



History of the Kabir Panth

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
HISTORY

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PREFACE

Both Kabir and the Kabir Panth occupy a very prominent place in the social and religious history of India. But the scarcity of authentic and reliable original material about Kabir's life and thought and the emergence and development of the Panth is a great difficulty in the historical assessment of the religious and cultural role of the Panth. Unfortunately the controversies about them are many and the data to settle them is tantalizing in its meagreness. Under such circumstances, one has to proceed with great caution in reconstructing the details of this movement. In the present thesis, however, an attempt has been made to separate the grain from the chaff and rely on the material which can stand the test of historical scrutiny. The information about the present condition of the various centres of the Panth has been gathered by my personal efforts and I have utilized it with much care and caution. Besides, an extensive use of the contemporary literature on the subject has been made. Later and even modern sources have been critically examined before using them in reconstructing a picture of the Panth. I have tried to draw my own conclusions in dealing with almost all the problems connected with Kabir and his Panth.

It would be ungrateful if I do not pay my heartiest reverence to all those Kabirpanthi Mahants and Sadhus especially Guru Amritdas (of the Kabir Chaura) and Mansoorul Haq (the present Gaddi Nashin of the Muhammadan shrine at Maghar) who have greatly helped me in obtaining informations about various matters of the Panth. Similarly, I should be highly grateful to Professor Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, my teacher, for the inspiration and guidance I received from him. I am also thankful to Professor Irfan Habbab under whose supervision I was firstly given and who helped me much in the initial stages. Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to all the members of our department who always proved to be helpful to me.



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ABSTRACT



Both Kabir and the Kabir Panth occupy a very prominent place in the social and religious history of India. But as in the case of many other religious systems there seems to be much less clarity with regard to either Kabir's life and thought or to the emergence and development of the Panth. As a large part of it is clouded with controversies and fanciful stories, no historical assessment and evaluation can be made unless fact is separated from fiction. It is interesting that in spite of so much uncertainty with regard to the earlier development of the Panth almost all of its branches relate themselves for their origin to any of the disciples of Kabir, who, according to their traditional accounts, had established their branches most often under direct instruction from Kabir himself.

In the present thesis, however, an attempt has been made to clarify most of the problems by setting aside carefully the traditions put by later fabrications. The information about the present condition of the various centres of the Panth have been gathered by my personal efforts and I have utilized it with much care and caution. Besides, an extensive use of the contemporary literature on the subject has been made. Later and even modern sources have also been utilized. But I have tried to draw my own conclusions in dealing with almost all the problems concerned.

In the first chapter I have tried to present a clear and complete picture of the life and teachings of Kabir. His ideas have been worked out in detail so that they may be later compared with those of his followers. A similar attempt has been made

in the second chapter to clarify as to what would have been the lump sum time of the emergence of the Panth. The conclusion of the whole discussion is that Kabir was personally not responsible for its origin but it was any one of his disciples (perhaps either Dharamdas or Surat Gopal) who would have at first founded it sometimes in the seventeenth century A.D., which developed in the eighteenth century onwards having been divided into various branches. The Third Chapter deals with the origin and development of the two main divisions of the Panth, i.e., the Kabir Chaura (Benaras) and the Chattisgarh (in the Central Provinces), which seem to have been the earliest branches of it. In this chapter I have tried to present a detailed history of both the sections along with their present condition. Similarly, the fourth chapter is devoted to the origin and development of many other dependent and independent centres of the Panth. Most of them seem to be simply the branches of either of two aforesaid sections but still there are some which are alleged to have established independently. The well known branches attached to the Kabir Chaura section are the Jahar Tara (Shivpur), Maghar (Gorakhpur), Kabir Pagh (Prayag, Allahabad) etc. Similarly, the branches which are said to be related to the Chattisgarh section are the Damakhara, Mandala, Kawardha, Kudarmal, Bamini, etc. The branches which have now detached their relations from the aforesaid section are said to be the Batkesar, Kabir Nirnaya Mandir (Burhanpur), Kabir Chaura (Jagdishpuri), Kabir Math (Jukshimpur Baghicha, Rusra, Distt. Darbhanga) etc. Branches which are said to have originally established as independent ones are the Bhaktahi at Dhananti (Distt. Saran), Fatuha (Distt. Patna), Bidupur (Distt. Muzaffarpur), Vachan Vansh (Rusra), Acharya

Gaddhi (Barayya, Jaunpur) etc. I have already described their full history along with their present condition.

Besides, the fifth chapter deals with the institutional structure and practices of the various centers of the Panth. In this chapter I have described in detail the systems of their management, economic resources and investment along with their customs and ceremonies, mode of living, dress and distinctive marks, etc. But the sixth chapter is slightly more elaborated than others, which is devoted to a comparative study of the teachings and ideas of the various centres of the Panth. In this context it may be borne in mind that in view of their ideology and devotional method, all of them may be broadly divided into two sections - One, represented by the branches related to the Chattisgarh section along with the Barsayya Acharya Gaddi of Jaunpur and Vachan Vansh of Ruzra; and the other, represented by the Kabir Chaura its affiliated branches along with the Fatuha and Burhanpur. It may also be borne in mind that the former is more ritualistic and conservative than the latter in the spiritual views down to secular life. I have, therefore, tried to assess and evaluate their ideas in the light of those of Kabir. Seventh chapter is that of Resume and conclusions in which I have tried to judge and evaluate all the systems of the various sections of the Panth in the light of Kabir's life and teachings. Meanwhile I have tried to explain why the Kabir Panth, like many other religious systems, began with liberalism and was subsequently absorbed in ritualism. The most important reason, which seems to me, is that they tried to form a group of their own distinct from others, which naturally would have led them to make a separate framework of their own.

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INTRODUCTION

Kabir was a great champion of the Bhakti movement, and therefore he occupies an important place in the social and religious history of the period. Indeed, he was the only saint of the 'Bhakti Marga' who not only gave a new impetus and orientation to the Bhakti thought itself but also influenced even the entire gamut of the religious thought and behaviour of the contemporary Indian Society. His greatest contribution was that he tried to capture the spirit of all religions. The motivation of all of his spiritual as well as secular views was conditioned by two fundamental defects of the contemporary society: formalism of religion and rigid classification of society. Kabir tried, on the one hand, to form a classless society and, on the other, to popularize a simple religion based on personal experience.

It is significant that almost all the ideas enunciated by Kabir had already been represented, and were also being represented during his life time, by a number of religious teachers and reformers. We know that the mystics of the Wujudi thought were also trying

to popularize the idea of Hindu Muslim unity.¹ Besides, the saints of the Shattari Silsilah seem to have helped thoroughly the growth of liberal ideas among the masses. It is said that they not only maintained friendly relations with the Hindus but also tried to be familiar with their religious thought and practices.² Moreover, the Mahadevis are also said to have been working on the same lines. But even greater contribution was made by the Muslim mystics in the growth of the cultural synthesis in India. It has rightly been observed by Prof. Habib that the wounds made by the Muslim warriors in the body of Indian Society was healed up by the Muslim mystics.³

1 Abdul Qudus Gangohi (in his Makhtubat, p. 205)

Speaks thus:

ابن ابی شیبہ نے فرمایا ہے کہ جو مسلمانوں کو مل جل کر رہنا سکھاتا ہے وہ اللہ کے فضل سے ہے اور جو انہیں علیحدہ علیحدہ رکھتا ہے وہ اللہ کی لعنت ہے۔
 کہ جو مسلمانوں کو مل جل کر رہنا سکھاتا ہے وہ اللہ کے فضل سے ہے اور جو انہیں علیحدہ علیحدہ رکھتا ہے وہ اللہ کی لعنت ہے۔

2 For details of it, see the article of Prof. K.A. Nizami, The Shattari Saints and their attitude towards the State (M.I.S., Oct., 1950).

3 See, Prof. Habib's article pub. in The Muslim University Journal, 1931. It is well known that Sheikh Farid was maintaining the political organization on the basis of Iranian concept by embracing the idea of the difference between the Turks and the non-Turks. Sheikh Farid had left the door of his Jama'at Khana opened for all without any consideration for caste and creed.

The religious and cultural gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims was, in fact, bridged by the efforts of the Sufis who tried to win over the heart of the people by awakening the feeling of harmony and good will between them.¹

On the other hand, however, on the basis of certain evidences provided by P.R. Chaturvedi it may be assumed that a doctrine similar to that of ^{Kabir} round about the ^{same period} ~~Kabir~~ was simultaneously being propagated in many parts of the country.² He declares that in the extreme East of Bengal, there were many such 'Premomadi Sadhus' at that time who, because of their having a curious compound of the ideas from Muslim mysticism and vaishnavism, were known as extra-ordinary personalities and were termed as 'Haul'. Also, there was another group of Vaishnava Sahajyas who, by explaining and

1 Ameer Hasan in his Fuwaid-ul-Fuwad (f. 94 b.) narrates a very interesting event: A Musalman one-day brought a certain Hindu to Shaikh Nizamuddin and introduced him as his brother. On being asked whether the Hindu was inclined towards Islam, the Muslim replied that he hoped that the August look of the Shaikh might have desired effect on him. Now the Shaikh's remark was that "these people will hardly yield to force or persuasion, only a sympathetic intercourse might incline them to Islam."

2 Prashu Ram Chaturvedi, Uttari Bharat Ki Sant Prampara, pp. 220-221.

elaborating the term of 'Sahaj', were trying to popularize it on a large scale. Later on in the north also a group of the 'Vaishnava bakts' (devotees) known as 'Punch Sakha' had appeared who, inspite of having been under the impact of Buddhism, were trying to popularize ideas against all sorts of ritualism and caste-systems as well. Similar tendencies could be noticed ~~during~~ in Jainism also during the same time. There were two religious reformers named Lunka Shah (b. 1415 A.D.) and Taran Swami (b. 1448, 1415 A.D.) who, although originally attached with 'Shwaitambar Sampradaya' and 'Digambar Sampradaya' of Jainism respectively, tried to popularize ideas against the conservative thinking and ritualistic observances not only of Jainism but also of Hinduism and Islam, putting both of them in a single category.¹ Kashmir too experienced the same tendency, where Shaikh Nuruddin, a contemporary of Kabir, is said to have been preaching during those days a religion based on sincerity

1 For details of their lives and teachings: See the account provided by Prashu Ram, op. cit., pp. 222-223 and 223-224. It is related by him that the radical views enunciated by Lunkashah got soon a definite shape and his followers divided within a century into thirteen branches out of which at least four are still alive in some way or the other. Besides, Taran Swami is said to have been the author of fourteen books which have now been published by the title of 'Adhyatvani' (i.e., spiritual voice). They are mostly related to matters of Jainism, but the central idea of them all is the propagation of kindness and humanity which are taken into account as the light of knowledge and as the real means of salvation. His followers are said to be still found in the Central Provinces, U.P. and Rajasthan.

and purity of heart by rejecting ritualism and caste - distinctions. He was very popular there and was generally known as Nand Rishi.¹

Besides, even in Kabir's own circle his fellow-travellers (like Sain, Pipa, Raidas and Dhanna) under Ramananda (who himself is said to have left the traditional Vaishnava School of Ramanuja simply because of some rigid practices performed in it) raised their voice for breaking down the barriers of sectarian differences and racial distinctions and denounced the forces of ritualism.² Since they were not systematically educated and also did not favour the traditional educational system, it is quite natural that their ideas took an identical course. It is interesting to note that although all of them disapproved group-formation, separate groups or sects were formed after each of them in future like Sain Panth, Pipa Panth, Raidas Sampradaya etc.

1 For details of his life and teachings, see Ibid., pp. 255-57.

2 See their verses contained in the Adi Granth Macauliffe has collectively reproduced them all beside dealing with the lives and thought of these saints. See, The Sikh Religion, Vol. VI, pp. 106 - 125.

CHAPTER - IKABIR AND HIS TEACHINGS

As in the case of many other religious teachers and reformers, the life and teachings of Kabir cannot be historically assessed and evaluated unless fact is separated from fiction and the traffings put by later fabrications are carefully set aside. Unfortunately the controversies about his life are many and the data to settle them is tantalizing in its meagreness. Under such circumstances one has to proceed with great caution in reconstructing the details of his life and teachings.

It has been generally accepted, on the basis of the account produced by the Kabirpanthis, that Kabir was born in 1398 A.D. and died in 1518 A.D. having approximately attained an age of 120 years.¹ But some of the

1 According to a couplet attributed to Dharamdas, Kabir has born on Monday, the day of the full moon, in the month of Jeth, 1455 of the Vikramaditya era, which corresponds to 1398 A.D. This is accepted by Macauliffe, The Sikh Religion, Vol. VI, p. 122. With regard to the date of his death, the Kabirpanthi account places it in 1518 A.D., as is narrated by Tara Chand, Influence of Islam on Indian Culture, p. 146.

Macauliffe speaks of his age as 119 years, 5 months and 27 days. See, op. cit., p. 139.

modern scholars do not accept this.¹ The only fact which is accepted by all is that Kabir flourished during the fifteenth century. The rest is all controversial and speculative in the absence of solid historical facts.

