CHAPTER IX

KABIR THE MYSTIC:

HARBINGER OF HINDI-MUSLIM UNITY
He said in his a two line poem (doha):

Jogi Gorak Gorak Karai, Hindu
Ram - nam Uchcharai
Musalman Kaha ek kudai, Kabir ko swami
Chat ghat rahyo samai.

Yogis call upon Gorakh, Hindus Chant the
name of Rama, Muslims say one Khuda, but the Lord of
Kabir pervades every being.

Kabir was familiar with the Sahajia thought of
Buddhism and the direct experience of Natha school's
Sahaja path of religious life. Though he was not directly
influenced by the sufistic way of life, yet he was partly
influenced by the sufistic thought from one of his preceptor
Sheikh Taqqi, with whom he had an encounter in the later
stage of his life.

Kabir was a common house-holder and lived with
his wife and children. He was the proud father of a worthy
son Kamal and a daughter. Kabir did not attach any impor-
tance to caste.
Tanana bunana sabhu tajyo hai kabir
Hari ka nam likhi liyo sarir.

Kabir has renounced spinning and weaving. The name of Hari (God) is imprinted all over the body.

Kabir was a reformist:

Kabir was not sufficiently educated in modern sense. But he had gathered much knowledge by giving up the superstitions of Hindu and Muslim societies. He had a hatred for outer zeal of religious rites minus spirituality. Kabir and Tulsidas had their immense influence on the less educated and illiterate population of Northern and Central India. Kabir was a contemporary of Sikander Lodi, the emperor of Delhi. Kabir is the Indian Luther of the 15th Century. His comparison with Luther, the pioneer protestant movement in the medieval Europe is meaningful. Luther protested against the autocracy of

2. Sir W. W. Hunder in 'Indian Empire' - 1892
   as quoted by G. H. Westcott in 'Book Kabir and Kabir Panth' 1907.
the legal power of medieval Europe and revolted against the church for their misinterpretation of teachings of Christ. Kabir had no such power of political foreseeing but he also protested against the authority for misuse of regal power and oppression. Thus he spoke:

I touch ink nor paper
nor take pen in my hand;
of the greatness of the four ages
Kabir has given instructions
with lips (BIJAK SAKHI *188)

However he had the sixth senses and an acumen coming out of his practicing spiritualism by not sharing the pangs of sorrows which pierced the heart of the common men through the political upheaval and social injustices done by the affluent community. Truly speaking he had a hatred for the general conventions of the society regarding the feelings on spiritualism, what it meant for. Uttering some derigatory remarks on Islam and making a confrontation with one of his Muslim religious preceptor Sheikh Taqqi, he vexed the Muslim community against himself. Similarly condemned certain custom of the indus, like 'Sati (widow burning), female child killing etc. The Maulavis of the Muslim
community and the selfish priest community of the Hindus accused him of preaching anti-religious things. They took him to the court of emperor Sikandar Lodi.

Social and religious protest by Kabir, the mystic:

The term 'protest is derived from Latin word 'protestari' which means to protest or to bear witness or declare openly. In medieval western countries the Lutherean followers protested against atrocities committed by both the king and the priest of the churches on these who believed in freedom of thought in spiritual matters. The regal power and the priest obstructed them and intended to suppress the Lutherean movement. Kabir was a contemporary of the protestant preacher of Christianity and like him propagator of freedom of humanism like Martin Luther. Kabir protested against the different aspects of socio-political life of medieval age. There were four spheres of sociological and religious oriented points where kabir's ideas worked and made some epoch making changes of society. There were in socio-religious spheres and in political phase including the protest against the invasion of foreigners, in eradication of Casteism and to make a spiritualist but casteless society and in rising of regional languages.
Religion and Society at the time of mystic Kabir:

Religion was a social and political force in the medieval India. One cannot think of a society without the existence of religion, so it was an inseparable part of the society. But a number of inhuman customs had entered into the society. Like polygamy among both communites of the Hindus and the Muslims, child-killings, system of burning the widow on the pyre of deceased husbands (Satidaha) among the Hindus. Kabir fought a relentless war against these evils. Religious zeal was used for the interest of the intelligent group of the society. Common people didn't like the hotchpotch of philosophy and wanted to live in peace with the cooperation of different communites in society. But that was totally absent in the medieval society of India. The path of Bhakti was only the way to save them from socio-religious stagnation and destruction at the hands of traditional religions. Monism and monotheism of Islam yielded a unique unity among the Brahmanical concept of thought and Islamic way of thinking on the oneness of Godhood. That thought was disrespected by the sharer of views both of them Hindus and the Muslims. The Hindus forgot the upanisadic concept of symbolic nature of idol-worshipping. Muslims paid no heed to the God-hood as it
He attributed his personal God as Nirguna (a quality above all worldly conception). He was a dutiful householder with his mother, wife and children. He did not like to live on the others earnings. He used to earn his livelihood by the sweat of his brow by weaving cloth. But normal duties of life didn't prevent him from practising the spiritual life by repeating the name of God according to the Vaisnavite way of religious practice, thus he attained the supreme goal of spiritual life. 5 Kabir was influenced by the Upanisadic non-dualism and Islamic concept of monistic outlook, but of different qualities. His God was:

\[
\text{'Jaye muhn mathe nahin} \\
\text{nahin rupak rup} \\
\text{Phup Vas te patla} \\
\text{aisa tat anup'}.
\]

which means 'who is without face or head or symbolic form, subtler than the fragrance of the flower, such an essence is He'.

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5. Meditation and spiritual life.

S. Y.

Bangalore, 1980, pp 261-263.
He depicted in the songs composed by him the nature of relationship between the universal almighty and men according to the philosophical idealism of vaisnavite sects and sufi concept. He used some important terminology coined from Natha religious literature and widely used Tantravite terms. In a conflict composed by him, he attributed the life of religious enthusiasm in such manner of synthetic outlook:

(Kaise din Katihai ....)

How shall I pass the day
tell me the way,
This side Ganga
that side Jamuna
Please build a thatched hut
for me in between, I say.
I will tear my upper garment
into pieces like paper
Please inscribe your face
on my heart for ever
says Kabir, Mastan O Sadhus,
take me by my arm
and show the way — Render by P. K. Machwe —
Florest of his songs are sung as folksongs by the illiterate masses even today. His formless 'Rāma' gone beyond the description as the Srimad Bhagvat Gita describes him, 'where words fails and cannot reach ordinarily'.

Kabir used to see the God in all He manifested in the worldly materials:

\[
\text{Garh candra tapan jot barat hai}
\]

The light of the sun, the moon, and the stars shines bright:
The melody of love swells forth, and the rhythm of love's detachment beats the time.
Day and night, the chorus of music fills the heavens; and Kabir says, "My Beloved one gleams like the lightening flash in the sky".
Do you know how the moments perform their adoration?
Waving its row of lamps, the universe sings in worship day and night, There are the hidden banner and the secret canopy:
There the sound of the unseen bells is heard.

Kabir says: "There adoration never ceases, there the Lord of the universe siteth on His throne."

Render into English by Poet Rabindranath Tagore

He was a monist. He had a vision of the almighty in all different forms in the visible world. He painted the picture of the almighty as a great weaver and sang of Him as:

Dharani akas ki kargaha banayi /
Cand suraj dui nal calayi //

'The sun and the moon are weaving making this world and sky as an abode of weaving'. Kabir described God as 'Rama' (Anandamaya - an embodiment of eternal joy), Prabhu, Sain (Swami - Lord), Allah (Muslim name of almighty) Khuda (Sanskrit term Svadha or an established soul), Pura Sahab (Pu.na Brahma : Pure Brahman), Angacia dawa (Swayambhu devata : an eternal deity) etc. According
to Kabir's version 'God Himself is beyond any attributory form and beyond the thought and mind of name and thought.  
So he sang the oneness of Godhood avoiding His different names:

Alakh illāhi ek hyay, nām dharayā doy /  
Rām Rahimā ek namhai dharayā doy /  
Kršṇa Karimā ek hyay, nām dharayā doy /  
Kāśi Kābā ek hyay ek hi Rām Rahimā /  
Mayḍā ek pakuśn bahu, baithi Kabirā jīmā //

He disapproved the outer religious life associating with the ostentations coloured graces of the medicants and ritual performances. So he composed couplet and sang it for the sake of the interest of the saints and to raise the ethical consciousness of the common people:

'Men nā rangaye, rangāye yogi kaprā /  
Assanmari mandirme baithe //  
Āramhachhari pujan lāge pathrā /  
Kanwā pharay yogi jātrā barhaule //  
Dārhi barhay yogi hoi gaile bakrā /  
Jangal jai yogi dhuniā rāmaule //  
Gītā banchke hoi gaile lābrā //
‘Oh’ you communicator of God, you have coloured your dresses before cleaning your mind. You are making your sitting posture in the temple only to worship stone. ‘Oh’ you communicator of God. You have made holes in your ears and enhancing your matted hair but after enriching your beard. You have turn into a he-goat. Entering into the jungle you have kindled incense. ‘Oh’ yogi you have transformed yourself into a eunuch torturing your carnal desires. ‘Oh’ yogi, you shaved your head, have coloured your dress and reciting the Gita, you have turned into a liar. ‘Oh’ you saint, listen me please. 'The death God. Yama drag you to the gateway of his palace'. In the above song he warned the saints, those who misguide themselves by following a soulless ritual and ignoring its true spirit.

Again he warns them against creating voidness in the name of practising religion. So he says:

Nā jānāi sāhāb kaisā hai /
Mulla hokar bang jo dawī,
Keyā terā sāhāb bāhrā hai /
Kirike pag newār bāje,
So bhi sāhāb suntā hai //
Mālā pheri tilak lāgāya,

- : ( 105 ) : -

Kanhahi Kabir suno bhāi sādho /
Yam darwaṅ bandhala joibe pākrā //
I do not know what your Lord is. You being a Mulla you sound Aja (Muslim invocation of Lord), is your Lord dumb? He hears even the sound of twinkling of legs of insects. You turning your heads of garlands and paint the forehead with dusts. Your beard increasing rapidly. But you have to search Him within the corner of your heart.

He does not like to reside in the temple of Hindus, not in the Mosque, nor in Kaba (Muslim holy place), nor in the Kailash (Hindu's sacred place in the Himalayas). So he sang:

'Mokăñ kanha dunrah,
Mai to teră pas main
Namai dewan, namămi masjid,
Nā kābā, kailās main.
Nā to kaun kriyākarma main.
Nāhein yog-bairāg main.'
Oh, you are servant of (God) Mind. Where you are searching Me, I am with you and by your side. I am not in the temple, nor in the mosque. I am not even in the communicational measure of thinking or in the remnunciation. If you be a seeker of God, than you will really realise soon, if you search for a moment. Kabir says, Oh, brother listen me please. He exists in the hearts of all living beings.'

In the above statement Kabir expressed his view of monism and desired to remove misconception of the ignorant mass, who frequently refused reality of His existence in the human beings and other living beings also in his own days.

