

INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

The International Film Festival Mumbai (IFFM) stands as a premier cultural event in India's vibrant film landscape, drawing filmmakers, actors, and cinema enthusiasts from around the world. Held annually, this festival serves as a platform for showcasing diverse cinematic works, fostering cultural exchange, and celebrating the art of filmmaking.

IFFM features a rich lineup of films from various genres, countries, and cultural backgrounds. These screenings encompass feature films, documentaries, shorts, and experimental cinema, offering audiences a wide array of cinematic experiences. The festival hosts competitive sections where filmmakers vie for prestigious awards across categories such as Best Film, Best Director, Best Actor, and more. These awards not only recognize outstanding artistic achievement but also promote emerging talents on a global stage.

In addition to screenings, IFFM organizes masterclasses and workshops conducted by industry veterans. These sessions provide aspiring filmmakers and enthusiasts with insights into various aspects of filmmaking, including direction, cinematography, screenwriting, and film financing. The festival serves as a forum for intellectual discourse on cinema's social, cultural, and political impact. Panel discussions, seminars, and Q&A sessions with filmmakers offer audiences an opportunity to engage with critical issues shaping contemporary cinema.

EVM VS PAPER BALLOT DEBATE

■ K.V. SEETHARAMAIAH

Once again the losers in the election have started attacking the use of Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) despite the Election Commissioner of India consistently maintaining that EVM has been functioning properly. Leading the attack on EVM, Sanjay Raut says it is not the question of EVM, but it is about the entire system. Defeated Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Jagan Mohan Reddy has joined Raut to bat for paper ballot system for "True Democracy". Is it a tacit admission that his regime was also wedded to 'False Democracy' since his party was elected in 2019 with the use of EVM? Reddy found "EVM fine" when he won 151 seats in 2019 and lost trust in it when he won 11 seats in 2024. The statement of Jagan Mohan Reddy "Just as justice should not only be served, but should also appear to have been served" has come after his party suffered heinous defeat in Andhra Pradesh. The EVM system was first introduced in 1998 after reaching consensus in 16 Assembly seats in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi. It was expanded to 46 Parliamentary seats in 1999. In 2001, the state assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry and West Bengal were conducted with the help of EVMs. In 2004, EVMs were used in all the 543 Parliamentary Constituencies totally replacing the system of papers ballot. 2004 and 2009 saw the defeat of BJP. In fact it is BJP which ought to have grievance over the continued use of EVMs. After the advent of EVMs, almost all the parties have enjoyed success and suffered defeat. Therefore the suspicion on the functioning of EVMs is ill-founded. Section 61A was included in the Representation of People Act 1951. The Supreme Court upheld the validity of Section 61A. It is well known that when paper ballot was in force, cases of invalid votes were high and booth-capturing was at its peak. Proximity to free and fair elections was far away compared to voting with EVM system in place. Probably the advocates of EVMs want the 'lost opportunity' restored for booth-capturing. Sanjay Singh, AAP wants the Supreme Court and Election Commission to take a 'drastic decision' on the EVM issue. When the Supreme Court has upheld the newly added Article 61A of Representation of People Act, the issue is deemed to have been closed. Raising the same issue again and again amounts to lack of respect for the verdict of the top court. Returning officer of the Mumbai North West Lok Sabha constituency has reportedly dismissed the allegations of EVM tampering stating that the EVM is a self-contained device and does not require a mobile OTP for unlocking as it is non-programmable. This statement is in response to an allegation that a relative of Ravindra Waikar, the Shiv Sena candidate who won by a narrow margin of just 48 votes was seen using a mobile phone reportedly connected to an EVM during the vote counting on June 4. To buttress the allegation which the EC officials have strongly refuted, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other opposition leaders have made a reference to Mid Day newspaper report which alleged that Mangesh Pandlikar, brother-in-law of Ravindra Waikar used a mobile phone to "unlock" an EVM during the vote count. Rahul Gandhi has called the EVMs 'black boxes'. Returning officer for Mumbai North West Vandana Suryavanshi has reportedly labelled the Mid-Day newspaper report as false and accordingly a defamation notice is said to have been issued for publication of false news. Truth must come out. The opposition parties have found ground for return of paper ballot system because some other countries are using it. It is the prerogative of the respective countries to use any system of their choice. It cannot be valid ground for India to follow. Who knows if the opposition parties there are demanding EVM system citing India using it? India is also capable of showing path to others. There are 20 countries using the electronic machines. Opinion against EVMs is misleading going by the results seen in the last elections after EVM system was introduced. Had the EVMs been one-sided, only one particular party should have registered victory in all the elections. Opposition parties have registered victory both at centre and in a number of states. Malicious propaganda against EVMs does not work.