Many historians hold that Kabir was born in a Muslim family, while others make a more cautious statement and say that he was brought up in a Muslim family. In the fabricated accounts of the Kabirpanth he is originally related to a widow Brahmini.² It is interesting that even if we accept the suggestion found in the

1 For details of it, see, Westcott, Kabir and the Kabirpanth, p. 2; Keay, Kabir and his followers, pp. 27-28.

2 Leaving aside the long legendary story as to why Ramananda gave the blessings to the widow and how Kabir was born, thrown away and adopted by Neeru Julaha (as it is described by many historians), attention may be drawn to certain interesting points regarding the unsuccessful attempt of proving him a Brahman: Considering it improper that the child in the presence of both husband and wife was thrown away, he is said to have been the issue of a widow Brahmini. But still there was the problem of the prestige of the widow Brahmini and of their spiritual leader Kabir himself, which was removed by another tradition of Ramanandas' blessing. The other hypothesis that the child sprang up from the palm of his mother was the next step to maintain their chastity. What is more interesting is that even this hypothetical event is sought to be conceived of another hypothesis, and that is the explanation of the word 'Kabir' by which it lies as Kar + bir or 'hero' (bir) of the hand (kar), and the fact is left aside altogether that the name Kabir was not so much unusual during those days as the legends seem to indicate. We shall subsequently see the references to several persons named by Kabir even about the same period, which have rather created

legends that Kabir in his childhood was found and adopted by Neeru Julaha and his wife Neema,¹ how does it prove that he was a Brahman or even a Hindu by birth? The legends are, however, not silent even in this context and they account that Gossain Ashthananda (a Hindu Saint, disciple of Ramananda), knowing the boy's real Hindu origin, taught him secretly the Hindu ideas.² But the question arises as to how did the saint come to know about it, while it has already been referred in the legends themselves that the child was alone when he was found by the weaver. If it is believed that he might have been informed afterwards, it may be said that there is no positive evidence even about his being an orphan, what to speak about his being an illegitimate child of a widow Brahmani. In fact, neither Kabir nor his parents ever referred to this. The resentment of his mother for his indifference to family responsibilities seems to be rather an out come of the parental affection. Similarly,

certain problems in even identifying the Bhakat Kabir.

- 1 The original names of Kabir's parents were 'Noor Ali and Neema, as is evident from the description provided by Ali Sardar Jafari, Kabir Bani (Preface). Macauliffe is of the opinion that the weaver's original name was Ali but because of his residing beside the water (nir) he was popularly known as Niru. See, op. cit., p. 123.
- 2 Keay, op. cit., p. 29, also Macauliffe, op. cit., p. 124.

Kabir was himself aware of his family responsibilities and therefore expressed them on many places just in a way which is the part of an elder or succeeding son of a family, though practically he was not very sincere to them because of his religious preoccupations. Besides, there is a verse attributed to him in which he speaks clearly that "he was a Brahman in his previous birth, but now is reincarnated as a Julaha (i.e., a Muhammedan weaver), because he had neglected the worship of Rama (Ram Bhajan) in that life."¹

Besides, there are some other contemporary evidences which bring about the same conclusion. Both the authors of Ain-i-Akbari and Dabistan-i-Mazahib have referred him as a 'Muwahid' (i.e., monotheist)². It is to be borne in mind that the term 'Muwahid' could never be applied in a Persian Chronicle if he was not originally a Muhammedan.

1 Quoted by Westcott, op. cit., p. 3

Another reference of the same nature is contained in the Adi Granth, Gujari - 2, where he speaks thus: "..... My understanding is mean; my caste is that of a weaver."

2 Ain-i-Akbari, ed. Bloock, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, Vol. I, p. 433; Dabistan-i-Mazahib (Persian text, ed. by Nazir Aahraf, Calcutta), p. 200. For instance the author of Dabistan accounts thus:

"دیکھو جو کہ وہ ایک آدمی ہے جو کہ اپنے آپ کو کہتا ہے کہ میں ایک جولاہا ہوں۔"

That Kabir was a Muhammedan by birth is also evident from the following statements made by some of the contemporary saints:¹

1. It appears from the Janam Sakhi that Nanak once told Babur that Kabir was a Muhammedan weaver.
2. Raidas (in Raidas Ki Bani) clearly speaks of him a Muslim.
3. Garibdas (in Garibdas Ki Bani, Parakh Ko Ang) states that Kabir was a saint and Muhammedan by birth.
4. Sant Tuka Ram also refers him as a Muslim.

In the light of these evidences it seems unhistorical to presume either that Kabir was an orphan or that he was by origin a Brahman.

Now the question arises as to how a boy of Muslim family could have adopted the Bhakti thought. We know

1 These statements which are contained in the Adi Granth have already been referred by Govind Trigunayat in his Kabir Ki Vichardhara, pp. 6 - 7 and p. 10. For instance the statement of Sant Tuka Ram is as follows: "गौरा कुम्हार, रविदास चमार, कबीर मुसलमान, सैन नाई, जना बाई कुमारी जसी मरिक् के कारण ईश्वर में लीन हो गये।"

that the Bhakti movement (at least the phase of it which emerged under Ramananda) was itself independent free from as such any religious grip.¹ Since the basic concept of it was of having no consideration for caste or community, there would have been no practical difficulty in admitting Kabir in its circle, whether he was a Muslim or Hindu, whether of high caste or of low. It is to be borne in mind that this was not the case of Kabir alone but most of his fellow - travellers under Ramananda were of low castes. For instance Raidas was a chamar or leather worker; Sain, a barber; Dhanna, a Jat peasant.² Hence, there seems to be no historical value of the peculiar story generally related to Kabir's initiation as a disciple of Ramananda.³

1 It is stated by Cunningham that "the cultural conflict between Hinduism and Islam led to the establishment of an independent and comprehensive sect by Ramananda of Banaras." History of the Sikh, 2nd ed., p. 30.

2 For further details of these and other disciples of Ramananda, see, Wescott, op. cit., p. 11; Kay, op. cit., p. 4; Tara Chand, op. cit., pp. 144-45; Saints of Northern India, pp. 3-5.

3 It is ^{is} strange that the traditional story as to how Kabir became the disciple of Ramananda is contained in even the contemporary or semi-contemporary sources like Nabhaji's Bhaktmala and Dabistan-i-Mazahib (Persian Text, pp. 200-201), which shows how soon traditions developed during those days.

On the other hand, however, it is generally believed that Kabir was attached to the Bhakti movement simply because he had grown up "with a back ground of Hindu ideas in his mind."¹ But, had he been affected by the Hindu ideas there would have been no clash between him and his fellow boys and later between him and the religious authorities of both the major communities. It is interesting to note that the plea which the people took, while complaining against Kabir to Sikandar Lodi, was that he had so led people astray all over the city that those who paid heed to what he said remained neither Hindus nor Muslims."² Of course, there might have been the impact of the situation and the circumstances prevailing during those days in Benaras on the development of Kabir's thought, but our submission is that this was not the whole of it. Kabir was the person who was witnessing the extreme degeneration of the society around him. We know that inspite of the best efforts made by both the major communities, the religious friction remained alive. Besides, the communal feelings, racial

1 Macauliffe, op. cit., p. 124; also Keny, op. cit., pp. 28 - 29.

2 Macauliffe, op. cit., p. 132.

distinctions and class superiority could never be washed out from the society, and therefore the different classes of people of even a single community could, in actual fact, never be united, what to say the Hindu Muslim unity. The people of the lower classes of either of the two major communities were, in practice, the target of all sorts of inequalities. These along with other such defects of the Society awakened Kabir who henceforth decided to break all the barriers traditionally setup by the higher authorities of the Society. Similarly, when he realized that simply the rituals and dogmatic practices had become the essentials of all the religions, he felt it better not to be associated as such with any religion but rather tried to find his way some where else. In fact, his sense of moral and human concept was so mature and he was so much sincere with his basic aim that he was not ready to compromise with any religion. He considered his mission or aim as his religion, and therefore it would not be unjust to call him more a reformer than merely a religious man.

Now, Kabir's adopting the Bhakti marga (which was free from all the formal obligations of any of the prevalent religions, and where there was no consideration for any thing else than the purity of heart) and his

coming in contact with Ramananda (who was teaching a way contrary to the dogmatic practices of Brahman and Mulla alike) should be judged in this light. We have already mentioned that this was not the case with Kabir alone, but most of the disciples of Ramananda were of lower or depressed classes, which clearly indicates that like Kabir they also, having been suppressed by the traditional set up of the society, would have turned to the liberal faith (i.e., Bhakti) as a reaction of the same. Besides, it is noticeable that had Kabir not associated himself with this movement, he could never have been able to popularize his own teachings on such a wide scale and neither, perhaps, would he have acquired so much popularity and respect as he appears to have gained.

Besides, it is generally believed that Kabir's migration from Banaras to Maghar was one of the most important steps of his life taken against the prevalent

superstitious.¹ If this was the reason, he was really a great revolutionary man since he maintained his revolutionary nature even at the time of his death by showing that there is equal importance of all the places just like the equality of human race. But at the same time, it is quite possible, as is suggested by Keay, that Kabir's migration to Magahar would have been because of a decree issued by Sikandar Lodi.² There is no clear indication in Kabir's poetic account for the subject concerned, but if we go deep into his verses it may be easily discovered as to how much frustration he was feeling on this inconvenience of his life. The following verse attributed to him

1 Kabir has himself described this fact. See, his verses contained in Adi Granth, Gauri 15, Dhanasari 3, Asa 32; also the verse quoted by Macauliffe, op. cit., p. 138. For further details of it, see Macauliffe, op. cit., pp. 137 - 38; Westcott, op. cit., p. 13; Keay, op. cit., pp. 23 - 24; and Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 149.

It is said that when Kabir heard that Banaras was so holy a city as to confer paradise on those who died there and that the death at Magahar entailed rebirth as an ass, he left Banaras for Magahar at the time of his death in Samwat 1575 (i.e., 1518 A.D.) by saying that "what (difference is there between) Banaras and the barren Magahar, if God be in the heart?" (Adi Granth, Dhanasari, 3)

2 Keay, op. cit., p. 44.

clearly indicates that his migration to Maghar was not willingly but in forcible condition:

"..... People tell me I had little sense to leave Banaras. (My) whole life is lost in Shivpuri (Banaras). At the time of death I have risen and came to Maghar. Many years I have practiced austerities at Kasi (Banaras), Death has come on in the dwelling of Maghar. Kasi and Maghar I consider as the same"¹

Anyhow, it is also generally believed that on Kabir's death there was a great conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims with regard to the disposal of the dead body - one desiring to cremate it, while the other to bury it.² As both the rival parties appeared with dagger drawn, it is said that Kabir himself appeared and commanded the people to raise the Coffin under which

1 See, Adi Granth, Gauri, 15.

2 For details of it, see Macauliffe, op. cit., p.139; Westcott, op. cit., pp. 14 - 15; Keay, op. cit., pp. 23-25; and Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 149.

the body lay. When they did so, they found nothing but a heap of flowers, half of which were taken by the Hindus who cremated them at Banaras, and the remaining half were buried by the Muslims at Maghar.¹ Indeed, this incident of quarrel attributed to Kabir, which is confirmed by the account of Dabistan-i-Mazahib,² is very significant and suits well to the liberal and open-hearted person like him. But the reality of it may be suspected on the basis of certain facts available. Westcott, while narrating the cases of more than one Kabir from the contemporary sources, quotes a passage from Akhbar-ul-Akhyar where

1 Keyes has, however, described the incident in a different way. According to him, even before the death of Kabir (while he was going to Maghar) there was a quarrel between Raja Bir Singh Bundela and Nawab Bixli Khan (both were then the disciples of Kabir) with regard to the disposal of the dead body after his death. As Kabir himself pacified them both in his life time there was no quarrel after his death, because then the body itself converted into a heap of flowers. Both of them took their shares and disposed them off according to their faith - See, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

2 The Dabistan-i-Mazahib (Text), p. 200.

a similar story is related with the name of Ameer Kabir Mir Sayyad Ali Hamadain who died in Kashmir in 1384 A.D. prior to even the proposed date of Bhakt Kabir's birth.¹ Besides, at another place Westcott suggests that the same story is told in connection with the death of Guru Nanak² whose death, in any case, took place after the death of Kabir. Now, the following two questions are unavoidable:

- (1) Whether the story itself has any reality?
- (2) If correct, with whom it is originally related?

In either case, however, it is possible that the story (whether by innovation or derivation) would have been wrongly attributed to Kabir's name in a later period simply to show his extra-ordinary popularity among the people.

Just like the personality of Kabir his family life has also been clouded with mystery. The question

1 Westcott, op. cit., p. 17

2 Ibid., p. 15.

whether Kabir was a married man or not has always been an interesting problem before the historians who have dealt with it according to their own angles.¹ In fact, there is no problem for the Muhammadans to accept him as a married man because the Muslim mystics usually married and the rule of Shariat itself is in accordance with it. But there is no mention in the contemporary sources of the name of his wife, and the traditional accounts have supplied a Hindu name Loi (meant for blanket)² to the woman who, according to them, was temporarily living with Kabir as a disciple. This itself implies that she would have been his wife, because otherwise it would have been not possible for a young lady, in especially such a conservative society like that, to live with a strange person in any condition. It is

1 Westcott., op. cit., pp. 21-22; Keay, op. cit., pp. 14-15; Tafa Chand, op. cit., p. 149.

2 It is supposed that she was found by a certain Sadhu floating in the Ganges wrapped in a woollen cloth, and therefore she was given the name of Loi by the Sadhu himself who desired at his death that she should become the disciple of Kabir.

also believed that she learnt his trade of weaving in order to help him in earning the livelihood, which again indicates that she was his wife.¹ Besides, we get certain evidences in Kabir's verses which also bring about the same conclusion. According to the Sikh traditions put forward by Macauliffe, just like Kabir's mother Ioi was also sick of the household affairs, so much so that she once refused to prepare a meal for a Sadhu who came to meet him,² which clearly indicates that such a case would never have been taken by an unconcerned lady. In fact, had she been simply his disciple, she would have thought it her duty to follow whatever her spiritual guru was doing rather than complaining in a way which is just the part of a wife towards her husband.

