

6 Knowledge Management and Change Processes

Lessons from Kabir

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In this chapter, we investigate a key formative, historical influence on the Indian work culture. This influence is represented by medieval Indian literature, which represents fusion of the pre-medieval philosophy and turbulent medieval times. We focus on the works of the medieval saint and scholar, Kabir, and derive general implications and insights for the transformative organization in light of the current Indian context and international research. Kabir (1440–1518) was one of the greatest exponents of reforms in medieval India and a key figure in the medieval knowledge school. In this chapter, we draw from his work to highlight the process of discovering the diverse tacit knowledge bundles, developing them into productive organization-wide learning, and correcting the learning to sustain competitive advantage—the steps of knowledge management that we identify as integral to the transformative organizations.

Kabir, born to a Hindu widow and abandoned at birth, was brought up in the house of a Muslim weaver in a village in Uttar Pradesh. His life was marked by spiritual happiness and contentment. He possessed a straightforward nature and challenged the dogmas of the powerful sections of society. His principal work, *Kabir Granthavali*, contains a distinct form of presentation using devotional couplets, whose dominant motif is the inter-relationship between social capital and spiritual capital. Kabir spread his message through examples for the managers and the masses alike, and his works are widely taught and referred to in modern India.

Through his works, Kabir preached love and devotion which could be followed by the masses and thus unite all sections of society. He was opposed to all kinds of discrimination, whether on the basis of caste, religion, race, family or wealth. His sympathies were decidedly with the poor with whom he identified himself. Instead of focusing on social reformation, he addressed the issue of transforming the individual and the guiding power of true leaders or gurus, and thus contributed to a transformative and long-lasting change in social practices. It is this focus on the transformation of individual motivation to that of devotion and love for pursuing the path of knowledge, and realization of one's mission,