

## **Saint Kabir (1290-1410 A.D ?.) - Life and Message: By Dr. H. K. Gandhi**

From the dawn of human civilization and pre-historic millenniums, India (Bharat) has remained a land of God search, religious debates and spiritual quest. During the long span of evolution innumerable visionaries (Darshniks), saints, poets, noble kings, Rishies, (Philosophers), Bhaktas (Devotees), and Acharyas (founders of religious cults) have contributed their wisdom in the Vedas, Upanishads, Gita, Hindu Darshans and scriptures of Jainism and Buddhism. They provide moral guidelines not only for the people of India but for entire mankind. India may be backward in scientific developments, but she is the richest land of religious literature, noble conduct and moral guidelines for all classes of people. India possesses wonderful scriptures of philosophy and God search by self search.

This literature was created during the BC. Centuries. In those times Europe was living in dark ages. The scriptures were usually created in a poetry format so that people can memorize it and pass over to the next generations.

Great saint, poet and Bhakta Kabir was one such 'Kohinoor' of India who lived during the 13th century AD. The exact date and place of his birth and the names of his parents are not available because he was an abandoned orphan. He was cared and raised by a Muslim weaver couple. The art of weaving cotton was invented in India since prehistoric centuries, but the class of weavers was looked upon as an untouchable class by orthodox Brahmin priests.

During young age Kabir came in contact with a great Hindu Acharya Ramanujacharya. He was a true devotee of Rama preaching one God theory. Inspired by this divine teacher of God, **Kabir became a devotee of God.**

**Kabir had created nearly 3000 original Dohas (two line verses of poetry). They possess great wisdom and give practical moral guidelines in common people's dialect. His poetry has the touch of a sweet breeze flowing from the ocean of great religious wisdom. The words of enlightened souls spring from heart and convey a direct message of God and human equality. Such souls don't do verbatim translation of ancient scriptures which most traditional priests usually do.**

**Like any true saint, Kabir had a broad minded attitude towards all religions like Islam and Hinduism. But his broad views were strongly opposed by priests of both the groups. Kabir was imprisoned, harassed, tortured, poisoned, and many attempts were done to kill him. Lord has promised in Gita "My true devotee never perishes". "(Na me Bhakataha Pranashyati)". He was saved in all these events. Kabir lived a long life of 120 years.**

**The words flowing from the lips of Kabir were so appealing that in course of time many saints, kings and people of Hindu and Muslim faiths became great devotees of Kabir.**

Islam was started by Mohammed in the middle east during 7th century AD. It united many Arab tribes fighting in names of many pagonic idols of Gods. Lot of gold had accumulated in the temples of India like the Shiva temple of Somnath in Gujarat. There was lack of unity among the Hindu kings. Priests preaching different faiths in name of different Gods and practice of untouchability as a religious custom had failed to create religious unity in India. All these factors invited the Arab tribes to invade India from 10th century onwards. After some invasions, a Ghori dynasty was established in Delhi. It was followed by a Lodi dynasty. Ibrahim Lodi was the ruler of Delhi in the time of Kabir.

Kabir mostly lived near Kashi (Benarasa) in a small hut. He earned his livelihood by doing the job of a weaver - the art of his foster parents. Visitors came from all parts of India to hear his devotional songs and learn about the practical religion in daily life. One day an unknown woman came and requested to stay with Kabir and serve him for life. Kabir accepted her request and she took care of his home affairs. People thought they were husband and wife, but it was not true. They lived a chaste life. They adopted an orphan boy Kamal and a girl Kamali and raised them. Many verses of Kabir are addressed to Kamal, in the style of a father giving good advice to a son.

**Kabir kahe Kamalko, do bataa shikh le;  
Kar Sahib ki bandgi aur bhukheku kuch de.**

Kabir says to (son) Kamal " Learn two things in life. Pray God and give something to a hungry person". Hunger in this verse has two meanings. Hunger of food and hunger of knowledge. Do not withhold knowledge if some one comes to learn from you. Give good advice freely to a lost path soul.