Similarly, the case of Kabir's children is also not clear. The traditional accounts put forth in this

1 It has always been the system of especially a weaver's family in India that the ladies were helping hands in the business, bearing sometimes even more responsibilities than what the gents of a family were performing. This may be seen even now-a-days in Mau and Benaras.

2 Adi Granth, Asa 35; and Gaurd 6.

context two names, Kamal and Kamali, but they are described there not his own offsprings but adopted ones as Kabir himself is said to have been.¹ But there are many references in the verses of Kabir and Kamal both, which indicate that Kamal was his real son.² The following verse attributed to Kabir, which is in the shape of his wife's complaint against him, may be placed as an instance:

".....I am persecuted by those (Sadhus) coming and going. Kabir now never speaketh of his beam or shuttle. His mind is only concerned with the name of God. His daughters and sons have nothing to eat:"³

Now, if the verse is reliable, it clearly indicates that Loi was the wife of Kabir and that Kamal and Kamali were their own offsprings. Besides, there is another verse attributed to him in which Kamal is said

1 For details of it, see, Westcott, op. cit., p. 21; Keay, op. cit., pp. 15-17.

2 For Kabir's account, see the verse quoted by Keay, op. cit., p. 16; and for that of Kamal, see the verses contained in the Shri Sant Gatha (Indra Press, Poona), pp. 75, 76, 79, 87, which prove him not only the son of Kabir but also a Muslim by birth.

3 Adi Granth, Gaund - 6.

to have destroyed Kabir's Vaish because of his being much inclined towards the accumulation of money.¹ There are many traditional explanations of this verse but the most stressing is that Kamal was once asked by the followers of Kabir (after his death) to organize a Panth but he refused (by taking the plea that he would be subjected thus for the sin of murdering the spiritual teacher), and therefore it was then that he was thus accused by them.² But the author of Bodh Sagar refers him having been sent by Kabir himself to Ahmadabad to preach his mission.³ This may be supported by the fact that in the list of the Gurus of Dadupanthis his name is mentioned in the fifth generation.⁴ But nothing is known about his life except that his tomb is situated besides Kabir's shrine at Maghar.⁵

1 Adi Granth, Taran Taran Sanskaran, p. 115.

2 Kshiti Mohan Sen, Medieval Mysticism of India (1930), p. 91 for other explanations of it, see, SHIVA Varat Lal Verma, Santmala (Lahore, 1923), pp. 58-59; and Dukhran's BHAKTANIA, p. 150 and again p. 151.

3 Bodh Sagar (a Kabirpanthi work, pub. from Bombay), p. 1515.

4 P.N. Chaturvedi, op. cit., p. 260.

5 But Mohan Singh accounts that his tomb is in Kara Manikpur. See, Kabir and the Bhakti movement (1934), Part 2, p. 83.

On the other hand, however, Kabir is described by some of the scholars as a Yogi.¹ The author of Dabistan-i-Mazahib speaks of him a vairagi² and the traditional accounts seem to be also in accordance with it. But there are many references in Kabir's own verses which invariably go against the practice as a whole.³

In fact, Kabir was a 'grihasta' or house holder or house-holder in the sense that he usually lived with his family and continued his family profession after the death of his father.⁴ Therefore, it is quite natural that he would not have appreciated, at any stage of his life,

1 The belief that Kabir was a Yogi is so popular that there is controversy among the scholars in even accepting as to which sort of Yogi he was ; Dr. Ram Kumar Verma accepts him a Hathiyogi (See his account, op. cit., pp. 68 - 91, where a long description of it is provided by him), while others say that he was a Rajyogi. There are still others especially among the KABIR Panthis who speak of him to have observed Shabd Suratī Yoga.

2 See, the Dabistan (Persian Text), p. 200, where the following argument is made:

کابیر صاحب نے اپنے زمانے میں جو بڑے بڑے
یوگیوں کو دیکھا تھا ان میں سے کوئی ایک بھی
اس کی طرح کی زندگی نہیں کرتا تھا۔

3 Adi Granth, Māru 3 and Bitavālu 8:

Bijak Ramkali, 71, where Kabir appear criticizing and even condemning the Yoga system. In some of his verses he refers to the austerities practices by Gorakhnath (the famous yogi and founder of Shivite sect) and speaks of him as having died in despair. However, it is stated by Keay that Kabir's condemnation of this practice was because the yogi ascetics were numerous in his days. See, op. cit., p. 75

4 That the wholesome responsibility after the death of
Contd.

the system of detachment or seclusion from the world.

He himself says:

"O Saints, he who brings self forgetfulness into his house, I like that man. Both meditation (yoga) and pleasure (Bhogn) are in the house (house-holder's life), one need not abandon the house in order to go to a forest."¹

Of course, some times he stresses on detachment which is not meant for leaving the world as such but for having control over passion and desire.

He spent most of his time in religious activities especially in receiving and serving the Sadhus and mendicants, as is evident from the verified complaints made by both his mother and wife.² This naturally would

his father came to Kabir's shoulder is evident from a verse of him contained in Adi Granth, Asa 3. Besides, in the traditional explanation of the Bijak, Sabds 64, a Sadhu is said to have asked Kabir to leave the mean employment of weaving, which he refused by showing its importance in quite a philosophical term.

1 Quoted by Tara Chaud, op. cit., p. 159

2 According to the Sikh tradition quoted by Macauliffe, both of them were full of anxiety because of Kabir's indifference to weaving and therefore they agreed him to give up at least his extra-religious activities.

See, op. cit., p. 126.

not have left him at ease to be much attentive to his business or rather to all of his house hold affairs.¹ It was due to this reason that he had to live in poverty facing sometimes even the distress even for ordinary requirements of life.²

However, the dynamic personality of Kabir was the identity of his character and career, which, on the one hand, attracted towards him a large number of people, but which, on the other, stood in contrast with what virtually was the spirit of his age. This was because the ideas which he, as a great pioneer of the Bhakti movement, injected into the veins of the then prevailing society and the activities he performed, inspite of being based on the essential facts of both the major religions,

1 Sometimes Kabir's own verses indicate that he had left his business altogether, but this seems to be simply an allegoric expression rather than the literal one, or otherwise it would have happened in later stages when he left Banaras for Magahar.

Keay has, however, raised a question why Kabir did not find spiritual significance in his domestic life? Its reply is quite obvious, because his bent of mind was decidedly different than what we expect from an ordinary man.

2. The problem is well reflected in a long poem of him (contained in Adh Granth, Sorathi 11), in which he appears complaining to God to provide the simple needs of life.

stood in a way in contrast from any religious concept,¹ and therefore not only his family but the whole society failed to understand him. What was troubling the prejudiced bent of their mind was that the aim of Kabir was quite different than what they were expecting from him. Now, the most radical views, as were presented by Kabir in the field of liberalism, would naturally have been felt as an open challenge by the existing conservative society, and therefore the reactionary steps taken against him were to be naturally very severe. We know that he had to face bitter and prolonged conflicts and petty persecutions from the religious authorities of both the communities,² who failing in their own efforts in silencing him went even to the extent of seeking the support of the State itself. It is said that when Sikandar Lodi visited Jaunpur in 1445 A.D., the Hindus jointly with the Muslims

1 Kabir's ideas were so unique from his child hood that even his play mates tried to oppress him. (See, Westcott, op. cit., p. 5; Neay, op. cit., pp. 11-12; Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 147). It did not stop but continued and later took the shape of severe criticism against him when he grew up.

2 Neay has discussed the problem at length. See, op. cit., pp. 40-41; also Westcott, op. cit., p. 20.

appeared before the Sultan and put forward their complaint against Kabir and thus he was accused of being a turbulent and quarrelsome person.¹

Besides, Kabir is said to have maintained his revolutionary nature in even acquiring the religious knowledge. In fact, he was not satisfied with the traditional system of learning since it led to nothing but to create controversies in mind, and therefore he himself says:

"I am not skilled in book knowledge (and therefore) I do not understand controversy."²

It was with this sense in his mind that he thought it better not to even touch a pen or paper.³

In either case, however, it is confirmed that Kabir was not educated in a regular manner. And yet he was well familiar with at least the basic contents of

1 Macauliffe, op. cit., p. 125; and Keay, op. cit., p.43.

2 Adi Granth, Bilavalu 2, Slock 45, and Bhairau 7.

3 Bijak, Sakhi, 188. But more realisation seems to be the reason that Kabir was himself not in a position to take up his academic career in a systematic manner, because his whole life was full of troubles and problems, as we have already discussed.

both the major religions (i.e., Hinduism and Islam), so much so that he is said to be having, even in his early life, a good deal of informal knowledge about them.¹ It was, in fact, due to the oral guidance which he received simultaneously from Ramananda and Sheikh Taqi and the contacts which he had with both Hindu vairagis and Muslim mystics, that Kabir was able to have a better understanding and knowledge about both the communities.² Therefore, inspite of having as such no acquaintance with any of the classical languages, he freely uses the technical terms of both Muslim ideology and Hindu philosophy.³

Kabir was the greatest champion of the Bhakti movement, and therefore he occupies an important place in the social and religious history of the period.

1 Keay, op. cit., pp. 11-12; Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 147.

2 Dr. Ram Kumar Verma says:

“ वह एक ओर तो हिन्दुओं के उद्देशक के ढोंह में पॉणित है और दूसरी ओर मुसलमानों के सूफ़ी सिद्धान्तों को भी स्पर्श करता है। ”

Kabir Ka Rahasyavad, p. 20.

3 Dr. Tara Chand has discussed the problem at length. See, op. cit., p. 148.

Indeed, he was the only saint of the Bhakti marga who not only gave a new impetus and orientation to it but also influenced even the entire gamut of the religious thought and behaviour of the contemporary Indian Society. The greatest contribution of him to religious faith is that he tried to capture the spirit of all religions.

The period when he emerged is noted for what Toyabee calls "Scism of the soul" and "scism of the body politic," the response of which was, however, being taken up by a number of leaders and reformers. It has rightly been assessed by Keay that Kabir's period, inspite of being of political chaos and social and religious anarchy, was of great literary and religious activity.¹ Hence, it would not be unjustified to say that Kabir was the product of both the constructive and destructive ideas of his age, which led him to be a great revolutionary man.²

But there is divergence of opinion among scholars on the subject as to which sort of leader Kabir was:

1 Keay, Kabir and his Followers, p. 7.

2 His revolutionary nature is well depicted by Govind Trigurayat, Kabir Ki Vichardhara, p. 94.

Our School accepts him a great saint or mystic,¹ while the other speaks of him simply a Darshinic.² There are still other scholars who prove him exclusively a social or religious reformer³, and some others are of the opinion that Kabir's was not to reform but only to preach.⁴ In fact, Kabir was a frustrated man,⁵ and the inconsistency and complexity of ideas in his nature did not left him at ease to plan as to what should be the exact lines of thought and action. Therefore, his aim or mission should not be regarded as static but rather varied and dynamic, as we shall see subsequently.

- 1 Dr. R.K. Verma, Kabir Ka Rahasyawad, p. 35; Zutai, Kabir Sahab, p. 89.
- 2 Dr. Shyam Sunderdas, Hindi Sahitya, p. 138.
- 3 Ram Chandra Shukl, Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihas, p. 87.
- 4 Dr. Trigunayat, op. cit., p. 131. But his further statement that revolution had become the part of his life, itself suggests that he was of reforming nature, because otherwise there would have been no need of revolution of at least that nature which Dr. Trigunayat has himself tried to indicate.

It is, however, expressed by both Tara Chand (op. cit., p. 153) and Keay (op. cit., p. 68) that Kabir was simply a religious teacher rather than a systematic religious philosopher.

- 5 There are a number of references in his verses where he appears facing the conflict of mind. For instance, see the verses quoted by Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 152; and a long poem, quoted by Macauliffe, op. cit., p. 124.

It was in fact, the reaction of the two fundamental defects of the society, i.e., the formalism of religion and classification of human race, that the motivation of his varied and dynamic aim took place. He was so much sincere in his object of forming a classless society that he was not ready to compromise with any of the prevalent religious systems. His only aim in this connection was to harmonise Islam and Hinduism and to afford a common meeting ground to both the communities.¹ It is significant that on the one hand he wanted to form a classless society and on the other to popularise a simple religion based on personal experiences, by declaring clearly that there is only one

1 In his crusade against every thing that was unmeaning and unreal, Kabir disapproved of the caste system and bitterly condemned the idea of classifying the society -- He declares thus: "Whence have come Hindus and Mussalmans? who both put them on their different ways?"

Besides, there are a number of such references in his verses where he appears reconstructing a new path in between the two faiths on which the followers of both of them could move smoothly and where there was no place for any sort of discrimination. See, the verses quoted by Macauliffe, op. cit., p. 127; and Keay, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

religion and that is the religion of love and humanity.¹
 But it is to be borne in mind that the religion he propounded was by no means his own innovation but rather based upon the essential and constructive ideas found commonly in both the religions in contrary to their dogmatic practices.²

Kabir was a strict monotheist and therefore he has clearly and repeatedly declared that God is one and there is no attribute of him. The following verses would indicate the extent of his being firm in the faith of the Unity of God:³

- 1 In a verse Kabir clearly says that "the religion of those who understand (or who are enlightened) is one, whether they are Pandits or Shaikhs." Quoted by Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 165.
- 2 As the basic aim of Kabir was simply to reform and reconcile the society around him he was never inclined to establish a new sect of his own, though his ideas were later developed by his followers on a large scale having been termed as Kabir Panthis, which we shall discuss in subsequent terms.
- 3 They are taken from Bijak, Sabdas 43 and 42, and Ramaini 59, respectively. The other verses of the same nature may be seen in Adi Granth, Prabhati - 2, Gauri 34, 37, Ass 11.

