ________________________
Appendix II:

Interview outline

1. How and when was born your relation with the Kabir Project/ Kabir community?
2. What drew you there?
3. What activities of the Kabir Project have you attended?
4. What messages have you get from the events/music/films?
5. What are you taking back from them?
6. Why do you keep attending the events year after year (if you do)?
7. Why do you try to stay connected with the voice of Kabir?
8. What feelings arose in the festivals/yatras that you have attended?
9. What kind of audiences did you find there?
10. Why you think this/these kind/s of audience/s attended the events?
11. What was the relation between them and the artists?
12. What is the meaning of the Kabir Project for you?
13. Do you perceive divisions/ violence in contemporary Indian society?
14. What kind of divisions/violence?
15. What do you think are the reasons for this violence?
16. Do you think that the messages of Kabir, spread through the Project, could contribute to improve this situation?
17. Would you like to comment or add something else?

Personal information:

Age:  0-15  16-25  26-35  36-45  46-55  +55 (more than…)
Gender: Male Female
Place of birth: City: _________________________
Region:________________________
Education: without studies primary secondary professional university
Religion:________________________
Occupation:________________________
Appendix III:
Field work- Extracts of in-depth interviews

This is the personal information, in the terms they define themselves, of 9 out of 13 of my interviewees, whose testimonies I have used in the research analysis for being most relevant.
I will refer to them as a capital I and a number, in order to preserve their anonymity, except in the case of Shabnam Virmani, Kabir Project’s manager.

I1: 43 years old, female, born in Buffalo, New York, USA with Indian origins, living in Bangalore.
University studies. Jain. Food consultant.

I2: 52 years old, male, from Bangalore, in Karnataka.

I3: 66 years old, male, from Prna, in Bihar.
Ex-Army, now facilitator in leadership programs. Hindu.

I4: 62 years old, male, from Akoda, in Maharashtra.

I5: 58 years old, female, from Amroreoti, in Maharashtra.
University studies. Hindu. Housewife.

I6: 42 years old, female, from Amritsar, in Punjab.

I7: 37 years old, male, from Lucknow, in Uttar Pradesh.

I8: 68 years old, male, from Kanpur, in Uttar Pradesh.
Interviews extracts:

1. Social change potential of the mediated messages of Kabir in the world-views of contemporary Indian citizens, exposed to the Kabir Project and related events in Mumbai and Bangalore.

The first impact of the Kabir Project for its ‘mother’ is a transformative personal experience. “You understand yourself: how violent you are. It gave me new lens to understand myself and the world. The first gift was beginning to sing. And the stillness, joyful, not mind-driven body, as a media to share films and singing with people. I let it go through my own identity; lose my grip of me”, Virmani says.

For I1, the most important gift of the Kabir Project, through the yatra, is “the joy, the freedom, my take away and the sense of community. It’s like I have another big family around the festivals and yatra, apart from my own family”, she says. “Most important messages for me are the spirit of not to be scared, of fearlessness. (...) Satsaangs, understanding the songs, singing, made me look inside me, stronger, freer”, she adds.

In I3’s opinion, violence and divisions as caste, religion, rich and poor, sexual abuse… need more than legal measures: “an appeal to your inner conscience: that is where Kabir comes in 100%. I believe his voice can benefit society and I would like it to be given in bigger publicity: at school, university, politicians and bureaucrats. (...) Kabir is the need of today, today is more relevant than it was when alive”, he claims. For him, Kabir’s most important message is “self reflection, introspection, self belief. Don’t be academic theoretical, but be academic, be practical (...). Kabir can make people aware, but the change can be only done by them. (...) Kabir further strengthens and reinforces my beliefs”, he exposes.

I5 and I4 attended the Rajasthan Kabir yatra in February 2012 in the Bikaner district, visiting five villages until Pugal, the village of one the Kabir Project musicians, which is deep in the desert. It was their first real experience for Kabir.