During the last years of his life Kabir shifted his residence from Kashi to his native place of Mazaharpur in U.P.-India. His Hindu and Muslim devotees came in great numbers to visit the departing saint. Muslim devotees wanted to bury his dead body in a grave and build a monument. Hindu devotees wanted to erect a Samadhi on the cremation site. Kabir could foresee that these people would fight for the final rites of his dead body. **He indicated an exact date and time of his death and entered a room for final prayers and meditation. When the devotees opened the room next morning, they were surprised to find that there was no trace of any body but a pile of fresh flowers on the bed.**

Hindus took half portion of the flowers and cremated them. The Muslims erected a grave on the other half. Today there are two Samadhies at this place, side by side. Thousands of Hindu - Muslim followers come to this place for pilgrimage to pay their respect to Saint Kabir.

One also observes similar incidence in the life story of Jesus Christ. His body was kept in a cave guarded by Roman soldiers. It had disappeared to the utter surprise of everyone. Devoted Christians go to visit this place in their pilgrimage of the Holy Land. An educated man of common sense will not believe in such miracles.

From 12th century onwards one finds two distinct trends in Hinduism, the Bhakti Path of simple prayers and devotion to one Supreme God and Spiritual Knowledge Path of some Acharyas who were Sanskrit Scholars. The great Hindu Acharya Shankara (in 7th cent AD) had started an Advaita path and organized Hinduism as a religion.

After the 12th century Acharyas like Madhava (12th Cent. AD) started Dwaita Path. Ramanuja (in 13th cent. AD) showed a Vishista-Advaita and Vallabhaa-Charya (in 15th- Cent. AD) indicated Shuddha-Advaita Path and founded the Vaishnava Path and many Krishna temples were built. Hinduism got divided into two main paths, the religious cults of Acharyas and simple living Bhaktas like Kabir.

These great Acharyas wrote good commentaries on ancient scriptures like the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita and the Puranas. But this literature was written again in the Sanskrit language. The Acharya Path was welcomed by Brahmins who made their living by giving discourses of religions.

But some true devotees of God like Kabir, Surdas, Tulsidas and Meera delivered the message of religion and morals to the people in the common language spoken by the people. This was not liked by traditional Brahmins. Hence these all such devotees had to undergo many hardships at the hands of Brahmin priests of Kashi (Benaras).

In the trend of Bhakti path, the devotees wrote songs and Dohas in the common man's language. Saint **Kabir is looked upon by many true devotees as one of the founder of the Bhakti path. He spoke in people's words and sung devotional prayers in simple words.** The style and approach to religion in the songs and Dohas of Kabir's is observed in later devotees like Surdasa (13th cent) and Saint Tulsidas (15th). Tulsidas re-narrated the Sanskrit Ramayan in Doha style in Hindi, and he had to undergo many hardships also. This Ramayan of Tulsidas is very popular today.

Mira (15th Cent. AD) a princess and later queen of a state, renounced her royal position, and adopted a simple life style. She wrote many devotional songs of Krishna Bhakti.

The founder of today's Shikh Sampradaya, Guru Nanak (16th cent) wrote his famous Granth Sahib (The Holy scripture of the Shikh Path) and gave message of one God and practical morals to people and the message of One God in simple manner in Punjabi language.

Though not popular in the west, millions of illiterate masses in the villages of India, and many simple Sadhus sing the Dohas and Bhajans of Kabir today and follow his simple preaching and respect Kabir as incarnation of God. In many villages devotees of Kabir have erected temples of Kabir where Hindus and Moslems pray jointly in a wonderful religious harmony and friendship.

Without attending any school or college for scriptural study, and without having any ability of reading or writing, Kabir has given the entire mankind a treasure of religious literature in form of Dohas and Bhajans (prayer songs) on a variety of subjects, like Omni-presence of One God, time, money, death, happiness and unhappiness, true and false priests and saints, heaven and hell, equality of all human beings, and practical simple codes of moral conduct. The Dohas and songs of Kabir are very popular and quoted by the illiterate and the learned scholars alike. Kabir's literature is a beautiful cocktail of two major religions of India, namely the Hinduism and the Islam. Kabir was a Muslim devotee of Ram, but in fact he was beyond any religious and secular label and attachment.