1. "He is one: there is no second."
2. "Where from have two Gods come?
Who has misguided you?
Call him by any name, Allah,
Rama, Rahim, Keshava or Hazrat."
3. "Rama, Khuda, Shakti, Shiva, are one and
they cannot be distinguished from each
other".

Besides, in describing the very fact that God is
of without attributes, Kabir speaks thus:

"This world is defiled with impurity;
Pure is God alone who hath neither form nor limits"¹.

It is to be born in mind that in describing the
qualities of God (as the Savior, Merciful, Joys,
bountiful, happy, perfect, etc.) Kabir seems to be very
close to the ideas and the spirit enunciated by the Muslim

1 Kabir hymns, Bhairau, 111. Other references of the
same nature may be seen in Bijak, Ramsini 6, 7 and 8;
and Adi Granth, Gauri - 9.

mystics and sometimes even to the purely Islamic concept, rather than the Saguna concept of God as depicted in the Hindu philosophy. Therefore, wherever he appears speaking of the Hindu deities by narrating peculiar stories, they all seem to be unauthentic and wrongly attributed to his name. He has repeatedly expressed even that the eternal truth is beyond Nirgun and Sagun.¹

Besides, Kabir had no faith in the incarnation theory of the Hindus and therefore he has clearly declared that the ten incarnations that people talk about did not concern him, "they are merely the reapers of the fruits of their actions, but the creator is someone else (and that is alone without attributes)".² This shows that he was not unmindful of the existence of extra-ordinary personalities or of the extra-ordinary qualities they possessed, but his only claim was not to accept them as the incarnations of the Supreme God, and therefore he clearly says that whosoever (whether Hanuman, Brahma or Vishnu, Mahesh or Krishna) came into existence, all are

1 Kabir Granthawali, p. 149, Verse 180.

2 Quoted by Dr. Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 163.

dead except He alone who is not held in coming and going.¹
 He has even condemned that Rama was the incarnation of
 Vishnu. It appears from Bijak (Ramaini 29) that the
 true Master did not take birth in the family of Dashrath,
 nor was Devaki his mother.²

It is at this juncture that Kabir's concept of
 God seems to be quite different from what we find in the
 account of Tulsidas (i.e., Ramcharitra Manas). In spite
 of the fact that both of them (Kabir sometimes and Tulsidas
 always) have used the same name Rama to indicate God, the
 difference between them is that Tulsidas was the saguna
 upasak of Rama, while Kabir believed in Nirguna aspect of
 the same, and therefore wherever he uses the name of Rama
 it does not mean for the incarnate of Vishnu but rather
 the Supreme God Himself who is one and alone without
 attributes and beyond the incarnation.

1 Bijak Sabda, 45.

2 The other verses of the same type are quoted by
 Dr. Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 163, one of which is
 as follows:

"The creator did not marry Sita nor did he
 make a stone bridge across the water."

Now, as regards the question why he has used several names in indicating one God,¹ this was not to stress on polytheism but rather to lead people to realize that there is only one God and that the different names are the different ways of approach by his co-religionists. The other consideration was that he declared himself the leader of all the communities and therefore he had to provide consolation to all.

Kabir was the believer of Monism, but there is controversy as to which sort of monist he was : some say that he was Advaitvadi, while others speak of him as Visishtadvaitvadi (i.e., modified monist). There are still other scholars who call him Bhedabhedvadi. Anyhow, the poem of Kabir contained in the Adi Granth (Bhairav - 1) reflects his modified monism stressing on that the Universe is not the creation of Maya but the body or manifestation of God. The other verses of him dealing with the subject are as follows:²

1 He generally calls God by the following names:

Rama, Hari, Govinda, Brahma, Samrath, Sam, Satpurusa, Bechun (Peerless), Allah, Khuda, etc. etc.

2 The first verse is quoted by Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 155 (From Tagore's account), and the remaining two are contained in Bijak Sabda 27, and Adi Granth, Asa - 11.

- (1) "He (God) Himself is the tree, the seed and the germ, He Himself is the flower, the fruit and the shade.
He Himself is Brahama, creature and Maya."
- (2) "Wherever, wherever one looks, there, there is He the same; He is found in every Vessel."
- (3) "When the five of (avarice) is out, and the smoke (of desires) no longer issueth.
(Then shall man know) that one God is everywhere contained and that there is no second."

But, most often Kabir holds the concept that the nature and essence of God is light, as is suggested by Dr. Tara Chand who further provides in scattered way the following evidences of this nature from his poetic work.¹

- (1) "See the ocean - filling one light (aur) which spreads in the whole creation".

1 Dr. Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 155.

2. "The Light (nur) fills all".
3. "The Light is covering, the Light is the seat, the Light is the pillow. Says Kabir, hear, O ! brother saints, the True Teacher (God) is completely Light (Nur)".

It is, however, in this concept of God that Kabir, in the words of Tara Chand, betrays his deep debt to the sufis.¹ But more specifically he seems to be deriving the wholesome spirit of this concept from the philosophy of Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi who, according to Dr. Tara Chaud, believed that "the ultimate principle of all existence is Light (Nur-i-Qahir), whose essential nature consists in perpetual illumination."²

Anyhow, this concept of accepting $\overset{u}{G}od$ in the form of light would naturally have led Kabir to believe Him also as transcendent (i.e., beyond approach) and therefore he says:

1 Ibid., p. 155

2 Ibid., p. 71-72.

"The Absolute (Para or Brahma) the supreme soul (Purusa) dwells beyond the beyond." ¹ It is at this stage that, according to Keay, this sort of Kabir's concept of God (where He is depicted as inaccessible and inapprehensible) makes Him as shadowy being and therefore Kabir himself comes very close to the Hindu thinkers.²

Anyhow, inspite of the fact that Kabir's God is omni present and transcendent, he has also presented Him as One with whom man can have intercourse,³ and, as a matter of fact, wherever he has described Him as being close to the heart of the devotee, there seems to

1 Kabir, Rakhta No. 36.

2 Keay, op. cit., p. 73.

3 It appears from a verse of Kabir contained in the Adi Granth (Gauri 9) that though God is without qualities and yet one may have intercourse with Him. For further illustration of Kabir's this concept of God, see the verses quoted by Macauliffe, op. cit., p. 128; and by Tara Chand op. cit., p. 159.

be the purely Islamic impact on him. In this context the following lines of Kabir may be placed:

- (1) "Where dost thou seek me, O slave.
I am indeed near these, I am not in the temple,
nor in the mosque, neither in Kaba nor Kailas.

If thou art a true seeker, I shall meet
thee immediately in a moment's search.

Says Kabir, here, "Ve Sadhus, He is in the breath
of breaths."¹

- (2) "Hari dwelleth in the south, Allah hath his
place in the west.
Search in thy, search in thy heart of hearts;
there is his place and abode."²

With regard to the cosmological theory there are so many references in Kabir's verses found not only in the Bijak and the Adi Granth but also in several other places, which considerably vary from each other. By

1 Quoted by Dr. Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 155.

2 Adi Granth, Prabhati - 2

The first two lines are well depicting the places of the political and especially religious holders of the Muslims as well as of the Hindus.

reproducing them all, Dr. Tara Chand has rightly observed that some of them are based on ancient Hindu cosmologies, while the others are close to the Islamic concept.¹ It is argued by him that there are verses like the Panji Mangal where Kabir appears making "an attempt to reproduce the scheme of nine spheres (in Islam there are seven only) through which creation develops in accordance with Muslim philosophy." He further quotes a verse from Yuglanand which is as follows: "In the sky He was seated meditating behind close doors, then He saw His own image and thereby the three became pleased." This seems to him an echo of Ibn Sina's theory. Mentioning the other two speculations occurring in Siddharta Dipika, he further says that one of them devoted that every thing is created from water, and the other speaks of the creation as a mechanical process. Besides, Kabir has sometimes represented God as a weaver.² But these descriptions are not so perfect and systematic in comparison to those found either in his Remains or the Adi Granth. As

1 Dr. Tara Chand, op. cit., pp. 156-57.

2 See, his description in the case of Sarvajit Brahman, quoted by Macauliffe, op. cit., pp. 135-36; and also Rijak Saba 64.

regards the description of his *Ramsini*, It is expressed in the first *Ramsini* that *Jiva* (Soul) was in the Supreme Being before creation and it was due the illumination of His Light that it came into existence. The first creation was the female principle, i.e., *Shabda* or will (*ichha*) called *Gayatri* which later produced *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Mahesh*. The next stages of creation are described in the Second *Ramsini*, which were taken up by *Brahma* himself who after being created brought into being an egg from which the fourteen regions were created and then the three, *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Mahesh* presided over the whole Universe. But, according to the description of the *Adi Mangal*, knowledge or *Shruti* was the first appearing source from the Almighty who was alone in the beginning, and from this process came the word of *Shabda* and from *Shabda* five *Brahmans* and five breaths and from them the whole creation which is described in accordance with the *Sankhyan* system. But the account provided by *Keay* (on the basis of *Bijak Ramsini - 3*)¹ is the further elaboration, and that set forth by *Dr. R.K. Verma* (on the basis of what is prevalent among the *Kabir Panthis* of the *Chattisgarh Section*)² is still further elaboration of the theory,

1 *Keay, op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.

2 *Dr. Ram Kumar Verma, op. cit.*, pp.

which create the impression of being the product of a master mind. In fact, it cannot be expected from a person like Kabir (who was neither a systematic philosopher nor a man of letters) that he would have made in his mind such a developed and systematic system of cosmology, and so he does not seem to be responsible for all the accounts attributed to him for this subject. This is confirmed by the fact that they are found in the works produced by the Kabir Panthis, in a later period, as we shall see later on. Besides, the very fact that Kabir's cosmology is much less defined in his account of the Adi Granth¹ than what is contained in his Bijak may also be made in this context the point of consideration. Moreover, if we go into the depth of such accounts, it would not be difficult to find out the extent of their falsehood, because there are several such ideas which, on the one hand, contradict each other themselves, and collectively, on the other, defy even the well known concepts of Kabir. For example, we

1 It is noticeable that only few lines of the whole poem contained in Adi Granth are relevant to the exact subject, otherwise both the following and preceding lines are written simply in praise of God.

repeatedly get there the expression of more than one God.

However, on the basis of the collective account of the Remainis Nicolson seems to have rightly suggested that there is a curious resemblance between Kabir's account of cosmology and those of Jili and Badruddin Shahid. Leaving aside the other factors of similarity between them which have already been dealt by Tara Chand,¹ it is significant that the basic point of similarity between Jili and Kabir is that both of them consider the world not an illusion like Shankaracharya but as reality.

The other point of consideration is that there are so many references in Kabir's account with regard to Maya, and they are found especially in his Remaini

1 Tara Chand, op. cit., pp. 152, 156. It is suggested by him that Kabir uses the same simile representing the essential oneness of the universe and the Absolute, which Jili and other Muslim mystics have used". In support of it he quotes a verse in which Kabir speaks thus; "As ice is made from water, and as ice will become water and vapour, so is the reality from that, and therefore this and that are the same." Really, this sort of simile has a curious resemblance to that used by Jili who says that "The Universe is ice, God, water", or that "God is the substance (hayula) of the cosmos". (See, the description for Jili in Ibid. p. 76).

and Sabad. There, he has represented it in the shape of a powerfully beautiful and charming lady or rather most often as a seductive pros who, according to him, attracts the people towards her at first and thereby gives them, by her cunningness, the wrong way or the way of sexuality.¹ It was due to this reason that he has bitterly condemned it by calling it with several names, i.e., Dayan, mahathagni etc., At one place he says that "the world has been burnt by the flames of 'maya' although it looks like golden maid."² In fact, the repeated criticism of the mischievous acts of maya shows that he was very much angry with it and therefore he wanted the people to escape from its net.

However, the collective impression of Kabir's maya shows that there is much impact of Hindu philosophy on him or rather more specifically of the theory put forward by Shankaracharya. But the statement of Dr. R.K. Verma that Kabir's concept of Maya was entirely based on that of Shankaracharya,³ may be questioned at least in

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- 1 Dr. R.K. Verma has discussed the problem at length. See, his work, Kabir Ka Rahasyawad, p. 46, also p. 21.
- 2 Quoted by Dr. Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 153.
- 3 Dr. R.K. Verma, op. cit., p. 21.

its absolute form, because there seems to be by no means the entire mutual understanding between these two teachers on the subject. Kabir's theory might have been fundamentally based upon that of Shankaracharya but certainly not in its exclusive form, because Shankara, by including all the things of the world into maya, has clearly declared that it is illusion, while Kabir does not deny its existence but rather he has stressed on its reality by saying that soul and God are the parts of a single force which are separated by Maya and if it is thrown aside they would be re-united as such. He says:

जल में कुंभ कुंभ में जल है बाहर भीतर पानी ।
फूटा कुंभ जल बलहिं समाना यह तत क्ययां ज्ञानी ॥

This verse clearly indicates that there was an independent mystic approach of Kabir to Maya.