“We were moving in 3 or 4 buses with about 150 people from other regions, even foreign, even school children from Kashmir, to 70 years old people. (...) In the concerts, everybody tries to come, local organizations are also involved. There is a lot of interest in villagers (...). The concerts are in the open until 2 or 3 o’clock. Sometimes there is no room for everybody (...). They start singing Kabir while brushing the tooth; that is the best thing: it is no formal”, explains I4.
For 15, “the yatra was the way to Kabir. It has changed us. Before, we, my husband and me, were isolated. Now we are more open. We mix with different people more than before: with all kind of people”, she affirms. In the yatra, they met people from all over the country. “We forgot everything: we had no proper bed, no food, no hot water, but everything was fine because of Kabir. It started changing the way we think; we were not able to grasp everything, we were very new in relation to religion or spirituality, and giving more importance to external and outside things instead of internal things, before our relation with Kabir”, she assures. And she understood that they had to be positive, give importance to everything: “even to small insects, and everything which is alive”, she adds. “All human beings are themselves divine, happy, pure, love; we need no look for happiness outside. You have to learn how to manifest that”, she concludes.

After the yatra, they went to ashrams and joined the Kabir community in Bangalore: “every week, there is a charity program in somebody’s home”, they say. “My whole belief system got reinforced. The Kabir though touches your heart: shows you what you should be doing”, says 14. “Distance between the other members of the community is vanishing: rich, poor, Indian, Spanish, if you live in a beautiful home… these are not important things, because God is the same in everybody. The thought ‘I cannot mix with you’ disappears”, she explains.

“It changed our thinking pattern. The negative thinking is going away: only more thoughts come. Distances are narrowing between our family members, our office colleagues, our servants, our neighbors. Our perspective, how we think and look at the situation of the person, is different now. (…) Other people told us same”, he adds. “People say the world was better and now it is bad, but this is not true: it has always been the same. It depends on how you look at it. Even illiterate people: if everybody follows Kabir thought, (…) there would be no problems between people and countries”, he concludes.

They also attended the festival in Auroville, Pondicherry, where accommodation was good, the place was comfortable, but there were “just events, in one place in the ashram. Participants in the festival exchanged thoughts about Kabir. The audience was educated, a lot of foreigners, intellectuals; and there were talks in the afternoon, questions and answers sessions, films discussions…”, explains 15. 

14 assures that, in the development sector, Kabir “can bring about the big change. Today we think that doing something external things will change: that is the big difference. We have to take out divides from our minds- we will come closer to
everybody’s situation; and it becomes very easy to implement and it is good”, he predicts. “We have to keep on, to strengthen; to bring his thought into our activities, and it should change our behavior, to become better human beings. If we are good human beings, we will become God. That means that we will reach good qualities: love, no hatred, no jealousy: there is a sort of enlightenment”, he adds.

15, on her behalf, thinks that “change takes a lot of time; it’s very difficult to live”.

12 discovered Kabir in the festivals, and his voice changed him: “now I am able to deal better with other people, other points of view and also appreciate them. Why? Because Kabir talks about universal God which is there, within everybody”, he explains. As he highlights, in the events “your mind is uplifted even if I don’t understand Hindi, Urdu, but music touches your heart”. The main messages for him are “to look at ourselves, to understand to ourselves better, in order to see our inherent hypocrisy”.

1.1 Capability of the Kabir Project of generating positive attitudes towards dialogue between confronted identities in Indian audiences exposed to the Kabir Project and related events in relation to religion.

18, from childhood, was fond of Kabir as a revolutionary against Hindu and Muslim fundamental attitudes in relation to religion and society.

16 underlines the fact that “Kabir’s simple and straightforward principles, emphasizing equality among kings and paupers, and negating religious discrimination, instilled lessons of benevolence and non-violence in the people. He deplored social and religious man-made differences. Pilgrimage is source of religious discrimination. People should strive for a place transcending Allah and Ram. Spirituality, not religiosity is essential for human existence”, she declares.