SANT KABIR-A COMPASSIONATE SOUL

■ I D SONI

India is considered to be the land of saints and sages. For centuries many saints have taken birth on the sacred soil of India and have influenced the lives of countless number of people. It can truly be said that no other country has been blessed with so many saints. One such saint, was Sant Kabir. Infact, he is regarded by many as a spiritual giant among saints. Some even regard him as a manifestation of God himself.

Sant Kabir, appeared in the year 1398. Around that time, India was through a difficult period of her history. His arrival heralded a new era.

There are different accounts describing his birth. According to some of them we are told that, one day, a small child was found lying under a tree, sucking his thumb. His eyes shone brightly, and a beatific smile was on his face. Others say that a small child was found atop of lotus leaf in a lake in Banaras. Nobody really knows where and how he was born. Some are even of the opinion that pillars of light descended from Heaven, touched the waters of the lake, and thus, the child was created.

There is only one common ground of agreement that, during his childhood he was brought up in a poor Muslim family. His father was a weaver Neru, and his mother was Lohi. Both father and mother were illiterate and poor and belonged to the underprivileged class. They were childless, and having discovered the abandoned baby, took him home and brought him up as their child.

A kazi-Muslim priest-was called for the naming ceremony. When the kazi opened the Holy Quran, the first word spotted by him was Kabir. The kazi closed his eyes, said his prayers and opened the Quran again. Again, his gaze fell on the Kabir word. Kabir is a name of God. How could a child coming from his lowly background, be named after God? The meaning of the word Kabir is the Almighty One, the highest One. The kazi thought that it was inappropriate for this child to be given this name. So he asked them to wait a while. Once again, he closed his eyes, offered a prayer and opened the Holy Quran Sharif. His eyes fell on the word Akbar. Now Akbar is also another name of God. Allah-O-Akar-Allah, the greatest of the Great. The kazi was bewildered. He felt that he could not, should not, give a child of a backward class, a name like Akbar.

In the meantime, the parents got impatient and did not want to wait anymore. They decided to name their child Kabir. Both of them loved Kabir dearly. Kabir's shining eyes and pleasant face attracted all. As he grew in age, he would often sit in a silent corner. His mother would call out to him," My child Kabir, lend me a helping hand with the household work." His father would call him

Guru Hargobind Singh Ji and his Prakash Parv

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

On 22 June 2023 Saturday ,the Sikhs in particular and other countrymen in general are celebrating the birth anniversary of Guru Hargobind singh ji with enthusiasm and great fervor. He was the sixth guru of the Sikhs community and he was born at Janam Badli in Amritsar . Guru Hargobind Singh ji was son of 5th Sikh guru Arjan Singh. His mother's name was Ganga. This year his prakesh Parv will be celebrated on 5th July Wednesday with traditional gaiety. On this auspicious occasion ,SabadKirtan, Akhand Path and langer is held in Gurudwars. This sixth Guru had spent major part of his time in war training and war art and skill .Later he became adept in sword using and he also became adept in horse riding and good wrestling .It was Guru Hargobind Singh who inspired Sikhs to learn the art and skill of arms training and bestowed Sikhism the character of war .Guru Hargobind Sing ji was revolutionary war hero and was also a man who helped others .His life philosophy and his life was associated with welfare of the common man and his wellbeing .It was this great Guru who had constructed and established the seat of AkalTakh. Again it was he who founded Mera Peraand Kartarpur Sahib. This Guru of Sikh Panth was educated under the guidance of big educationist Bhai Gurdas. Guru Hargobind Singh got the blessings of baba Budwaji .The sixth Guru had seen many changes in the Sikh religion ,culture and its code of conduct with his eyes and because of it the great son of Sikhism was strengthening the roots of his religion .Guru ji had with his God's vision secured the tree of inheritance and also gave it the opportunity to grow and flourish .The Guru has not only made the sacrifice of his father Guru Arjan Dev Singh as ideal of his life but the great works which had been started by him ,the Guru showed commitment to complete those works .Guru Hargobind Singh ji was born on July 19,1595.He was one with the almighty on February 28,1644.He is credited with laying the foundation of Akal Thakt and he is famous for accomplishing this great feat .He is the first Sikh Guru who had taken part in a war .It was he who had inspired the Sikhs to learn the skills of war and also to learn war trainings .He took active part in Rohila war ,Kartarpur war ,and Amritsar War of 1638,Hargobindpur war ,Gursar war ,Keeratpur war. He also founded Keeratpur Sahib,Guru ArjanDav was his predecessor and Guru Hari Roy was his successor: Mata Nanki, Mata Mahadavi and Mata Damodari were his life partners .He was blessed with four off springs .Due to changed circumstances ,Guru Hargobind Singh ji had taken education about religious

and say," My son Kabir; I have woven the cloth, come, help me carry it to the market place to sell it." Kabir was always lost in his own thoughts.