On the other hand, however, it seems difficult to determine the extent he was attached to the theory of metempsychosis, or in other words, whether he was against or in favour of it, because the references of both the nature are available in his verses. Some of the passages in which he repudiates the theory are as follows:

1. "The soul (jiyara) is a guest which will not come a second time."
2. "Birth as man is not easy to obtain it does not happen a second time, when the ripe fruit falls it does not again get attached to the tree."
3. "All go from this side taking their burdens with them, no one returns from the other side, who could tell the tale." ¹

On the other hand, there are passages in which he, in the words of Dr. Tara Chand, "speaks of the eighty-four lakhs of birth, and of unceasing coming and going."² But the plea which he has taken in support of why Kabir "uses the fear of death (Yama and Kala) and of remorseless chain of birth and death" by saying that this is "more or less as warning for men to deter them from their ungodly lives," seems to be not very sound, because the same argument may be deduced from the verses which are not in favour of this theory. The next contention is, however,

1 All these references are quoted by Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 164.

2 Ibid. p. 164.

more weighty when he says that "he (Kabir) does not expatiate on the doctrine of Karma which is indissolubly linked with Metempsychosis." In fact, Kabir, being a great social reformer, was deeply interested with the existing situation rather than that of the hereafter, and therefore he felt no need of enforcing the doctrine of Karma. Though he believed in good action for the betterment of the day to day life, he was not attached with that sort of good action or Karma which was linked with the theory of metempsychosis. It is therefore quite possible that the verses in which he speaks in favour of the theory would have been later additions.

Anyhow, it is significant that the verses in which Kabir rejects the theory seems to be much close the Islamic concept and its spirit, as is evident from the verses we have already quoted. Besides, about spirit (ruh) Jili says: "I (i.e., spirit) am the child whose father is his son and the wine whose vine is its jar.... I met the mothers who bore me, and asked them in marriage, and they let me marry them."¹ It is interesting that this concept as a whole bears a peculiar similarity to

¹ Quoted by Dr. Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 76.

what Kabir has produced (in his first Ramaini) in the context of putting forward his cosmological theory. He says that after being produced Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh, by Sarda or Gayatri, Brahma asked the woman who was her husband, and whose wife she was? She replied thou art I, I am thou, and there is no third. Thou art my husband and I am thy wife".¹ It is further interesting that this sort of concept (that the father and son had a common wife, and a woman had a twofold character - one of mother and the other of wife), whether found in Jili's account or that of Kabir, has its, according to Tara Chand, a curious resemblance to the vedic concept, where the Adities are spoken of as mothers as well as wives of their sons.²

However, the whole spiritual concept of Kabir lies on the Unity of God, unity of soul and the ultimate unity of both and therefore he declares : "I and thou are of one blood and are one life".³ It is, suggested by Tara Chand that both Kabir and Jili seem to mean, that

1 Quoted in Ibid. p. 156.
Dr. R.N. Verma has, however, described, on the basis of the account found among later Kabir Panthis, as to how this woman completely took the shape of 'Maya'. See, op. cit., pp. 42-45.

2 Tara Chand, o.p.cit., p. 156

3 Kabir, Bijak, Ramaini, II.

soul (Jiva or ruh) is the object of divine knowledge, and as the centre of soul is its father, yet God becomes the object of knowledge and therefore the son of soul."¹ It is further related by him that Kabir often compares the relation between God and soul as that of waves and the sea,² which itself is very close to spirit of the Muslim mystics. They believe that the soul is always in the condition of proceeding onwards, and its final destination is its complete annihilation (fana) in the Supreme Soul. When the substance of a body has vanished, the soul of it takes form into the other body and thus it finally annihilates into the ultimate Reality where it gets baqa or subsistence and where the chain of life and death comes to an end. Now, when in this way all the souls are mixed with the supreme soul, the universe comes to an end, but soon afterwards the other circle of creation begins likewise, and thus the universe is always going on in a cyclic order. It is, of course, true that Kabir was not so much systematic as the Muslim mystics were, but there is a fundamental unanimity of

1 Tars Chand, op. cit., p. 156.

2 Ibid., p. 153.

thought between him and the Sufis because both hold that the human soul is a part of divine power, and therefore would after death return to it.

However, it was to search out the virtual means of salvation that Kabir felt it necessary to set aside the formalism of all the religions. In fact, the sincerity or the purity of heart in Bhakti (or devotion) was the Key Stone of his religion, and without which the devotion was considered by him as an offence against God.¹ Tara Chand has rightly stated that Kabir was the Saint who placed the greatest value upon the inwardness of religion and impartially condemned the external formalism of both the major faiths of India.² It is really very significant that he was equally emphatic in breaking down the religious barriers whether of Hinduism or Islam. If on the one hand he asks the Hindus to have no faith in pilgrimage, ceremonial purifications, fasting,

1 According to the account provided by Nabhaji, it was believed by Kabir that religion without (true) Bhakti was no religion at all", and that asceticism, fasting and alms giving had no value if unaccompanied by Bhajan (or the true remembrance of God's name)."

2 Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 150.

sacred threads, and all those things of out ward or external forms and superstitious,¹ he suggests, on the other, the Musalmans to give up their religious formalities like the pilgrimage to Mecca, fasting and regulated prayers. There are so many references of this nature in his verses, some of which are, however, as follows:

- (1) "Devotion, sacrifice and rosary, piety, pilgrimage, fasting and alms.

Nav Nidhi (i.e., nine sorts of devotion of the Hindus), Vedas, the Book (i.e., the Quran), all these are cloaks of false hood....."²

- (2) "The Brahman (yearly) observe twenty-four (fasts) on the eleventh (day of the dark and light halves of the lunar month);

1 With regard to the Brahmins, Kabir is said to have attacked in thirty short verses of his Viprasapati (one of the sections of Bijak) on their religious systems of conservative nature. Keay, op. cit., p.53.

2 Bijak Sabda, 113.

The Musalman fast in the month of Ramazan.
 The latter put aside eleven months of the
 Year,
 And say that the Treasure is in one alone.
 What availeth it the Hindus to bathe (at
 Jagannath in Orissa):
 What (for the Mussalman) to bow their
 heads in a mosque?
 With deception in their hearts they repeat
 prayers:
 What availeth it then to go on a pilgrimage
 to Mecca."¹

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- (3) "They who bathe in the evening and morning
 Are like frogs in the water.
 When men have no love for God's name,
 They shall all go to the God of death (Yama).

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- (4) Those practisest circumcision for love of
 woman,
 I shall never believe in it, O brother.
 If God had desired to make me Musalman,

1 Adi Granth, Prabhati 2. The theme of this poem is
 further elaborated in another poem of Bijak which is
 quoted by Kany, op. cit., p. 11.

2 Quoted in Ibid., p. 74.

I should have been born circumcised.

If a man become a Musalman by circumcision,
What is to be done to a woman."¹

In fact, as a liberal figure, Kabir could not tolerate the religious orthodoxy set forth by the religious authorities and therefore his satire against the Brahmans and the Mullas alike has always been very accurate. This was also because they were enjoying the privileged position in the society by having a number of advantages prescribed by themselves. Now, Kabir's clash with this group of people was but natural.

However, on the subject of idolatory, he is said to have spoken thus :

"If God be found by worshipping a stone,
I will worship a mountain;
Better than that stone is a hand-mill
Which grindeth corn for the world to eat."²

Making it clear that there is no trace in Ramandas' teaching of his having given up the worship of idols,

1 Quoted by Macauliffe, op. cit., p. 127.

2 Ibid., p. 128.

Keay says that it was Kabir only who preached strictly the doctrine of theism where there was no place for the things like polytheism, incarnations, idols, myths etc.¹

Macauliffe has, however, expressed some where in his book that an infidel, in Kabir's eyes, was that -

1. Who struck any person without just cause,
2. who were a religious grab to deceive the world,
3. who drank wine, 4. who stole, 5. who committed suicide, 6. who smoked tobacco, 7. who committed highway robbery, and 8. who took life.

These points, if reliable, are very significant in understanding the thought content of Kabir, because this shows the extent of his revolutionary nature. This much, however, seems true that Kabir believed in only whatever he was seeing with his own eyes, and the judgment or remark which he set forth was only on this basis.

Anyhow, Kabir's Bhakti or devotion may be better understood by dividing it into two aspects - one, leading to the discipline of soul; and the other, leading to the Bhakti itself. It is to be borne in mind that there is

1 Keay, op. cit., pp. 4 - 5.

a very strong link between these two, so much so that without crossing the first stage one cannot enter into the domain of the other. Anyhow, the first stage is said to be that of self-mortification or in other words, that where a true devotee purifies his nafs or self for spiritual advancement. There are various means prescribed for it in various religious systems, but Kabir adopted only that which was real. It is repeatedly declared by him that the true Bhakti cannot be attained merely "by revolving the rosary in the hand, but by revolving the beads of mind", and also "by suppressing the five evil tendencies, of the mind, by abandoning anger and pride, by the acquisition of humility, poverty, patience and discrimination."¹

It is significant that this thing was considered by him not only important but also very difficult process and therefore he speaks thus :

"Lay hold on your sword, and join the fight,
Fight, O my brother, as long as life lasts....
In the field of this body a great war goes

¹ These references are quoted by Dr. Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 159.

forward against passion, anger, pride and greed. It is in the kingdom of truth, contentment and purity that battle is raging, and the sword that rings for the most loudly is the sword of His name."¹

But, it is to be borne in mind that inspite of the fact that Kabir has emphasized the struggle against any sort of meanness of the world, he was never in favour of the detachment or retirement from the world, as we have already discussed while dealing with his life-history . Hence, his theory of self-purification was only on the basis of having control over passion, desire and all such worldly affections which are harmful to pure devotion. This spirit of Kabir brings him close to the purely Islamic concept where a true devotee is defined only that who lives among people by facing all the difficulties of life. Kabir speaks of a true devotee thus:

"The man who is kind and who practices righteousness, who remains passive amidst the affairs of the world, who considers all creatures an earth as his own self,

1 Quoted in Ibid., p. 160.

He attains the immortal being, the True God
is ever with him."¹

The other thing which is necessary for a true devotee is the dedication of every thing in the service of God, and Kabir, as a firm believer of emotional devotion, has justified it well. He says:

"Whatever I do, it becomes His worship
All I achieve is His service."²

In fact, Kabir's Bhakti or devotion was extremely pure and selfless and therefore the conditions which he laid down for it were very difficult in the sense that the whole life should be dedicated to it. Therefore, Kabir not only considered his own life as a dedication to God but also he tried to inspire his fellow travellers to dedicate all the things including life to the will of God.

1 Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 150

It is significant that the definition of a perfect man advanced by Kabir in these lines is not very far from the Islamic theory of Insan-i-Kamil.

2 Ibid. p. 159.

Besides, some of his verses show him with a deep consciousness of sin within him, and a profound sense of his unworthiness before God, which also brings him close to the Islamic philosophy. See, the following verse of line:

"How shall I cross the sea, O master? How shall I cross the sea?

I am full of many sins.

How shall I serve and worship thee, how meditate on thee? Only without am I white, like a heron.

My nature is a snake's, and I am a great sinner.

The conscience is foul, and like a cat.

I see it to be contrary and crazed, wrapt in the cloak of the Six Darshanas (or the six philosophical systems of the Hindus)

Kahir says, Listen, O men that are mine:

All are caught in the noose of a witch."¹

Besides, there are also the references in his verses of the constant repetition of God's name (i.e., dhikr). Of course, he was not so emphatic on the

1 Bijak, Sabda 104.

subject as the Muslim mystics were, but inspite of this he has given it a very important place in his Bhakti. Some times, however, he speaks against the revolving of rosary, as we have seen earlier, but this does not mean that he was against the practice of remembering God. What he meant, in actual fact, was that what ever you do, that must be done with sincerity or purity of heart. He was so steadfast in his selfless devotion that he considered that the knowledge of scriptures and even good actions (i.e., Karma)¹ are the secondary. It was rather believed by him that the true devotion would itself illumine the devotee's heart with all sorts of knowledge and even good actions. He further goes steps further by declaring that there should be no consideration of even reward and punishment in spiritual observances, and therefore he rejects to have any belief in even heaven or hell. In fact, as the union with God was considered by him to be the only destination of an individual, he did not lay any emphasis on the concept of heaven or

1 We have already noticed while dealing with his concept of soul, as to how and why Kabir was not much emphatic on the subject of Karma.

hell. He says: "What is hell and heaven, the wretched places?"¹ At another place he speaks thus:

"Paradise and hell are only for the ignorant, not for one who knows Hari (or having reasonable knowledge about religion.)"²

Emphasizing the real Bhakti, he once again says:

"As long as you expect paradise (Vaikuntha) so long will you delay dwelling at the feet of the Lord."³

On the other hand, it is difficult to determine whether Kabir believed in intermediary source or not, because there is no specific reference dealing with either of the two respects. Anyhow, the references which we find in the context of dealing with mainly the other subjects, show him as having been somewhat inclined to accept the existence of pirs (spiritual leaders) and paimbars (prophets) and also of the

1 Kabir : Remkali (another part), contained in Macauliffe's account, op. cit., p. 138.

2 Quoted by Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 158.

3 Ibid., p. 158.

great Prophet Muhammad himself. Once, he clearly declares that "Kabir is a child of Rama and Allah and accepteth all gurus and pirs"¹

Besides, Pandit Sunder Lal has noticed that in the Das Mugami Rekhta (the poem describing the ten stations) Kabir has reproduced in his own way the whole story of Muhammad's Miraj as developed in the Muslim tradition.²

But it is quite obvious that the importance of a Guru or spiritual guide in the process of spiritual perfection is described by Kabir with almost the same force which we find in Muslim mysticism. He considers the Guru no less than Govinda (God), rather he sometimes places his position even higher than God Himself. See the following verses attributed to him :

1. "Guru and Govind both are before me, to whom I must bow; Guru, I am obliged to three because thou told me about Govind."

