

B.A. 5th Semester (Honours)

Paper: Indian Political Thought I

Paper Code: C-12

Unit V:

Q. Explain Kabir's political thought.

Answer:

Kabir lived during the reign of Sikandar Lodhi in 15th Century in Varanasi. He was a weaver (*Julaha*) by profession and caste. He was brought up by Muslim parents but his guru (teacher) was Ramananda, a Vaishnavite Hindu saint. He was not educated formally but seems to have studied Vedantic, Sufi, Nath Panthi and Sidhha traditions.

He did not write anything himself but all his 'sayings' or 'advises' were orally transmitted by his disciples/common people. Later on, perhaps during the 17th Century they were written and compiled in a different traditions, such as, Kavir's Sayings were written in the 'Adi Granth' by Sikhs, 'Panchvani' by Dau Dayal Panth in Rajasthan as well as 'Bijak' by Kabir Path in Eastern India.

His style of writings were poetic, usually known as '*doha*',- direct, critical of prevailing socio-political system and mystic. Some are like riddles (*Paheli*), some uses 'Ultabansi'-reverse meaning.

Crux of his Socio-Religious Philosophy:

Rejected and Opposed:

- Polytheism and Idol worship, ritualism, rigid practices and pretensions of institutionalized religion.
- Caste System, untouchability, ascriptive entitlements, social hierarchy.
- Socio inequality and injustice.
- Necessity of state and sovereignty of Monarchs/King.

Adopted and Supported:

- Monotheism-two is one-no duality-God is creator as well as creation.
- Syncretism, salvation through extreme love, devotion and knowing internal self.
- Transmigration, unification of self with supreme God.
- Detached Worldly life, virtuous life without ego, desire, greed, anger like Lotus Flower.
- Purity in speech, thought and action; blessing of worthy and true 'Guru', and company of virtuous people.

Kabir's Political Thought: Syncretism:

- The terminology 'Syncretism' means the combination of different religions, cultures of schools and thought.
- Assumed significance during Muslim and Christian rule in India; was considered must for social harmony and religious tolerance.
- Hindu Bhakti movement and Sufi movement within Islam played important roles in promoting syncretism in India.
- In contemporary India, syncretism has acquired even bigger meaning-unity in diversity, which is must to perpetuate the idea of India.
- Kabir has been the shining light, most potent force behind syncretism in medieval India. He continue to be the most famous icon of Syncretic culture of India.
- He rejected ritualism, pretensions, and hollowness of both Hinduism and Islam, yet his legacies are claimed by both Hindus and Muslims.
- He did not rejected Hinduism or Islam, rather rejected their formalization, external pomp and show, ritualism and insignificance of individuals in the formal institutionalized religion.
- His life and acts symbolized syncretism: Muslim Parents but Hindu Guru, called his Supreme God- Rama; considered as great Hindu Saint.
- He presented as well as strengthened the religious ferment and evolving syncretic culture of 15th Century India-Sufism, Bhakti Movement, Sikhism

Kabir's view on State and Kingship:

- He rejected sovereignty and divine origin of kingship.
- For him, both temporal and spiritual sovereignty is vested in the people.
- King and commoner-to him, were equal- both having same fate.
- His ideal society was stateless, casteless, class less, without private property, tax, sorrow, fear, hate, competition.

Premnagar or Begumpura: Kabir's Ideal State

- Kabir called stateless, casteless, property less, hierarchy less ideal society as Premnagar or Amarpura, sant raidas called it Begumpura.
- Begum-pura, the kingdom of god, was an ideal village society without any sorrow, private property, taxes, monarchy or social hierarchy.
- It was a land of virtuous people without any fear, greed, anger, competition, discrimination, crime and scarcity.
- Temporal and spiritual sovereignty is vested in people-individuals.
- Love, compassion, social harmony, and religious tolerance was essence of the social order.