As a little child his heart was full of mercy and compassion. On the occasion of Bakri Id, as per custom, an animal is bought and sacrificed ritually. The meat is cooked and distributed as holy prasad. Id was nearing, and Kabir's father said to him, "My child we shall purchase a lamb and sacrifice it on the day of Id." Kabir exclaimed, "sacrifice it! What does that mean?"

The father explained, "According to our custom, we buy an animal. Itis slaughtered and cut into pieces and cooked for the feast." Hearing this, Kabir was horrified. He exclaimed, "Get it home! Feed it well and then slaughter and cut it into pieces? What kind of festivity is this?" It was beyond the child's understanding.

However, Neru brought the lamb and tied it up in the house. From that day, child Kabir was unable to eat a morsel. When food was brought tohim he refused to eat, for he had lost his appetite.

His parent asked him what was his problem. What had happened to him? Without answering, Kabir would go and sit near the lamb and shed tears. He would pat the lamb lovingly and would say, "Now you shall be with us for a fewdays. After that, my father, with his own hands will slaughter you."

The parents found it unbearable to see him crying. They said to him, "Son, you are the light of our eyes, the soul of our being. Why are you crying?"

Kabir said, "I am unable to bear it. There is a storm of agony in my heart. This lamb which we have kept with us and whom we have been feeding, we are going to slaughter it with our own hands! How can we do such a thing?" Kabir was heartbroken. He could not partake of any food or drink. He spent sleepless nights.

At last the father understood the great depth of sorrow and agony of his son. He promised that he would neither slaughter the lamb and nor he would sell it anyone else. The lamb would stay with them as a member of their family. Hearing those words from the lips of his father, Kabir danced with joy. Was he not an angel of compassion?

Thus, Kabir's journey of compassionate life started and he, without any exaggeration became a great saint. Kabir Sahib travelled through out India. He became the disciple of a great saint Swami Ramananda. In kashi, one of the main centres of Hindu orthodoxy, he eked out a meagre living by weaving cloth and faced unrelenting opposition from the priestly class for teaching people of all caste how to worship God. He attracted a large following of disciples including Hindus and Muslim's people from all shades of the society. He was outspoken in condemning the abominable rituals

and religious observances. His versatility and power and depth pf his poetry is widely acknowledged and his 'Bani' forms an integral part of Guru Granth Sahib and is enchanted with all reverence.

Kabir ji, as an angel compassion, tried his best to invoke the name of God, and asked everyone through his very enriched 'Duhais' that everyone must give of his compassion to the sadand weary. We must carry the message of hope and cheer to the suffering and sorrowing ones, the poor and broken ones in this world which,by some reason we may not understand, is a world of suffering and pain.

The essential quality of Kabir ji's life was compassion and tenderness for all those whom the cruel world trampled upon, day after day. He judged no one- not even the thief and the criminal, nor those whom society regarded as sinners and "fallen ones". For him, it was one object to behold suffering and to poor out compassion.

How lonely is the world! And how sad! Why is it so? Who knows? Kabir ji used to say, we may not understand the why of it! But this we all must do: we invoke the Name of God and we must give of our compassion to the sad, and the weary: We must carry the message of hope and cheer to the suffering and sorrowing ones, the poor and the broken one. In this world which, for some reason we may not understand, is a world of suffering and pain. Most moving are the words which Kabir ji spoke to the people, "I am a hermit. And I live in a house by the side of a Bazar: And I see men move on, some good, some bad. But here, in the Bazar; I stay with longing in my heart for the well-being of all with an urge to become a servant of all, a helper of men."

His compassion was not restricted to human beings; it extended to all creatures- even to trees and flowers. He did not pluck flowers. Flowers, he said, had their families, and they must not be separated from one and other:

Some of the Kabir's Duhasare:-

► Kabir, I am the worst of men, except myself everybody is good. He who holds the same opinion is my friend.