1 Adi Granth, Prabhati - 7.

2 Pandit Sunder Lal, Kabir Aur Insaaniyat (an speech delivered on 25th April, 1964, pub. from Ameer Khusrav Academy, Delhi, p. 8.

2. "If Hari becomes angry still there is some chance, but if the Guru is angry then there is no chance whatever."
3. "The real meditation (dhyana, dhikr) is of the Guru's form, the real worship is of the Guru's feet."
4. "In the three worlds and nine regions none is greater than the Guru."

There are many more references of the same nature in his verses.¹ It appears from the account provided in *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* that Kabir was very much keen in searching for a true spiritual teacher.² It is expressed by him that those having no Guru, their efforts will be of no avail, and they will be washed away by the current who do not take hold of the arms."³

When the place of a Guru is so significant in spiritual process, one should be very critical in his

1 Adi Granth, Asa - 3; Bijak Ramaini - 77.

2 Dabistan-i-Mazahib (Text) p. 200.

3 Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 159.

selection and therefore he says:

"The Guru should be a polisher (Siquigar) who would polish the mind, and who would clear away the stains and make the heart a mirror". And, in fact, if the Guru is not of the right sort, then it is a case of "the blind pushing the blind and of both falling into the well."¹

But there are certain other verses of him where he has tried to pose himself as a prophet sent by God in order to save the world from the misery of sinful acts. But this seems an addition by his later followers, and therefore it would be discussed later on while dealing with the philosophy of the Kabirpanthis.

As regards the emotional tendencies Kabir has described them also almost in the very terms which have been the part of Sufism. See the following instances provided by Tara Chand from various sources of Kabir's poetic account: The path is "like walking on the keen edge of a sword," having "terrible obstacles." Again, "the clouds gather, the evening falls, the rain pours

1 Ibid., p. 159.

down, the four fold blanket becomes wetter and wetter and the burden gets heavier and heavier," and gain, "walking, walking the feet are acting".¹

But the most important factor of spiritual life is love. As all the pains and difficulties occurring in the way of spiritual advancement are caused by love, it is considered by almost all the mystics as the most essential factor in accomplishing the highest aim. It was because they consider also that it is love which has brought man from the world of Unity to the world of variety, and the same force would again take him to the world of unity from that of variety.² Kabir was also the believer of the same. He has repeatedly declared that love is superior than even acquiring religious knowledge:

1. "The world is dead by reading and reading books, but no body could become the learned one. Only that is the real learned man who reads carefully the two and a half

1 Kabir Bijak, Remains 15 - and 16 (of Ahmad Shah's collection).

2 Dr. R.K. Verma, op. cit., p. 37. Dr. Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 63.

words of love."¹

2. "(My) Guru has taught me the subject of love; Now there is nothing to read out".²

In spite of the fact that Kabir could not describe the concept of love in such a developed and systematic manner as we find in sufism, at least the spirit found in his verses seems to be very close to what is described by the Sufis. He considers love as wine which is to be drank while proceeding spiritually onwards. It is further believed by him that the senseless or intoxication caused by it is a must for those who want to be absorbed in deepest meditation to God. He says:

हरि रस पीयां जानिये, कहुं न जाय तुम्हार ।
 वै कृता पुका किरां, नाहीं तन को सार ॥

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- 1 It is interesting that the word 'Prem' (meant for love) used by him comprises, in Hindi script, of two and a half letters.
 - 2 Quoted by Dr. R.K. Verma in its original script. See, op. cit., p. 35.
 - 3 Quoted by Dr. R.K. Verma, op. cit., p. 23. He has further quoted a number of such verses from Kabir's 'ultbasian', where he speaks as to how one goes out of senses and what sort of things does he observe in the stage of spiritual intoxicacy. See, Ibid., p. 36.

✓ Besides, it is believed by the Muslim mystics that one who observes love in its complete form becomes immortal, as is evident from the following verse of Hafiz Shirazi:

- *Handwritten Persian/Urdu text* -
- *Handwritten Persian/Urdu text* -
- *Handwritten Persian/Urdu text* -

But it is significant, that the idea which Kabir has put forth in this context seems to be much in advance of the concept of Hafiz, because it is clearly indicated by him that when the soul is absorbed in the supreme Brahma, not only the reality of both of them becomes one but also even the destiny of both runs on parallel lines: He says:

हरि परि हूँ तो हम हूँ परि हूँ ।
हरि न परे हम कहे काँ परि हूँ ॥ ²

The motivation of all of his spiritual as well as secular views was conditioned by the two fundamental concepts of Islam - Unity of God and Unity of human race. It is interesting that wherever the Islamic

1 Ibid., p. 27.

impact on his thought is clear, he appears to be often more inclined towards the purely Islamic views. We know that the mystic systems established by the Muslim mystics in India were well organized and that they were influencing most of the awakened personalities of India. It was therefore quite natural that Kabir could not keep himself away from its impact.¹ This was especially because he found there the answers of almost all of his problems from spiritual process down to worldly affairs in a more systematic order than what he would have seen in other spiritual sources. Therefore, he was immensely inspired by the Islamic ideas in general and particularly by the Islamic mystics from his condemnation of caste system and formal observances down to his adoption of each and every step in the process of spiritual advancement. It may also be added that even the vigour or the spirit displayed by him in dealing with these problems seems to be also much more close to what is found in the concept of the sufis of especially

1 It is interesting that the Bhakti with which he was associated was itself greatly under the influence of Islamic concepts especially of the liberal ideas of the Sufis. For details of it, see Dr. Yusuf Husain, Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture, pp. 2-6 and p. 12; Prof. K.A. Nizami, Studies in Medieval Indian History, p. 75; Dr. Tara Chand, op. cit., pp. 144, 165; Macauliffe, op. cit., p. 107.

the chistic order. Similarly, Kabir seems to be very close to Ibrah-al-Arabir's theory of Wahdat-ul-Wujid when he speaks like this:

• हम सब मांदि सकल हम मांही ।
हम र्थ और कुरा नाहीं ॥
तीनों लोक में हमारा फारा ।
आ कगम सब तैल हमारा ॥

Moreover, the theory of Fana introduced in Muslim mysticism by Bayazid Bustaini, seems to be well revealed in the following verse of Kabir:

माली जा वत पैर कर कालियन करे पुकार ।
फली फूल इन ल्यो, कालि हमारी कर ॥

Besides, Kabir seems to have described, in his Das Mugani Rekhta (the poem describing the ten stations), the journey of the self within the self in the very terms which Mansur-al-Hallaaj has used early in the tenth century.¹ Then, he seems to have succeeded in describing all the situations and circumstances leading to the final

1 References quoted by Dr. Tara Chand, op. cit., p.161: and Pandit Sunder Lal, op. cit., p. 2.

stage of spiritual perfection almost in the same manner as we find in sufism. In sufism maarifat or gnosis is defined as the ultimate cause, where the soul is to be mixed, by crossing even the domain of name and attribute, with the ultimate Reality in a way that it cannot be identified.¹ Now, let us see the following lines of Kabir which would clarify as to which extent did he justify the case :

"There the Lord stands self-revealed and the goal of the long and weary search is at last reached."

Then, the very fact that in this stage all the distinctions between man and God disappear, is described in the following verse of him:

1 For detailed study of Sufism as to how did it follow the various stages, stations (maqamat) and their corresponding states (hals) in the way of spiritual perfection, see Nicolson's The Mystics of Islam; also Dr. Tara Chand, op.cit., pp. 77 - 83.

It is in the final stage that the transformation of the whole of man (will, intellect and emotions etc.) takes place. Now, the soul, being meaningless, passes away from the self (fana) to the unitive state or to be in essential unity with the unitive state or to be in essential unity with the ultimate Reality. Therefore, this is defined as the 'Stage of Complete Union with God' where the soul finds in itself the sense of baqa or subsistence. As in this stage the illusion of subject and object vanishes, the sense of individuality dies and law and religion lose their meaning, the soul feels divine qualities in itself, and thereby

Contd.

".....(As) God and Kabir have become one; no one can distinguish between them."¹

Besides, he seems to be very close to even the ideas of Mansur when he, describing the reality of bubble (hubab) and the sea in a philosophical manner, says:

"Both the bubble and the sea are Kabir, and all other names are unmeaning."²

Thus, Kabir seems to have described many spiritual problems almost in the same manner as we find in sufism. But the difficulty is that such experiences of him are mostly versified in his 'Ultwasian' which are most often quite obscure and meaningless, and therefore it has always been difficult to find what exactly he meant for them. Dr. Trigunayat is of the

explains like Mansur "I am God" (ana! Haq) or "I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I."

² Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 163.

¹ Macauliffe, op. cit., p. 139.

² Dr. Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 152.

opinion that the Key for them was known to the contemporary saints, but as they did not disclose them, only guess work is possible, and therefore the possibility of misunderstanding has always been intact there.

Now, inspite of the fact that Kabir had derived much from the Muslim mysticism (as we have seen above), he could not follow them in toto in especially the minute details of the observation of the process of spiritual approach. In fact, the mystic systems established by the Sufis in India were too varied and too well - planned and the way in which they have dealt with their spiritual problems was too systematic to be initiated or copied fully by the person like Kabir who was neither qualified for it nor a systematic philosopher. Therefore, there seems to be not much accuracy in the suggestion of Dr. Tara Chand that Kabir had experienced all the conditions which the Muslim mystics describe.¹ He may be right to a certain extent in his assessment, but the absolute term in which he has talked about the matter seems to be not correct. It is true

1 Dr. Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 161

that Kabir's concept of love was very deep as he considered it both Sadhan (i.e., means) and Sadhya (i.e., object), but he could not follow the well-planned system of it which we find in sufism -- the various stages of it as to how one passes on from superficial love (i.e., Ishq-i-Majazi) to the real one (i.e., Ishq-i-Haqiqi).¹

There is, however, no doubt at all that Kabir contributed much to the development of the mystic doctrines of Islam itself in India. J.N. Farquhar has rightly considered him one of the most popular Indian propagandists of sufism,² and, indeed, it was by the time of Kabir that the condemnation of idol worship and that of polytheism became very frequent. But even more important aspect of his contribution lies in a wholesome and simple fusion of Hindu Vedanta and Muslim Tasawwaf. Hence, his emergence marks a new era in the history of Indian thought. Although it was already

1 It is important to note that in Sant Sahitya as a whole there is no place for Ishq-i-Majazi, as it was considered by them as an illusion.

2 See, his article: Out line of the Religious Literature in India, pub. in the Journal of Indian Culture, p. 284.

much popular in India because of its liberal ideas, but the credit of Kabir is that he gave a new impetus to it by not only introducing in it certain new factors like love etc. It was by his time that the movement in order to maintain the past traditions split up into two branches, i.e., the Saguna Bhakti marga Sekha and the Nirgun Bhakti marga Sekha. The former was the conservative school which, being represented by Nabhadas (the author of Bhaktamala) and Tulsidas (a great Hindi poet), remained sincere to the Vedas and the past traditions; while the other, being represented by radicals like Kabir himself, adopted an independent path in order to create such socio-religious environment which could be accepted acceptable to all without any distinction. Hence, it is significant to note that the movement represented by Kabir and others likewise is termed by Prof. Irfan Habib as the 'Popular Monotheistic Movement' which, according to him, has to be distinguished from the conventional Bhakti belief.¹

1 Cf. Irfan Habib, The Historical Background of the Popular Monotheistic Movement of the 15th - 17th Centuries. It is further stressed by him that the two were in their very essence quite different, as the followers of former not only set themselves apart from those of later but also saw a unity of ideas among themselves. In support, of it he says that this is best exemplified by Guru Arjun's practice of including in the Sikh Scripture, the Guru Granth, the compositions of the monotheistic teachers, Kabir and Ravidas, besides the verses of Nanak and his successors, while the compositions reflecting the conventional Bhakti beliefs are rigorously included there.

The teachings of Kabir were so pure and powerful that they were largely appreciated both during his life - time and afterwards. We know, when the Panth was organized and its off shoots spread in many parts of India, his followers having been termed as the Kabir panthis increased rapidly so as their number reached to many lakhs. But there is no certainty with regard to the number of disciples formerly admitted by his own hands. It appears from a verse of Kabir that he had made many disciples and followers of his own, though all of them failed in performing the true devotion.¹ To begin with, however, Nabhadas has mentioned only one name, i.e., Padmnabh, and has described as to how he was directly taught by Kabir.² The commentator of it, Priyadas, has included the names of Tattva and Jiva as his disciples and has spoken of them the inhabitants of South India.³ But Raghavadas (of the Dadupanth) has accounted in his Bhaktmala that there were nine

1 See, Adi Granth, Shlock 90.

2 Bhaktmala of Nabhadas, Chappaya 68.

3 The Commentary of Priyadas on Chappaya 69.

disciples of Kabir : Kamal, Kamali, Padmaabh, Ram Kirpal, Mir, Shir, Gyani, Dharamdas and Hardas.¹ Out of these he has separately repeated else where the names of first three along with Gyani and Dharamdas. Besides, there are many more names which are included by some of the modern scholars to the same context: Jagoodas and or Bhagoodas (who is generally known as the copyist of Kabir's Bijak), Surat Gopal (founder of the Kabir Chaura Section of the Pauth), Bijli Khan (whose tomb is situated adjacent to Kabir's Shrine at Maghar), Bir Singh Bundela and Lodhan or Jodhan.³ But there is no certainty with regard to any of them, though P.R. Chaturvedi has provided a very cautious description about the lives and careers of some of the so-called disciples of Kabir.⁴

1 Bhaktmala of Raghavadas, Chappaya 352.

2 Ibid., Chappayas 181, 182, 354, 355 and 357.

3 Hindi Sahitya Ka Virhat Itihas, Vol. IV, p. 133; also the detailed description provided by Kedarnath, op.cit., p. 96. With regard to the case of Lodhan or Jodhan, however, there is a great confusion: The authors of both the Tarikh-i-Farishta (Vol.I, p.183) and Tarikh-i-Daudi (p. 59) call him Lodhan or Vodhan, who, according to them, was killed under Firozshah because of his liberal views, while Westcott (op.cit., p. 20) calls him Jodhan. Besides, Modiwala traces him out as Bhawananda, one of the twelve disciples of Ramananda (Studies in Indo-Muslim History, p.471). It is only Wilson who supports the view of Kedarnath in accepting him among the disciples of Kabir, by recognising him as Lodhan (Asiatic Research, Vol.XVI, p.55).