**Today the students of poetry, philosophy and literature in Indian universities study the life and works of Kabir to get their doctorate in philosophy and literature. Kabir was a living university some scholars have remarked.**

Is it the monopoly and authority of few scholars, Gurus and Sanskrit Pundits of ancient scriptures and literature only to talk about God and religion? The answer to above question is nicely indicated in the Gita.

Lord clearly declares "Anybody can worship ME, My justice is equal for all creations, men and women. Even women, the Vaishyas and the Shudras (Untouchables) can worship me and excel in life". (Ch.IX-Vs. 29 -31)

Traditional priests (Brahmins), generally preach from the scriptures written in very ancient times. An average men and women fail to receive the correct message of religion and God. At such times few common people get divine inspirations. They preach the true message of scriptures in simple language. This is not liked by the traditional priests because their business of fooling people in name of God is challenged. Such devotees have to face great difficulties created by the religious heads who have great influence upon ruling kings.

This is the story of all great prophets like Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, Buddha, Kabir, Mira, and Tulsidas and many others. But they are true persons of One God conviction. In course of time they open new doors for worship of God. Their message creates shining mile stones in the religious history of the land. Their words coming from heart spread to different parts of world. They become immortal souls, prophets, messiahs, etc.,

***Kabir was one such Immortal Soul of India.***

***My Salutations to the Great Kabir.***

***Famous Doha - (2 line stanzas) of Kabir.***

### **How to Find a true Guru?**

Kabir gives us a yard-stick for judging a true Saint or a Guru from a selfish and hypocrite Priest.

***Kalika Brahmin Mashkara, tako na dijo dan;  
Kutumb so narak hi chala, aur sath chala jajaman.***

**"Do not give alms (donations) to Brahmins in Kali Yuga. They are cheating you in name of God. They are sure to go to hell along with their families, and their followers will also accompany them".**

Kabir declares without fear of any body.

***Brahman Guru hai Jagatka, Sadhunka Guru Nahi;  
Ulaj Pulaj kar mari raha charo bedo mahi.***

"Brahmins may be Gurus of the entire world but a true Sadhu (Saint) does not need any Guru. Brahmins quote one thing from one Veda and another thing from other Veda. But they die in the end doing debates on the meanings of different scriptures only".

***Char Veda Pundit padha aur tark kare nadan;  
Bhava Bhakti Jane nahi sabhi pariksha baad.***

"Pundits (Scholars) learn four Vedas and debate in ignorance about God and religion but know nothing about God even after passing all their examinations. God could only be realized by true devotion and love for one God only".

No wonder why Kabir was disliked by Brahmins then and even now.

***Gyanine kahi ye kaha, Kahat Kabir Lajay  
Andhe Age' Nachate Kala Akarat Jaay***

When a man of knowledge says I know this and that, Kabir says I am ashamed of such words. Knowledge is like an endless ocean. No one can give any knowledge to such an ego-blinded person. Do not even try, otherwise your art and knowledge will be wasted if one dances before a blind man.

We listen scholars and Pundits talking about God and religions. But only a true devotee of God can speak in such clear words. Compare Kabir's message in above dohas with the following verses of Bhagavat Gita (5th Cent BC)

*Naham Vadeir na tapasa, na danen na ch yejyaya,  
Shakya avm vidho drastum drastavan asi man yatha;  
Bhaktyatu ananya shakyaha aham avm vidho- Arjunaha  
Gnyatum drastumch tatvena pravestum ch Paramtapaha  
(Ch.XI-Ver 53 & 54)*

Lord says " Oh Arjuna, It is not possible to see my Universal form, which you just saw - by the study of Vedas, by penance's (tapas), by giving donations (to Brahmins) or by performing complicated Yagnas (fire sacrifices and rituals).

