

Looking for Vernacular Modernity: Reading 'Dadu Janam-Lila' by Jan Gopal.

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Do we really find the notions similar to enlightenment values i.e. individuality, equality, protest and rebellion in bhakti or just back-project these values? Is the concept of 'Vernacular Modernity' a valid one or just a category-confusion?

To address this question, it is to inquire about the ways in which bhakta poets were being seen by their contemporaries and by those who came later but remained outside the grid of colonial education system.

It is important to recall that, the terms of the much of the discourse amongst vernacular intellectuals before the colonial period and during it can clearly be identified as 'Bhakti concepts.'

I have tried to have a dialogue with many such sources during the course of my research on Kabir. In this paper, I wish to share my reading of one such source- *Dadu Janam Lila* by his direct disciple, Jan Gopal.

Jan-Gopal composed *Janam-Lila* in 1620; seventeen years after his guru's demise, he mentions exact dates and historical persons like Akbar, Bhagwant Das, and his son Man Singh. In fact, Dadu's encounter with Man Singh is most significant for the idea of vernacular modernity.

Jan-Gopal reports very significant dialogue between Dadu and Man Singh (ruled Amer 1590-1614), in which, Dadu's rejection of child marriage becomes extremely significant in the context of the social composition of his following. Many of Dadu's disciples came from the ruling elite of the society, whose behaviour was expected to set the standards. This must have led to disquiet among those who wanted to uphold the 'traditional' order facing the challenges of rising voices of vernacular modernity.