4 P.R.Chaturvedi, op. cit., pp. 260-280.

CHAPTER - IIEVOLUTION OF THE KABIR PANTH

A Religion is said to have comprised many sampradayas and a sampradaya many Panths. Though in minute details they vary from each other, and yet there is a fundamental Unity among them of representing a single central idea, i.e., the betterment of human nature and character. With regard to a Sampradaya, it happens some times that a certain man of outstanding give way in a religion to certain new traditions, by which a separate Sampradaya somewhat distinct even from its original root comes up reflecting the personality of its founder. Similarly, the emergence of a Panth¹ takes place when a certain man of any Sampradaya adopts

1 The original root of the term Panth is Path which, in Hindi terminology means for way. In Sant Sahitya, the use of Panth instead of Path is frequent, though it is not known why this sort of change was made - perhaps for making it unique.

any distinct way of devotional practice. It also denotes the personality of its founder. But, in view of religious rules and regulations, it may be regarded less compact than a sampradaya and much less than a full fledged religion.

Though a large number of works have been produced on the subject, the problem as to when and by whom the Kabirpanth was originated is still unsolved. This is because the contemporary authentic sources for it are lacking, and the prevalent traditional accounts have rather encountered the problem much more by creating a host of complications and controversies. Many of the Kabirpanthi works of especially the Chattisgarh section speak that Kabir in his life-time was very much inclined to spread his religion. It appears from the account of Anurāg Sāgar that he himself had sent his four disciples, named Dharamdas, Chaturbhuj ji, Bankoji and Sahteji, to all the four directions to preach his religion.¹ But the evidence is too vague

1 Anurag Sagar, p. 86, where the whole problem is shown discussed between Kabir and Dharamdas in the form of dialogue.

to be taken into consideration. Except Dharamdas (who is said to have been the founder of the aforesaid section of the Panth) we do not get any reference about any of the three remaining disciples of Kabir. For this it is mentioned there that they are still hidden and when they would be manifested in their respective zones, Kabir's religion would spread rapidly. But the point of consideration is that even Dharamdas seems to have not flourished during the time of Kabir but about a century later than his demise, as we shall see subsequently. Besides, the author of *Bodh Sagar* refers Kamal having been sent by Kabir himself to Ahmadabad to popularize the saintly ideas.¹ This may be supported by the fact that in Gurus' list of the Dadupanth his name appears having been mentioned in the fifth generation.² But it appears from some other traditional accounts that he himself was rather against the system of forming anything like Panth. It is said that Kamal was once told by some one to organize a

1 Bodh Sagar (Bombay), p. 1515

2 P.R. Chaturvedi, Uttari Bharat Ki Sant Prampara, p. 260.

Panth but he refused (by taking the plea that he would be subjected for the sin of murdering the spiritual teacher), and therefore he was accused of destroying the 'Wansh' of his father, Kabir.¹

However, on the basis of such traditional accounts some modern schars^{Lat} have tried to prove that Kabir himself is responsible for the origin of the Panth.² It is, of course, true that the unique and powerful ideas of Kabir must have attracted a number of people towards him and that some of them would naturally have become his disciples, as we have seen earlier. But to make disciples is a different thing than to create a full fledged Panth, for which, as we think, certain rules and regulations of its own distinct from others are enthusiastically needed along with an under current

1 Kshiti Mohan Sen, Dadu Upkarmarika, pp.13-14; Medieval Mysticism of India of the same author (1930), p. 91.

2 For instance, it is believed by Ram Chandra Shukl that "Kabir installed his Panth by mixing various Indian religious systems like the Brahmavad, the ascetic practices of the Nath Yogis, the non-violence of Vaishnavism etc., together with the emotional tendencies of the Muslim mystics. See, Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihas, p. 77.

feeling of proving it better than its other co-stars. We know, when Gautam Buddha came in power, he organised a group of followers of his own and laid down many distinct rules and regulations for them to follow, a collection of which is known as 'Vinai Pitak'. Similarly, Guru Nanak not only established Sikhism but also made certain rules and regulations for it in his life - time, which are, in some way or the other, prevalent there even now-a-days. Moreover, he went even to the extent of installing, according to the rules laid down by himself, one of his followers as successor of his Gaddi.

Contrary to these, no such formula seems to have been worked out personally by Kabir and neither he seems to have formed any group of his own distinct from others. In fact, the complexity of ideas in his nature (discussed earlier) would not have left him at ease to plan as to what should be the exact lives of thought and action and neither would he have felt its necessity in his pure and simple devotion. His only aim, simply as a religious teacher rather than a systematic religious philosopher, was to fill the hearts of the devotees with the spirit of true Bhakti and to make them benefited by it, beyond which he did not believe in anything. Therefore, it would not have been possible for him to

establish any systematic organization like a Panth especially in the condition that he could never make up his mind to compromise with any sort of ritualism. He himself has remarked that "a true saint need not going on pilgrims and neither should be called Mahant. He should be (rather) busy in departing true seeds of religion to his disciples."¹ Besides, there are many such references in his verses wherefrom it appears that he was rather dagger drawn against the dogmatic practices and the object of achieving through which a super status in the society as well. Once, he condemns those gurus who make disciples by taking Gurudakshina.² For the next time, he says that the religious authorities have now become very rich and lavish, and this has no value in true religious spirit.³

Now, the person, who appears opposing so much the group - consciousness, would never have tried by

1 Kedar Nath, Kabir Aur Kabir Panth, p. 101

2 Hindi Sahitya Ka Virhat Itihas, Vol. IV, p. 133.

3 Kabir Bijak, Ramaini, p. 61.

himself to organize a separate Panth, and neither would he have allowed his disciples to do so.

It is interesting that this was not the case only with Kabir but to the names of many of the contemporary saints are attributed any of the sectarian features, though the teachings of all of them seem to have developed rather against the practice. We know that almost all of Kabir's fellow - travellers disapproved the system of group - formation, and yet emerged in course of time separate sects having been attributed to the names of at least some of them, for example Sain Panth, Pipa Panth, Raidas Sampradaya, etc.¹ Besides, Ramananda is said to have detached his relation from the traditional school (Shree Sect) of Ramanajis (Because of some of its rigid practices), but a separate Sampradaya named Ramavat or Ramanandi emerged in due course on his name also.² It is significant to note

1 For details of these Panths, See Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, pt. 2, p. 384; J.W. Briggs, The Chamars, p. 210; P.R. Chaturvedi, Uttari Bharat ki Sant Parampara, pp. 224, 227 and 242-49.

2 For details of this sect, see, P.R. Chaturvedi, op.cit., p. 232.

that they all try to be distinguished from each other on the basis of distinctive marks etc.

Anyhow, it is to be borne in mind that these saints were neither in a mood of nor in a position of forming any systematic organisation of their own. We know that the circumstances prevailing during those days in northern India were by no means favourable to them. The whole society was the monopoly of the privileged classes who, by dividing it into various units on religious and economic grounds, had become so powerful that there was no place for the lower classes to retain their identity. Though the monotheistic teachers were revolutionary and thereby touched freely the hearts of the people and yet they were considered by them as of out caste and therefore were practically bound to teach within certain limits. We know that the great Bhakti teacher like Ramananda, who himself was a Brahman, was always avoiding to come in direct clash with the prevalent Brahmanical ideologies.¹

1 It is stated by Yusuf Husain that inspite of his being more emphatic (in comparison to other previous saints of this marga) in considering all alike, Ramananda was perhaps not well prepared to take the risk of coming in direct clash with the Brahmanical class, because otherwise he would not have prevented the Sudras in his Anand Bhasya to read the Vedas and would not have, in matter of social concern, maintained to any extent the sense of superiority of a Hindu over a Muhammeden and of one belonging to the regenerate

Kabir (a Mohammedan Julaha by caste) was comparatively more radical and revolutionary and therefore stood in contrast to the ritualistic observances and thereby the vested interests of the religious authorities; and we know, he was not left unhurt by the consequences of it. It is interesting to note that among those who put forward their complaint against him to Sikandar Lodi were the Hindus and the Muslims alike, and the plea which they took was that Kabir had so led people astray all over the city that those who paid heed to what he said remained neither Hindus nor Muslims."¹

Under these circumstances, it seems difficult to accept that Kabir himself was responsible for the emergence of the Faith. Besides, had he initiated any systematic organization the contemporary saints would not have left it unmentioned. It is said that once Guru Nanak, while travelling in connection with a business, came across a group of some saints,² who are generally

classes (dwijas) over Sudras." See, Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture, p. 14. Similarly, it is pointed out by Kery that Ramananda was avoiding to interfere with the privileges of the Brahmins. Kabir and His Followers, p. 4.

1 Macauliffe, History of the Sikh, Vol. VI, p. 137.

2 Shaligram, Guru Nanak (Omkar Adarsh Charit Mala, Paryag), p. 761.

explained to have been the Kabirpanthis. Had Nanak himself identified them with this term, his statement, as a contemporary saint, must have been very useful in solving the problem under review. But the evidence is too general and vague to be taken into consideration. The persons found by Nanak are called by him simply as a group of saints who, therefore, cannot be regarded even as the disciples of Kabir. Nanak was personally impressed by the teachings of Kabir, as is evident from some of his verses, and therefore if the group found by him was that of the Kabirpanthis he would not have left them unmentioned. But it seems that neither Nanak nor any of the contemporary saints have ever related any sort of group formation to the name of Kabir.

That Kabir was not the founder of the Panth seems to be rather confirmed by some of the Kabirpanthi works themselves: Once, it is expressed in the Sat Guru Shri Kabir Charitam that "the Panth came into existence after the demise of Sat Guru Kabir."¹ For the next time, it speaks that "Kabir Swami did not form

1 Sat Guru Shri Kabir Charitam (Preface), p. 73

his Ashram any where", though at the same time it mentions also that "this task was assigned by him to the Vaish of Dharamdas."¹

Now, it seems possible that inspite of Kabir's disapproval with regard to the sense of group - formation the necessity of it would after his demise have been felt by his followers, also because otherwise Kamal (the son or disciple of Kabir) would not have been asked by some one to organize a Panth and on his refusal he would not have been accused of being the vanisher of Kabir-Vaish, as we have discussed earlier. This may also be supported by the fact that within a century after his demise not only various editions of his verses were published but also his teachings were given a definite shape.

It is, however, interesting to note that inspite of the fact that there is no certainty with regard to when the Panth was originated and how it developed, the prevalent branches of it, almost all of them, relate themselves for their origin to any of the famous

1 Sat Guru Shri Kabir Charitan, p. 466.

disciples of Kabir who, according to their verbal arguments, had previously established their branches having been most often directly instructed by Kabir himself. The most important among those usually mentioned in this context are the names of Dharamdas (who is said to have been the founder of Chattigarh section of the Panth) and Surat Gopal (of the Kabir Chaura section) who are said to have become the Acharyas of their respective sections by the recognition of Kabir himself.

We have already discussed that there are many works compiled under the Chattigarh Section which speak that it was Kabir himself who sent Dharamdas along with three other disciples to preach his religion all around, among, whom only Dharamdas has as yet succeeded. Sometimes it is also related there that Kabir himself had instructed Dharamdas to organize a Panth on his name by assuring the forty-two descendants of him to be the successors of his Gaddi.¹ Similarly,

1 The description provided by Keay, op. cit., p. 104; and Kedarnath, Kabir Aur Kabir Panth, p. 186.

the works of the Kabir Chaura Section (the other influential division of the Panth) speak of Surat Gopal as the first organizer of the Panth and sometimes also as the first Acharya after Kabir of the section concerned.¹ It is to be noticed that the accounts of both the sections ignore the case of each other.

But the interesting point is that neither of the two seems to have been the direct or the contemporary disciple of Kabir but among his later followers who would have flourished in the seventeenth century A.D. It is, however, most probable that either Dharamdas or Surat Gopal would have been first among Kabir's followers who thought of and tried for establishing a systematic Panth, which appears to have developed in the 18th century in many parts of the country. This may be supported by the account of the Anurag Sagar (a Kabirpanthi work of the Chattisgarh Section) which is said to have been compiled in any part of the 18th century.² It accounts that Niranjan, in order to

1 Guru Mahatmai, pp. 1, 2.

2 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 187.

propagate against Kabir, sent his Dwadash (Twelve) ambassadors to establish their branches against those of the Kabir Panth.¹ The names of them given in the work are as follows:

Marita Andha, Timirdoot, Andh Achet,
 Manbhang, Gyan Bhagi, Makrand, Chitbhang,
 Akilbhang, Vishambhar, Nakta, Durgdani
 and Hansmuni.