Oh Paramtapa, Only by true devotion and surrendering everything to One God it is possible to visualize my Universal form. Only then it is possible to Know me, See me and Merge with me".

***Jab lag nata jatka, tab tak Bhagat na hoy  
Nata tode Hari bhaje, bhagat kahave toy.***

Kabir says; "As long as one believes in sex differences, colors, castes and creeds, one cannot become a devotee of God. I call him Bhakata only when he breaks the bondage of higher and lower classes and worships One God".

***Airen ki Chori kare aur kare sooiko dan,  
oocha chad kar dekhte kai tak door biman.***

"People steal like lumps of anvils, but donate like small needles. Then they look towards sky for God's helicopter to arrive and give them a free ride for going into the heaven!"

***Sukhia Dhudhat mai firu Sukhia mila na koi  
Jiske age ek dukh kahu, so pehla ooth roi***

I was searching a happy man, but could not find one; I wanted to tell him my one difficulty. Finally I found one, but before I could speak any word, he started crying and telling me his story.

***Jisko mai ek Dukh kahun so kahe ek-bis  
dazat mai dukh ekse, kahan raku mai bis***

When I told him my one difficulty, he told me his twenty. When I was burning with my one, how could I carry the burden of his twenty problems?

***Tara mandal baithke, Chandra badai pai  
Uday bhaya jab Suryaka, sab tara chhoop jai***

The moon was boasting about his light in the association of some stars; but when the sun arose in the sky, all stars ran away from the moon.

***Chalti Chakki dekhkar deeya Kabira roi  
Do Patanke bichme Sabut bacha na koi***

Kabir saw a grinding mill and started crying; he observed that not a single grain came out intact from the crushing effects of the two grinding stones. All grains were turned into fine flour.

The symbolic meaning of the grinding mill is the crushing wheel of TIME. Its two halves are the Past and the Future. The Present is only a fraction of a second, the moment of existence only. We all are surely going to die one day, without any exception, and our flesh and bones are going to merge in the mud and water and air.

Positive Points of a True Saint, or Guru.

***Daya Garibi Bandgi, samata sheel swabhava  
Ete lakshana santke kahe Kabir sad-bhav.***

Kabir says. "Compassion, poverty (simple life style), devotion and prayers to One God, an attitude of equality towards all, chaste life and universal love are the qualities of a true saint".

***Asha tyaje, maya tyaje, moha tyaje aru man.  
Harsha Shok Ninda tyaje, kahe Kabir Sant jan.***

Kabir says: "A person, who has renounced all desires, attachments, illusions, is above any praise or criticism; and has conquered elation and depressions, is a true saint".

***Haat haat hira nahi, kanchan ka na pahad  
Sinahan ka tola nahi, sant biral sansar.***

"It is difficult to find a true saint, because diamonds are not available in every shop, and gold is not available as lumps in mountains, and lions do not live in big herds and crowds".

***Char chinha hari bhaktke pragat dikhai det  
Daya, dharma adhinta, par dukhko har let.***

"Following four qualities are very obvious in a true Saint or a real devotee of God; compassion, righteousness, surrender to God in all events, and helping others in times of their difficulties".

***Kabir mange mangana, Prabhu dijo mo doy  
Sant milan aur hari katha mo ghar nishdin hoy.***

A true saint does not ask anything from God, but Kabir says , I ask for only two things. " Oh God give me company of Saints and there must be daily recitals of divine stories in my home".

***Pani badho navme, aur gharme badho dam;  
Dono hath oolecheye, yahi shyano kam.***

"When water accumulates in the boat, and lot of money accumulates in your home; the wise thing to do is to remove them by your both hands".

***Jab tu ayo jagatme, log hase tu roy,  
Karni aisi kar chalo, tu hase jag roy.***

"When you were born, you were crying (in cradle) and people around you were laughing; You do such deeds in life that when you go from this world (when you die), you go laughing and many people around you are crying (mourning) at the time of your death".

**Jai Shri Ram. Jai Shri Krishna. Saint Kabirki Jai ho.**

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