



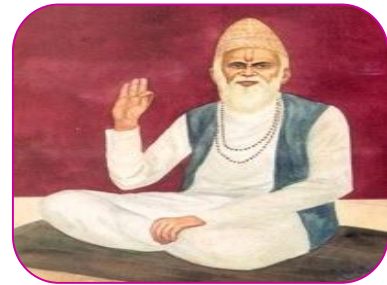
KABIR AND MUSLIM ORTHODOXY

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ABSTRACT :

This paper attempts to understand and analyse the couplets of Kabir regarding the Muslim orthodoxy. Sant Kabir lived in Banaras and represent both Hindu and Muslim communities. He was a Bhakti saint for Hindus and also considered as a pir for Muslims. His couplets are very close to the human life and social and religious practices. This paper mainly focuses on those couplets which are directly related to the Muslim orthodoxy and tries to analyse and situate in Medieval Indian time frame.



KEY WORDS: Kabir, Muslim, Orthodoxy, Medieval India .

INTRODUCTION :

Kabir is a unique figure in Indian history. He is a Hindu *sant* for Hindus, a *pir* for the Muslims, *bhakta* for Sikhs and for his own followers *Kabirpanthis* an *avatar*. He is always considered a champion of Hindu-Muslim unity and opposed to the superstitions, ritualism and orthodoxy of Hinduism and Islam. He was born in a family of *julaha* (weaver) in Kashi or Banaras, the modern Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. Kabir's poetry and songs are part of the consciousness of many ordinary Indians, especially the north Indians. This can be explained by the fact that the Bhakti saints composed their verses in local languages. They also translated Sanskrit works to make them understandable to a wider audience. Thus we find Jnanadeva writing in Marathi, Kabir, Surdas and Tulsidas in Hindi, *Hindavi*, or Bhojpuri and Awadhi, Shankaradeva popularising Assamese, Chaitanya and Chandidas spreading their message in Bengali, Mirabai in Hindi and Rajasthani.

Kabir's beliefs and ideas were reflected in the *dohas* (*sakhi*) composed by him. Kabir emphasised simplicity in religion and said that *bhakti* was the easiest way to attain God. According to J . N. Farquhar "His best utterances are probably the loftiest work in the Hindi language and hundreds of his couplets have laid hold of the common heart of Hindustan."¹ Discussing the influences of Kabir on medieval Indian society, Kshiti Mohan Sen says 'Kabir's superior spiritual achievements came to have sovereign influence on the people of the Indian medieval times. Kabir's

¹ JN Farquhar, *Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, P. 333). taken from Charlotte Vaudeville, *A Weaver Named Kabir: Selected Verses with a Detailed Biographical and Historical Introduction*, OUP, 1993, p. 12.

influence, direct or indirect, on all liberal movements which occurred in the medieval times after him is un-commonly deep'.²

In this paper I have endeavored to narrate some of the *dohas* of Kabir which are directly related to Muslim orthodoxy. In his poems Kabir criticizes organized religion and its rituals, attacks caste system, and offers moral lessons about uprightness and oneness with God. He preaches nonconformity and satirizes the superstitions and traditions of Hinduism and Islam as he saw them practiced by the religious leaders of his time. The simple narration of the *dohas* reflects the direct engagement of Kabir with the common masses. As he was speaking for the common masses his images are from the ordinary events and objects of daily life. The metaphors related to weaving reflect his humble background as well. The most striking feature of Kabir's poetry is its blunt tone and harsh criticism of religious orthodoxy. He emphasized the concept of humanity and universal brotherhood.

यह सब झूठि बंदगी बिरिया पाँच निवाजा
साँचहि मारे झूठ पढ़ि काजी करै अकाजा।³

O qazi, you perform prayer five times in a day. Do you follow the *quran* in your daily life? If you only recite the *quran* many times and you are not following the path of *quran* then your devotion is not trustworthy. Through reciting the couplet alone you would not be able to reach its meaning in proper manner and you will harm yourself.

कबीर काजी स्वादि बसि, ब्रम्ह हतै तब दोइ।
चढ़ि मसीति एके कहै, दरि क्यूँ साँचा होइ।⁴

Kabir says that when the *qazi* kill animal to satisfy his greed, at that time he sees Brahma (God) in the form of dainty (demon) when, however, he raises the *azan* from the mosque and tries to praise and establish that there is no god except Allah, how would he be able to legitimize himself in front of god?

काजी मुल्लाँ भरमियां, चला दुर्नी के साथि।
दिल तै दीन बिसारिया, करद लई जब हाथि।⁵

Qazi and *mullas* who always give sermons to show people that the true path of religion are in a sense themselves confused and on the other preach. On the one hand they sacrifice animals. Their sermons thus become meaningless and are doing the same things which they were trying to stop.

जोरि करि जिबहें करै, कहते हैं ज हलाल।
जब दफतर देखैगा दई, तब ह्वैगा कौन हवाल।⁶

² Medieval Mystics of India, London, 1930, p. 87 taken from Charlotte Vaudeville, *A Weaver Named Kabir: Selected Verses with a Detailed Biographical and Historical Introduction*, OUP, 1993, p. 13.

³ Shyamsundar Das (ed.), *Kabir Granthavali*, Lok Bharati Prakashan, Allahabad, second edition, 2011, Pad-22/5, p. 81

⁴ *Ibid*, Pad-22/6, p. 81

⁵ *Ibid*, Pad-22/7, p. 81

⁶ *Ibid*, Pad-22/8, p. 81

It is claimed forceful and *hala* means killing of animal. This hypocrisy will bring suffering to the doer of *hala*. *Qazi* or *Mullah* or any other being who is killing living beings is breaking the law of Supreme God as a result of which he will get punishment in the court of Dharamraj (God who keeps account of sins and good deeds). Kabir suggests that one has interest in doing *hala* then one should do *hala* of lust, anger, greed, attachment and arrogance and not of living beings.