1.1.1 In which ways?

11 went to the yatra in the villages of Rajasthan, and witnessed how everybody attended the events: Muslim and Hindu. “The events are not religious: they are spiritual. People come to the villages because Kabir talks no religion, and helps you break away from idols, rituals and everything which comes”, she explains.
1.2 Capability of the Kabir Project of generating positive attitudes towards dialogue between confronted identities in Indian audiences exposed to the Kabir Project and related events in relation to caste.

I1 underlines the fact that, in the *yatra*, “especially people from low caste go because there’s no discrimination, but a big sense of communication and belonging. Everybody is there because they like the music and the poetry and there is a sense of unity”. She believes that, in the *yatra*, “people can change their minds in relation to caste because they are able to meet. Low class can become stronger and upper, softer”.

I6 defines Kabir “as a philosopher, social reformer and revolutionary. He emphasized the unity of thought and action, theory and practice. His birth in a low status family motivated him to uplift Dalit communities. He preached supremacy of knowledge over ignorance, superstition and artificiality of castes. His philosophy of equality and unity inspired the oppressed communities, especially dalits/lowercastes”.

“The overflow of humanism in his poetry, paved the way for heralding a new society. Kabir challenged the unequal caste system and racial division and segregation. He gave the utmost importance to human equality and freedom, communal harmony and universal tolerance. He struck at the very roots of Brahminical orthodoxy by rejecting superstition and ritualism. So for me, Kabir is a human rights campaigner, who did not need education, but (...) poetry to reach out to people and instantly stuck a chord”, she claims.

“I forced myself to see differently”, explains I7. “I wondered: what am I doing to encourage equality? Then I started asking difficult questions to people. In the office there is an equal opportunities program, and I asked how many dalits had they hired. At home: why our servant vessels couldn’t be mixed with ours. Kabir said: what can happen to you? It’s possible to change”, he posits. “I try to reduce the rituals. (...) I was confused about a lot of issues: I found clarity. The Kabir Project sensitizes you. I said: now I have to engage it. I volunteer in human rights in relation to caste. Kabir is helpful to push the conviction”, he declares.

1.2.1 In which ways?

I1 went to two *yatra* in Malwa and Rajasthan. “It was like a family wedding: we were excited to meet, see the artists... Everybody was dying to meet each other after the first
one”, she remembers. “We spent all night singing until 5 a.m. We wake up and interact with musicians: it was fun. In Malwa: there were overwhelmed by people: even villagers from 60 to 80 years old attended, with blankets, many dancing, some sleeping, clapping, and very alive: Kabir is alive. In villages, people are very warm and want to interact with you”, she explains. In addition, “they have an understanding of Kabir: it speaks to them, and they like it. The artists are not pretending; there is no discrimination: this is so inclusive. I think this is why people like it”, she explains.

I7 is involved in a group which works with caste related issues. “I’ve taken a militant position in issues of caste, I am very assertive about my beliefs, but not everybody is happy with me. The Kabir Project definitely sensitized me, but it is not responsible. There was a practical reality in the yatra and I understood it. Before, I had dealt with caste superficially. I learned how to engage the subject in a healthy, not aggressive way, and I disengaged with people with different ideas”, he explains.

1.3 Capability of the Kabir Project of generating positive attitudes towards dialogue between confronted identities in Indian audiences exposed to the Kabir Project and related events in relation to socioeconomic class?

In I2’s opinion, the Kabir Project needs to spread deeper. The audience of the Bangalore festival in 2009 was formed by middle class people, and he considers that organizers should take it to town and small villages. He adds that Prahlad Tipanya, one of the musicians of the Kabir Project, is already doing these efforts to reach lower classes also. He observes that the festival events in cities are announced in newspapers. “The problem is that the poor don’t read newspapers”, he explains.

Nevertheless, in I3’s perspective, the point is “quality and not quantity”. For him it is fine if audiences are only formed by middle class and urban people in the festivals. He posits that the yatra are addressed to everyone: “Kabir has a mass appeal in the villages: they follow their values very high. In cities, it is more like any other event; like a play, but it is good to leave it like this: the message cannot be direct. Kabir messages are franc, mild. He is allowing you to find your own space”, he says.