According to the expressed view of Kabir, the mystic, God is one but He has no attachment to a particular sect or community. This view is an eternal truth and it was propagated by the Upanisadic seers of truth in the ancient period of the world history. But Kabir's endeavour was to teach the mass about the conception of God and ethics on the conception religious life which has an eternal meaning. For the benefaction of the mass, those who are particularly entangled with spiritual aspiration,

6. Banglar Baul 0 Baul gan - Upendranath Bhattacharya, Cal., 1364 B.S.
so he uttered the following ethical couplet to bury differences in opinion regarding the challenging mood of Godhood:

Ek niranjan alâha merâ, Hindu Turak
duhun nâhin merâ
Râkhun brat na Maharam jânâ, tîs he
Sumirun jo rahe midânâ
Pujâ Kârôn na mimaj gujarun ek
niraker hirdai namaskarun
Nâ haj jawân nâ birth pujâ
Ek pichhanna tan keyâ dujâ
Mahai Kabir bharam sav bhagâ,
Ek niranjan su man laga

which means: 'My Niranjan (formless God) and Allah are the same. Hindu and Turk (Muslim) are equal to me. I do not observe ritualism in different festivals. I have no knowledge about Muharram. I used to remember him constantly He who stays in the death-bed. I do not perform worship and pay respect Him, He, who is formless and exists in my heart. I do not have pilgrimage to Haj or other places of worshipping.'
If you recognise Oneness in all, then there is no need for search other, so Kabir declares all illusion had gone, 'now fixed your mind in the formless God'.

Kabir's contribution to the progress of religious ethics in medieval ages in India:

Evelyn underhill described Kabir in the introductory notes in the noted book 'One hundred poems of Kabir' tr. by poet Rabindranath Tagore which was first published in 1915: "Kabir belongs to that small group of supreme mystics - amongst whom St. Augustine, Raysbroeck, and the Sufi poet Jalatinddin Rami are perhaps the Chief, who have achieved that which might call the synthetic vision of God. These have resolved the perpetual opposition between the personal and impersonal, the transcendent and immanent, static and dynamic aspects of the Divine Nature; between the absolute of philosophy and the 'sure true friend' of devotional religion." If the devotional path of religion is easier to trod by the seekers of spiritualism,

7. One hundred poems of Kabir: tr. by Rabindranath Tagore assisted evahya underhid, 1954. P. introd. XXIII.
then it can be assumed that the path of devotionalism which was existed in India in medieval age Kabirdasa made it much easier, cleansed it to access the devotionalism for all illiterate common seeker of Godhood. He was a true friend of devotional religion in medieval India. Kabir, the mystic, introduced the ethical sense of consciousness in the devotionalism in Indian soil. Before the introducing the devotional path for the sake of spiritualism, he wanted to have a cleansed society and created an ethereal environment to practice it by eradicating social evils like enmity, casteism, superstitions etc. Before entering to the gate of spiritualism, he warned his fellow men not to bother for social evils and hotchpotch of philosophical arguments devading of the ethics for spiritualism. He stresses on the inner development of manhood first and then humanism. Surely his thought had a social value and historically changed the courses of religions and made the two apparently different religions come closer. That was done after a strenuous efforts and service to the society rendered by his facing constant opposition by both the sects of Hindus and Muslims. Kabir induced ethical codes in the path of spiritualism and disallowed the casteism in the field of religion so he sang:
"Brahman bhaya to keya bhaya gale lapte sut
Bhakti bhabfa^vw maram nā ḍane aisen Janglibhut”. which means the Brahmins with the sacred thread in the neck surely not depict the truth, if they don’t have regard for the path of devotionalism, if they are have rather they may be treated as the ghosts of forests. According to Kabir merely casteism is nothing but a barrier in the way of progress through the devotionalism. He refuted the nothingness of pilgrimage. So he said:

Tirath me to sav pani hai,
Howoi nahi kuchhu hai dekha
Pratima sakal to jarh hai,
Bola bahi bolay dekha

'Where there is pilgrim, there is water, I have dips there, but the result is nil. Idols are inert, and never answers even after calling them‘. which he indicated that was nothing but to trace inner developments of the spiritual life.