जोर किया सो जुलुम है लेइ जवाब खुदाइ
खालिक दरि खूनी खड़ा, मार मुँहैमुँह खाड़ा

Kabir calls *zor*, as oppression. He says for every act of violence man is accountable to God. Those who kill animals is a murderer in front of God. Their payers are false. All the saints in that era condemned killing of animals for food. Kabir condemned not only meat eating but also superstitions and beliefs regarding the sacrificial meat leading to heaven.

सेख सबूरी बाहिरा, क्या हज काबै जाइ
जाकी दिल साबित नहीं, ताको कहाँ खुदाइ⁷

O Sheikh! You are not satisfied, and are entangled in the worldly trap. Then, in such circumstances, what benefit will you get after performing the *Haj*? From inside your heart you are empty then how would you get God.

कबीर माला मनहि की, और संसारी भेख ।
माला पहर्या हरि मिलै, तौ अरहट कै गलि देषा⁸

Kabir is saying that the real rosary is inside the soul and that rosary of soul should be used from time to time to get God. The rosary around his neck is just for display to the world. If this type of rosary could bring solace to the soul, then *rahat* has a large rosary and it should be able to get God very easily.

काबा फिर कासी भया, रामहि भया रहीम
मोट चून मैदा भया, बैठि कबीरा जीम ॥⁹

Leave the superiority of your religion and follow the middle path when Kaaba becomes Kasha and Ram becomes Rahim. When the differences of religion and sects vanish then coarse flour (*mota aanta*) will become refine flour. O Kabir! You eat this *mota aanta* and donot try to venture for wheat flour.

दिन भर रोजा रहत हो, रात हनत हो गया
यह खून वह बंदगी, क्यों कर खुशी खुदाया¹¹

⁷ Ibid, Pad-22/9, p. 81

⁸ Ibid, Pad-22/11, p. 81

⁹ Ibid, Pad- 24/6, p. 83

¹⁰ Ibid, Pad-31/10, p. 90

¹¹ Ramnarayan Prasad Singh, *Kabir Ke Kavya Par Samakalin Paristhityon Ka Prabhav*, Patna, 1989, p. 95.

You do *namaaz* (prayer) fives times and at the time of Ramadan also keep fasts. In the evening you kill a cow and eat its meat. On one hand you pray to God and on the other hand you kill His being. How will God become happy with you like this? In other words you are yourself becoming a recipient of sin and by incurring the sin of misleading your followers, you will fall in deep hell.

At another place Kabir is saying that the simple reader of *veda* and *quran* are not following the right path. If you only read it then you would not be able to follow it in your life. It is important that you must conduct your life in accordance to religious scriptures. If you will spend your entire life in simply reading *veda* and *quran* then it would be meaningless.

I am hereby quoting some of the couplets of Kabir related to the Muslim orthodoxy. These couplets are directly hitting the *ulema* and orthodox religious practices prevalent in the Muslim society. These *dohas* are very much reflective of Kabir's idea of ahimsa, brotherhood, humanity etc .

हज काबै हवे हवे गया, केतौ बार कबीरा
मीरां मुझमें क्या खता, मुखां न बोले पीरा¹²

गलाकाट बिस्मिल करै, सो काफिर बे सूझा
औरों को काफिर कहै, अपना कुफुरन सूझा¹³

कबीर वह नर पीर है, जो जाने पर पीरा
जो पर पीर न जानहीं, सो काफिर बे पीरा¹⁴

पकरि जीउ आनि आ देह बिनासी मारी कए बिस्मिल कौआ
जोति सरूप अनाहत लागी कहु हलालु किउ कौआ¹⁵

भूला वे अहमक नादान (तुम), हरदम रामहिं ना जाना
बरबस आनि के गाय पछारीहि, गरा काटि जिव आपु लिया¹⁶

जाको दूध धाइ करि पिजे, ता माता कौं बध क्यू कीजे
लहुँ थकै दुहि पीया खीरो ताका अहमक भखै सरीरो¹⁷

रोजा करै निवाज गुजरै, कलमें भिसत न होई ।
सतरि काबे इक दिल भितरि, जे करि जा नै कोई ॥¹⁸

छाडि कतेब रांम कहि काजी, खून करत हौं भारी
पकरी टेक कबीर भागति की, काजी रहै इस मारि¹⁹

¹² Shyamsundar Das (ed.), *Kabir Granthavali*, Lok Bharati Prakashan, Allahabad, second edition, 2011, Pad-56/6, p. 115

¹³ Ramnarayan Prasad Singh, *Kabir Ke Kavya Par Samakalin Paristhityon Ka Prabhav*, Patna, 1989, p. 95.

¹⁴ Ibid,

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 97

¹⁶ Ibid,

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 230

¹⁸ Shyamsundar Das (ed.), *Kabir Granthavali*, Lok Bharati Prakashan, Allahabad, second edition, 2011, Pad- 255, p. 178.

¹⁹ Ibid, Pad- 59, p. 131.

I have tried to employ a different prism to view Kabir and his teaching. He was undoubtedly multifaceted and encompassed the all religious discrepancies including those prevailing in Islam. His focus on both knowledge and action displace the integrated approach to religion in the Bhakti. He is pleading for humanism and ahimsa as key tenets to meaningful life.