He also says that the audiences to be expected in auditoriums are middle class people, but this is not a critic. “We, middle classes, need to take the message; government more than the people. There is a lack of education, proper administration, health care that result in frustration as people have not job, no money… First, it is necessary to solve
the basic needs. Who is corrupted? Government, so the message is needed in the top. If upper classes get the message right, it will reach the law classes”, he explains.

1.3.1 In which ways?
In 2010, I8 attended the Malwa yatra. “Prahlad Tipanya was doing it ahead. For the first time, it was joined by different people: it was the first effort to bring middle class and upper class together. I met on the ground a wider community where humanity is in practice. That gave me a sense of belonging. It’s amazing how the couplets open you”, he says. He belonged to a Brahman family related to many rituals with which he disagreed fundamentally. Then, he left home and became a community worker. “Before, I was lonely. Now, I don’t have walls in Kabir. The limitless ‘you to me’: this is Kabir. In the yatra, I was really looked after. Kabir is a way. I won’t go to an urban festival: this is not my cup of tea”, he says, referring to the kind of audiences who attend this sort of events.

I7 calls the Kabir yatra the “Indian Woodstock”. “From concert to another, musicians were jamming in the bus: we felt privileged. It was fun and connected me to a lot of people: these relations were very important to me”, he claims.

I8 assures that he “met people living Kabir” and “unlimited, unconditional love”. The experience was that strong that he was pushed to left behind his life in Auroville, and the work he was doing, which was not satisfying him.

2. Why has the Kabir Project had such an impact and been spread all over the country?
When Shabnam Virmani, manager of the project, wondered whether would it touch other people or not, she never anticipated the huge impact it had and its rapid spread. In her opinion, some factors are relevant in this sense: “people are in distress: there is a loss of meaning in our society; consumerism deep need, unsatisfying, deep yearning to connect something larger than themselves”, she explains.

“The spirit of Kabir makes feel less isolated. The Kabir communities are connected through satsaangs, workshops and concerts. (…) Kabir voice is healing but challenges, and makes you interrogate yourself about who you are. (…) It is soothing, and it wakes you up”, she adds.
Another key factor, in Virmani’s opinion, is the “disillusion by mainstream religion, which is sectarian, divisive, fearbased, burdened with nonsense; the voice of Kabir speaks to them”, she concludes.

I2 underlines that musicians explain the Kabir verses at the beginning of the events, and “that helps: metaphors and old, ancient Hindi, difficult to understand”.

I4 says that he has always loved Kabir, but his verses are difficult to find. So the Project spread his voice.

I5 explains how at school, she never felt attracted by Kabir verses, as they are “very philosophical, very high, but in the Kabir Project events, the musicians explain the meaning. Music and words are more powerful”, she says.

For I8, Virmani’s personality as a good organizer, mixture of different good personal and professional qualities, is one of the Project’s main reasons for success.

I3 explains that, in the festivals, every session is different. “Attending one session, we cannot comprehend. That is why I go again and again, strengthening my belief with a value addition. What they present is not repetitive: they come out with something different. And they are also learning; they are not experts. They are gaining experience every day, refining them. Every time I go, I find a more redefined product”, he says.

In addition, he considers that Virmani’s documentaries use different messengers who appeal different kind of people: for instance, Tipanya, the dalit musician, who has no education, appeals to ordinary people by his humility and integrity, while Virmani appeals another different kind of urban educated people. Anyway, in his opinion, “which is really important is the message”.

For him, “through audiovisual media, the messages of Kabir have much more impact: everyone in the audience can identify him or herself to his or her own life, and it can help anyone to be a better human being. (...) Instead of teaching, through a sermon, entertainment messages are received better (...). Through documentaries and a variety of music by singers from different regions, audiences “don’t get bored and want more”, he admits. “It is very simple; one doesn’t have to brain to understand it: the whole approach is different”, he underlines.
3. Divisions and violence in Indian society. Causes.