► Kabir; man hath lost his faith through mamoon, but mamoon will not company him; he hath carelessly struck his feet with an axe by his own hand.

► Kabir, Maya is a thief who breaketh into and robbeth the shop; one man, Kabir who hath chased her in every direction, she shall not rob.

► Kabir, the body is like an earthen pot filled with water; it will burst today or tomorrow; if thou remember not they great God, thou shall be plundered half way.

Sadhguru Kabir-Weaver of Naam Shabad and great mystic poet

■ TARA CHAND BHAGAT

Many saints born during the period of 'Bhakti Movement' which started from 14th to 17th century. The names of the prominent saints of this movement were Ramamand, Namdev, Sur Dass, Meera Bai, Guru Ravi Dass, Guru Nanak Dev, Among all these great saints, the appearance and disappearance of Kabir ji was a great mystery: It is said that he appeared on a lotus flower in a pond called Lehar 'Tara Talab' in 1398,Varanasi and left this world in Maghar now in Gorakhpur without leaving his body. He was brought up by Neeru and Neema, the Muslim weaver of Varanasi. Among all saints Kabir ji is regarded as the most revolutionary saint of the Bhakti movement. Kabirji was also a great mystic poet and he preached his philosophy and ideology through his poetry. The language used or spoken by him in his poetry was straightforward and understandable by the common people. His verses or dohas were direct revelation of truth and full of spiritual landscape. He always believed in simple life full of purity. He was totally against false rituals and superstitions beliefs. He satirically denounced Brahmin pandits and Mullahs and thus won the hearts of the poor who had fallen prey to exploitation. He preached that the Salvation cannot be attained by mere performing of the rituals. And it is possible by following the path of truth and spirituality. He had condemned and criticized the idol worship. He had beautifully said in his couplet, Thana Baana Tajeo Kabir Raam Naam Likh Liyo Shareer: Neend Nishani Mout Ki Uth Kabira Jaag Aur Rasagyan Shandi Ki 'Naam' Rasgyan Laag.

Being a julaha, he shuttled the thread of cloth by his big hands and every time he worshipped shabad(Naam) barambaar: He also raised his bold voice against inequality, injustice and low and high. He advocated for equality, justice, humanity, truth, peace and love.

Those who dared to walk the spiritual path fearlessly have always been intrigued by the maverick mystic Kabir's life as well as his revolutionary and succinct expression of truth. Simple,yet mysteriously profound, soft, yet hard hitting, Kabir's teachings are in common dialect but their esoteric meanings are way beyond common pereption. It was Kabir ji who chanted Naam Shabad with his mind and soon attained spiritualty during his whole life. He considered the guru to be higher than the status of God. About the status of guru, he has said nicely , ' Sab Dharti Kagad Karon Lekhani Karon Sab Vamrai, Saat Sumandar Massi Karon Guru Gun Likha Na Jaaye.

The English version follows:

"of whom to pay his solutions God or Guru,preferred Guru because Guru is the refuge,if God is unhappy.But if Guru is annoyed,there is no place left for him,"said Kabir ji.

Guru Gobind Dou Khare Kake Lagon Paamb Balihari Guru Apne Gobind Diyo Batlaab.

Kabirji coined an exquisite(extreme beautiful) term Avadhoo that call upon the Guru. There was a time when the word 'Guru' used to be spoken with immense reverence and honour but slowly and gradually the beauty and depth of this pristine word Guru got eroded and guru began to be called pseudo Gurus. Kabir ji calls Guru as Avadhoo which means infinite, vast, expansive, unfathomable and boundary less. Kabir ji boldly proclaimed that what we ignorantly believe to be our real home-'this body' is not our true abode. (The body is ephemeral(short-lived) and so are its relationships, which we mistakenly consider to be real. Only the 'Self' is real truth consciousness ,bliss and all pervasive. Those who have forgotten this true identity are guided back by Avadhoo, and such a one is most dear to me, for it is he who brings the wandering ones home, says Kabir: It is a fallacy(deception) to assume that external pleasures