He also codified the nature of studies of the holy scriptures and thus warned other for misusing the reading habit of spiritual seeker and said rightly:
The Puran and the Koran are nothing but source of information I have seen them their reality by dropping the curtains. Gathering personal experience, Kabir searched and found soul incorrect insertions of information.

The view of Kabir was only to gather the knowledge from the scriptures for the passed experience or the errors but to have it tested with personal experience with the advancement of the age.

The ethics of religion was not based on caste. Once Sikander Lodi about his religion Kabir directly answered as follows:

Hindu Kanhu tau mai nahin,
Muselman bhi nahin
Panch tathwaka putla gairi khala manhi.
'I am not a Hindu, not a Muslim. This body is a doll made of fire ethereal materials and the doll is playing in my physical structure', a doll made of fire ethereal materials and the doll is playing in my physical structure.

Untouchability was a curse of the Hindu society from time immemorial, Kabir protested against the vice in a beautiful manner which uplifted hearts of so many common people. Once his daughter drew water from a well and while doing so some water from her pitcher fell into the pitcher of a Brahmin. The Brahmin complained to him against his daughter. Kabir had a chance to advise the unreligious but orthodox Brahmin. He composed a couplet and sang the essence of Indian Philosophy thus:

Pandit buj pya tum pain
Tohe Chhunt kahan laptani ?
Ja matlike gharne baithe tame sristi samani

'Oh, Pandit (Brahmin-learned man). You should drink water cautiously. How has the water become polluted by touching? Whole of the earth is connected by soil.
He sarcastically taught the Brahmin, the essence of Vedanta philosophy. 'All the visible things are nothing but the manifestation of Him'.

He rebuked both the Muslim and the Hindu priests for their ignorance about the saying of the scriptures of all ages and tried to free them from superstitions. He tried to penetrate in the hearts of the people through his scientific and logical arguments in the sphere of religion. He said:

Hindu kahata hai Rām hāmārā
gMuslāmān Rahīmānā
Apasme daun laerdhē marte hain
maram kai nāhi jānā.

'The Hindus declare Rama is of us. The Muslims say Rahim is ours. Both of them are not getting the truth. When grew old he went to Maghar, a place far from Kāsi, the holy, of Hindus. That was done by him only to induce the new thinking among his followers to eradicate the superstitious belief of Hindus, that one can get emancipation if he dies in the soil of Kāsi. He passed away there in the circa 1558 A. D.
He also embraced death like a Vaisnavite flower of Krishna cult. He compared death with a bride and himself as a bridegroom. Thus he said:

'Likha likhiki bāt nāhi hai, dekhā dekhiki dāt / Dulhā dulhin miligayā, phiki pāri barāt' //

'This is not a matter of writing but of the realisation that the bride and bridegroom became united, but mates failed to meet the reality'. That is the philosophy of Kabir. Where he tried united the two forces of opposite communities. He was a reformer and a preacher of great ability. He said the foundation stone of religious ethics where religion and spiritualism are separated on the basis of philosophy and argument. He was a harbinger of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Kabir's love for the Country:

Kabir was a humanist. He had a deep love for the human population all over the world. But he proclaimed his love for mother country in his different couplets.

Muhammad Hedyatilla Varanese 1977.
Kabir's teaching considerably influenced the later sages. His composition was mainly collected by one of his disciples, Dharamdas. He said the Kabir's composition from decaying. Guru Nanakadeva had personal regard for the teachings of Kabirdasa. He collected some of his valuable teachings composed in two line poems called dohas and a considerable number of couplets. The most important teachings of Kabir in poems are compiled in the holy scripture of the Sikhs the 'Adi Granth Sahib'. Kabir's teachings are carried by his son Kamal. Many sub-sects were formed to spread the teachings of Kabir among the oppressed class of the society. The aim of the different sects were to spread the Catholic teachings of Kabir. Raidas, Dadu, Mirabai were the principle product of Kabir's thought. They contributed equally to the development of the society in the different fields including the contribution of regional literature.