I6, who has been part of the core committee which started the first Kabir festival in Mumbai and initiated the project, points out that this initiative “is especially important today, when religion is tarnishing the peace in society, there is need for communal harmony and peace”, she assures. She remarks that the feelings that arose in the Mumbai festival are “peace, love, respect, equality. Feeling of being totally intoxicated with Kabir music and dancing, without knowledge of physical existence. This is an event which unites physical and inner self, completely. Kabir voice resonates in me and as one listens to him, the sitar inside starts playing the music of love and feet start dancing with pure love and happiness, its juts bliss…pure bliss”, she describes.

I3 and I2 find the cause of increasing violence in India, including the recent women attacks, in incomes disparity. “The divide is getting bigger, the imbalanced materialism and frustration can be the reasons”, I2 says. “Kabir will help at looking at yourself: you watch your breath and feel ecstasy”, he adds. He also relates violence to corruption in society.

And so does I3. He also finds the role of media in relation to violence, as “not very constructive” in their representations of it and as they might be only worried about money. He finds a huge divide between rich and poor: “it is necessary to reduce the divide and rules created by the politicians and religious leaders; they should become more ethical and responsible”, he says. Moreover, he identifies “fear of death and insecurity as the biggest problems”, and believes that, by education, Indian society and its divisions can be improved.

For I4, the main divisions in Indian society are “caste, gender, religion, economic differences, the city and the village, people who are smart and are not, educated and not educated. (...) In the Kabir thought, all these things become meaningless and the happiness starts coming. In villages people have time to think in relation to caste; in cities, the divisions are between rich and poor, educated and non educated”, he lists. I1 also admits that in cities, the divisions are related to money; in villages, to caste, towards drinking water in the same glasses or getting into temples.

For I5, caste and gender are still rigid divisions in the rural areas, but she does not know the caste of other people in the city.
Appendix IV:

Kabir Festival Mumbai programme

Join us as we revel, rejoice & remember the words of the mystic, through a series of rich & diverse Music, evocative Films & engaging ‘Dastangoi’ sessions. Get Inspired to ‘Journey Within’...

Entry Free On a First Come First Seated Basis

*Some events require free passes to be collected | Kindly see schedule for more details

www.thekabirfest.com © Call 9619881102 / 9619882205©info@thekabirfest.com
## The Kabir Festival, Mumbai, 9th to 13th January, 2013