can ever truly satisfy, but that is exactly what everyone is doing-running after seraps of sensory gratification, be it via husband or wife, job bank account, food, wealth and the like. One even travels far and wide to exotic locations seeking this very pleasure, which is like the eternal mirage in the desert that can never quench one's spiritual thirst of a traveller. Whereas the irony is that the 'Ocean of bliss' is ever present within. It is the only the Avadhoo, the true master-who can inspire the turning within and initiate the 'inward journey'. It is then we realize that this 'bliss' is our own 'Swarupa'. Now I would like to describe some important differences between the three-Teacher, Guru and Sadhguru. A teacher is one who helps his students to acquire knowledge and skills that helps him live well in the "Physical World". So, a teacher may be someone who teaches you a language, Mathematics, Science or a vocational skill like lathe operation, carpentry or perhaps the use kinds of machine used in turnery and pottery. A teacher's role has no spiritual angle at all. A guru is one who has attained a spiritual goal and has realized his true self. He can share his experiences and the path he believes that can lead disciples to the same spiritual goal that he has attained. However, he cannot ensure that his disciples will attain the spiritual goal of self-realisation. In that sense, he is like an electric bulb that can give out light but cannot light up 'another bulb.' A Sadhguru, however, is one who, in addition to being a Self-realized person, has ability to lead disciples to "Self-realisation". In fact, a Sadhguru once he accepts someone as his disciple, makes sure that the disciple will attain self-realization, even if it takes him more than one life to help him do so. A Sadhguru is like an already "burning Wick lamp (a strip or thread feeding the flame of lamp or candle)" that can light up another one. Kabir ji had got suchlike power of spirituality about self-realisation that being a burning wick lamp he lighted up another lamp to the

name of Dharam Dass who was Kabir's dear disciple attained that throne(gaddi) held by Kabir ji who left for heaven with his corporeal body leaving behind a basket of flowers there to which his followers both Hindus and Muslims distributed amongst them. Who was Dharam Dass? Dharam Dass was a very rich person of that time who had surrendered to Kabir Dass as a disciple. So Teacher or Guru has been given paramount respect and been compared to God.

Guru Paaras Baro Antro Aisa Hi Jaan Paras Loha Kanchan Kare,Guru Kare Aap Snaan.

Kabir Dass was a true Saint of his times. He also disapproved the belief that if a person dies at Kashi he will get a seat in paradise and if one dies in Maghar now Gorakhpur he will go to hell after death. He himself moved to Maghar during his last days of life to prove the futility of this belief.

Though Kabir was an unlettered personality, yet his Literary work and his life is a subject matter of research of several scholars. His compositions figure in the most Holy book of Sikhism "Guru Granth Sahib.". This scripture contains the hymns of many saints of Bhakti and sufi movement but Kabir's contribution is the largest one.Kabir ji was such and spiritual saint who had the spiritual power to sift through the past, present and future! Kabir Bijak,Kabir Granthawali and Anurag Sagar are some of his most revered work. In his writings the illustrations of moral and spiritual truth are found in incidents of everyday life. Sant Kabir ji played a pivotal role in awakening the people of all walks of life from the shackles of ignorance and superstitions prevailed upon the society.

Once Guru Gauraknath asked Kabir, "When did you become ascetic?" Kabir ji replied, "When He who has many forms had not yet begun his play and the world was not spread out, when there

was no guru and no disciple and the Supreme one was alone.

The legacy of Kabir is being forwarded by Kabir panthies whose Spiritual seat is at Varanasi and whose number is estimated at over one crore. His teachings are also being preached by spiritual sects like Sant Mat, Radha Soami and Sahib Bandagi and many others as his teachings are much more relevant today when the common man is generally into trouble due to his materialistic approach.

In the concluding lines I would like to sum up my article with a couplet wherein SadhGuru Kabir ji had said beautifully,

"Sura Tahi Sarahye Laddi Dhani ke Het Purja Purjai Ho Rahe Tau Na Shaande Khet."

Despite numberless challenges of difficulties during His remembrance ,one should never refrain from chanting His name even if one's body may get cut into pieces, even then one may not get deviated from one's field of Bhakti. Sadhguru Kabir's teachings and ideals of his scholarly nature of philosophy about spirituality not only influenced the people of all walks of life centuries ago in the past but also continue to impact all religious sects such as Radha Swami, Nirankari, Sahib Bandgi and their satsang remains get incomplete unless and until his sweet, attractive language of dohaas are included to be recited. His thoughts' expression is as high as vast his evergreen baani even to this present time. Thus Kabir ji has put the whole water of seven oceans into a one ghaghar(pitcher). This was the height of his spirituality. In the Concluding lines I would like to appeal all the various so-called Sabhas such as Bhagat Maha Sabha, Megh Sabha, Sadhguru Kabir Sabha and all other their Sub-Sabhas to be united at one platform for the well-being of our biradari to be acted upon the philosophy preached by the Samrat Saint Sadhguru Kabir Dass ji.