All events are free of cost

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
<th>Venue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9th Jan</td>
<td>7:00 pm to 10:00 pm</td>
<td>Live music performance by :</td>
<td>Vivekananda Auditorium, Ramakrishna Mission,</td>
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<td>January, 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vishnupriya Bhat</td>
<td>128 Road, Khar West, Mumbai.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10th Jan</td>
<td>11:45 am to 1:15 pm</td>
<td>Learning workshop for intermediate and advanced</td>
<td>Shantacasa West, Mumbai. Details on registration.</td>
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<td>January, 2013</td>
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<td>music students and teachers.</td>
<td>Please contact registration email:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Musician: Shashi Sharma.</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kabirproject.mumbai@gmail.com">kabirproject.mumbai@gmail.com</a> with your contact details.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2:00 pm to 4:00 pm</td>
<td>Film Screening:</td>
<td>Sophia College, Breach Candy, N Room, Social Communications Media department, Mumbai.</td>
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<td>The Unknown Bard: Dr. Seeraj Mokamel</td>
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<td>Followed by Live performance by:</td>
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<td>Shikshantar Das Basu</td>
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<td>8:00 pm to 11:00 pm</td>
<td>Live music performance by:</td>
<td>Veer Savarkar Auditorium, Shivaji Park,</td>
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<td>Mohantra Mudra and Muktiyaa Ali</td>
<td>Dadar West, Mumbai: 022 24169377</td>
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<tr>
<td>11th Jan</td>
<td>10:00 am to 1:00 pm</td>
<td>Film Screening:</td>
<td>Shishuvanta School, Shri Nilesh Bhagat &amp; Sons</td>
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<td>January, 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dada Ganges of Bengal, Dr. Sweety Dali</td>
<td>CVJ Jan Chhatralaya, 401, Near King's Circle Station</td>
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<td>Followed by Live performance by:</td>
<td>Muktajeevan East, School Park,</td>
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<td>Shikshantar Das Basu</td>
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<td>Live music performance by:</td>
<td>Anandabhai Theatre, SIMCA, Somaya Vidhyalaya</td>
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<td>Musician: Seeraj Mokamel</td>
<td>Ghatekar East, Mumbai: 022 25463194.</td>
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<td>6:00 pm to 9:00 pm</td>
<td>An evening of Meditation: Mask, Ghoran's discourse on Kabir (Tah]])</td>
<td>Canver Media Foundation, 301, Metier Palace, 13 Central Hotel Street, Fort, Mumbai: 022 22870933</td>
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<td>Mohantra Mudra and Muktiyaa Ali</td>
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<td>7:00 pm to 9:30 pm</td>
<td>Dastango - Storytelling by Ankit Chadha &amp; Ashish Palwal</td>
<td><strong>Sahitya Academy Hall, Next to Navi Mumbai Sports Club, Saigudi, Vashi</strong></td>
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<td>Songs of Kabir and other Bhakt poets - Dr. Pranab Mallick &amp; Vedanath Bhosale</td>
<td><strong>Yashwantrao Chavan Auditorium, Grenno Floor, Chavan Centre, Opp, Mankhurd, Mankhurd Point, Mumbai: 022 2564 0508</strong></td>
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<td>12th Jan</td>
<td>6:30 am to 8:30 am</td>
<td>Kaith Vani By:</td>
<td><strong>Gateway of India, Colaba, Mumbai</strong>.</td>
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<td>Prabhat Pipardee &amp; Rahul Dashpande</td>
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<td>11:00 am to 1:00 pm</td>
<td>Live performance by:</td>
<td>Kala Ghoda, Sambhaji Bhawan, Dr. Raju 45/F2, M.G. Road, Fort, Mumbai: 022 2288011/13</td>
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<td>Lakshman Das Basu and Vedanath Bhosale</td>
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<td>Digital Academy</td>
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<td>Film: Kya Sama Hai, Film: Chalo Hamare Doj</td>
<td>Street no. 11, Near Tungi Paradise Hotel</td>
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<td>Dir: Shubhraj Vrinda</td>
<td>RTO, Andheri East, Mumbai.</td>
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<td>3:00 pm to 4:00 pm</td>
<td>Film Screening:</td>
<td>Corners Media Foundation, 301 Meher House, 15 Gavisar, Pratik Street, Mumbai. Code: 022 22767461 Email:</td>
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<td>Film: Kya Sama Hai, Dir: Shubhraj Vrinda</td>
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<td>10:00 am to 12:00 pm</td>
<td>Live Performance by:</td>
<td>Carter Road Amphitheatre, Opp. Cafe Coffee Day</td>
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<td>Dastango - Ankit Chadha</td>
<td>Carter Road, Bandra West, Mumbai.</td>
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<td>Music: Shubhraj Vrinda, Mohantra Mudra and Muktiyaa</td>
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<td>Live Performance by:</td>
<td>Brij Keshan International School, Near Sadan,</td>
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<td>Shubhraj Vrinda</td>
<td>Nagur, Off. L.N. Road, Malad West, Mumbai. 022 28925360</td>
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<td>10:00 am to 12:00 pm</td>
<td>Interaction workshop with Muktiyaa Ali</td>
<td>Sargent Mahabubrahman, 10th Road, Opp. Amritab</td>
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<td>Mohantra Mudra</td>
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<td>11:30 am to 1:00 pm</td>
<td>Dastango performances by Ankit Chadha &amp; Ashish Palwal</td>
<td>Usha Moraya, Next to Mantravada Municipal Primary School, Opp, Mughal Wadi, Andheri East, Mumbai.</td>
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<td>Live Music by Prabhat Pipardee</td>
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<td>Digital Academy</td>
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