It is to be noticed that just as the works assigned to them were to be done negatively, their names are also of negative characters. However, the case may be clarified by somewhat by the help of the account produced in the Ghat Ramayan of Tulsī Sahēb and Kabir Manshoor of Parmanand,² where the names given are as follows:

1 Anurag Sagar, pp. 90-92. It is to be noticed that this sort of term is not a new thing but applied for many times for instance twelve disciples of Ramonanda or twelve Mahants of Niranjani Sampradaya.

2 Ghat Ramayan of Tulsī Sahēb pp. 234, 235; Kabir Manshoor of Parmanand (Bombay, Samvat 2009), p. 296.

Narayandas, Bhagodas, Surat Gopal,
 Sahabdas, Taksari Panth Parvartak,
 Kamali, Bhagwandas, Pranath, Jagjivandas,
 Tattava jiva and Garibdas.

If these names, which have no similarity with those described above, are considered to be correct for the real Dwadashpanthis, the case turns to be just the other way round. We have already discussed that these or at least some of these were the disciples of Kabir, who contributed much to, rather than propagating against, the development of the Panth by establishing various branches of it in many parts of India. Therefore, it seems possible that such a large number of branches established by one school of Kabir's disciples would not have been appreciated by the other, and therefore they would have been termed in its literature as Dwadash Panth having been patronized by Kal, which may also be supported by the following points:

1) Anurag Sagar gives the dramatic impression because it is written in the form of dialogues between Dharamdas and Kabir. 2) In Dwadash Panth, no mention is made about either Dharamdas or the Section established by him.

However, on the basis of the date of Anurag's compilation, it may be assumed that in the first part of the 18th century this sort of sect would have flourished in many parts of the country from the modern U.P. to M.P., Orissa, Gujrat - Kathiawar, Barauda, Bihar, etc. But both Westcott and Keay have disapproved these twelve divisions because of the uncertainty of the names of them.¹ Even if we consider them reliable, it would not be possible, in lack of the proper historical material, to determine when and which one came firstly into existence. It is, however, expressed in the Sat Guru Shri Kabir Charitam that though "Kabir Swami did not establish his 'ashram' any where," "this task was assigned by him to only the 'Vansh' of Dharamdas." Consequently, his son Muktamani Nath, after returning from Puri, established for the first time an 'Acharya Ashram' in Kughramal (i.e., Kudarnal in the Central Provinces)," and therefore, it is further suggested there that "only Kughramal should be regarded as the traditional root place of the Kabir Panth, because all other Maths are only the later offshoots of it."² But this also seems to be not very reliable.

1 Westcott, op.cit., p. 66; Keay, op.cit., p. 108-9. It is stressed by Keay that "the supposed division into twelve branches may have been suggested by the idea of glorifying the memory of Kabir, just as Ramananda is said to have had twelve chief disciples."

2 Sat Guru Shri Kabir Charitam, pp. 406-407.

CHAPTER - IIIDEVELOPMENT OF THE KABIR PANTH:(a) Two main divisions of it :

The early history of the Kabir Panth is too obscure to draw a clear and complete picture of its earlier developments. However, on the basis of the discussion put forth in the preceding chapter, it may be assumed that there are two main and earliest divisions of it - one, having its headquarters in Kabir Chaura, Kashi; and the other, in the Chattisgarh, district of the Central Provinces. It is not possible to determine positively when and which one came firstly into existence, though it may be supposed, in view of the fact that Banaras is the place where Kabir had himself emerged, that the Banaras section would have appeared prior to that of the Chattisgarh. This point

may be supported a little by the very fact that the former is generally called the Pāp (means father) section, and the later as the Māi (means mother) section.

The Kabir Chaura Section :-

For the gurus of this section there are two lists available, one is provided by Westcott and the other by Keay.¹ Therefore, it seems better to account them both, so that they might be compared easily.

¹ Westcott, op. cit., p. 92; Keay, op. cit., p. 93

Westcott

Names of Mahant	Samadhi at	Year of Office	Approximate date of installation	Key (give only the name of Mahants)
Shyam Dass	Magahar	28	1491?	Kabir Surat Gopal
Lal Dass	Magahar	29	1519?	Gyandas
Hari Dass	Magahar	18	1541?	Shyamdas
Surat Gopal Dass	Jagannath	35	1559	Ialdas
Gyan Dass	Jagannath	25	1594	Haridas
Sital Dass	Goya	24	1619	Shitaldas
Sukh Dass	Niru Tila	20	1643	Sukhdas
Hulas Dass	Niru Tila	26	1663	Huladdas
Madho Dass	Niru Tila	20	1689	Madhavedas
Kokil Dass	Niru Tila	21	1709	Kokildas
Ram Dass	Niru Tila	29	1730	Ramdas
Maha Dass	Niru Tila	22	1759	Mahadas
Hari Dass	Niru Tila	20	1781	Haridas
Sukh Dass	Kabir Chaura	27	1801	Sharandas
Saran Dass	Kabir Chaura	16	1828	Poorandas
Puran Dass	Kabir Chaura	18	1844	Nirmaldas
Nirmal Dass	Kabir Chaura	22	1862	Rangidas
Ranghi Dass	Kabir Chaura	15	1884	Guru Prasad
Guru Prasad Dass	Kabir Chaura	8	1899	Premdas
Amritdas	Present			Ram Vitasdas

It is to be noticed that the list provided by Westcott is comparatively more informative, as it gives not only the names of the Mahants but also describes their tenures of office as well as their Samadhis (tombs); and yet it seems to be not very authentic, because it is simply based on the hearsay account from any vairagi at Kashi. The other list provided by Key, however, seems to be more reliable, because it tally with the list of Kedarnath Divedi,¹ which is based on the account of the Guru Mahatma, a Kabirpanthi work. Anyhow, the difference between these two lists seems to be sometimes only of sequence and the names are generally the same with a little difference of their numbers. In Westcotts list the name of Sukhdas is twice mentioned; which is an error. This may be confirmed by the fact that the only tomb of Sukhdas is in the Niru Tila and there is no tomb like this within the compound of Kabir Chaura contrary to the information of Westcott, as we shall see subsequently. Besides, the last two names have also been missed in his list.

1 Kedarnath Divedi, Kabir Aur Kabir Panth, p. 164.

Anyhow, we have already discussed in the preceding chapter that many of the Kabirpanthi works prepared under the Kabir Chaura Section speak of Surat Gopal (who is said to have flourished between 1559 and 1594) as the founder of this section and sometimes also as the first Acharys after Kabir there.¹ But the difficulty is that the tombs of all the early gurus including that of Kabir prior to Sukhdas are elsewhere than Kabir Chaura (Benares),² on the basis of which many of the historians have derived the conclusion that the Panth before Sukhdas would not have

1 For instance, See Guru Mahatma, pp. 1, 2.

On the basis of the account provided in Bhakti Pushpanjali of Hari Sharan Goswami (p. 5, 10th Math, Chapra, 1950 A.D.), Kedarnath (op. cit., p. 163) has pointed it out that the name of Surat Gopal was firstly Sarvajit, a Brahman of great literary career, who having been defeated by Kabir in any religious discussion, became his disciple and henceforth his first name was replaced by Surat Gopal or Shruti Gopal. The work, Amar Sukh Nidhan, is said to have been his own creation but Kedarnath considers it doubtful.

2 Out of the first six Gurus of this section of the tombs of Surat Gopal and his disciple named Gyan Das are said to be in Jagannath, and that of Sital Das in Gaya. But nothing is known about the remaining three.

established its headquarters there.¹ As the first burrial (i.e., of Sukhdeo) is in Niru Tila, it is stressed by Keay that the compound of Niru Tila would have been acquired by his time (1643 - 1643) in mid of the 17th century, and Kabir Chaura still later. Then, as the first burrial of a guru (i.e., the 14th Guru, Sarandas) in Kabir Chaura is of early 19th century, round about which Raja Balvant Singh (d. 1770) and his son and successor Chat Singh were patrons of the Panth, it is further stressed by him, it may be said that the Kabir Chaura compound might have been acquired in their time.²

However, at present the Math consists of two Courtyards, the Kabir Chaura³ proper and the

1 Westcott, op. cit., p. 92; Keay, op. cit., p. 94; P.R. Chaturvedi, Uttari Bharat Ki Sant Prampara, p. 302; Kedarnath, op. cit., pp. 162, 164.

2 Keay op. cit., p. 94; also see the description provided by P.R. Chaturvedi, op. cit., p. 302.

3 The name given to it as 'Kabir Chaura' was because it occupies the traditional site upon which Kabir is said to have taught his disciples, and the Shrine of him is said to have built over the same spot where he used to depart his teachings.

Nīru Tītā,¹ which are connected by a bridge thrown across a narrow street. Both of them are surrounded by various buildings, though the main enclosure is comparatively large containing with some more buildings than the later which is said to be built for only the female Bairagis known as Mallog.² The main court yard, contains a Mandir (temple),³ a Gaddi, five Samadhis

- 1 This is the traditional site of the house of Nīru and Nīma, the parents or the foster - parents of Kabir, in the centre of which are the tombs of them. There are some other tombs also which would be discussed subsequently.
- 2 The female devotees are given the title of 'Mallog' (Mothers) because all Sadhus are required to treat them with respect due to a mother from her son.
- 3 It is remarked by Westcott that there was originally no Mandir, and it was in subsequent periods that the Kabir Panthis, having been influenced by other religious ideas, established their own arrangements. See, his work, op.cit., p. 69.

The Mandir is now built of white marble. It appears from an inscription there that it was repaired by Maharnai Panna Kusauri in 1959 under Ram Vilas who was then the Guru of this Section and having been on his post for about 50 years brought many changes in buildings under his guidance. It is told by the present Mahant that when the foundation of this Mandir was made, a copy of Bijak in a stone box along with many other things appeared and therefore it was henceforth named as the Bijak Mandir.

(tombs)¹ and many quarters for guest - Sadhus visiting this place. Other constructions are still going on there. The cave therein which is said to be very ancient is also now being repaired, in which some rooms are built for scholars working on Sanskrit literature. Of the possessions belonging to the Math, are a Topi (Cap), a Sehli (or the woollen necklace), the Khanraou (a pair of wooden Sandal) some pictures and a copy of the Bijak, which all are considered to be inherited by the Kabir Panthis from their Adi Guru Kabir; and therefore are of great value in their eyes.

1 Out of these five tombs one is called Samadhi Mandir, for which the present Mahant tells that Kabir was himself living there while he was of ten years' age, and therefore it was named like this. It was repaired with sand stone in 1933, as is evident from an inscription found there. The other tomb out of these is said to be of Ram Vilas.

The Chattisgarh Section:

This is the 'Mai Section of the Panth' which is generally believed to have been founded by Dherandas.¹ Its headquarters, in the words of Westcott, were originally in the neighbourhood of Jabbalpore wherefrom they were transferred to Koodarmal and once again to Damakhara (in the Chattisgarh district of the Central Provinces).² But there is no certainty with regard to either the date of its establishment or the life-time of its founder, as we have already seen and would also see subsequently. On the basis of certain evidences, however, it may be assumed that the section would not have been established before the beginning of the 17th Century A.D. But before going into the details of it, it

1 Keyy considers him the most outstanding leader after Kabir to whom the Panth owes a great deal for its development and with whom figures a large number of Kabir Panthi literature. See, op.cit., p. 97.

2 Westcott, op. cit., p. 71.

seems better to know about the gurus of this section, which might lead us to reach any conclusion.

The Mahants of the Chattisgarh Section:

All the three prominent historians of the subject concerned, viz., Westcott, Kedar Nath and Keay, have provided tables for the gurus of this section¹ -- first two give only the names and the approximate date of their installations, while the third one provides additionally the burial places of them. The following table is, therefore, prepared on the basis of the collective informations taken from all of them:

1 Westcott, op. cit., p. 93. Keay, op. cit., p. 99; Kedar Nath, op. cit., pp. 173-74.

The table provided by Kedar seems to be comparatively more upto date and also more reliable, because it is prepared on the basis of Vansh Parichai (a Kabir Panthi work, published from Dama Khara) and the letters and Punjas of some of the gurus, while the sources of the other two historians are - not known --- they are perhaps based on simply the hearsay accounts provided to them by the Kabir Panthis.

Name	Approximate date of installation			Burial Place ¹
	Westcott	Kavy	Kadarnath (his dates in Samvat, so converted into A.D.)	
Dharandas	--	1699	Beginning of the 17th C.	Puri (Jagannath)
Churaman Das	1694	1644	1618	Kudarnal (near Janjgir)
Sundarshannam	1714	1669	1643	Ratanpur (Distt. Bilaspur)
Kulpatilam	1734	1694	1668	Kudarnal
Premodas (Guru Bala Pir)	1754	1719	1693	Mandala
Kawal Das	1774	1744	1722	Dhamda (Drug District)
Amol Das	1794	1769	1737	Mandala
Suresh Sanchinam	1814	1794	1768	Singori (14 miles away from Chindwara on Seoni road)
Naqas	1834	1819	1796	Kawardha
Pal Das	1854	1844	1823	"
Praghat Das	1874	1869	1863 (Praghat died in 1874 and henceforth to 1894 the Gaddi was vacant) ²	"
Dhire Das	1894	1894	1894	Dhamakhera
Ugr Das	1897	1897	1897	-
Dayan Das	-	1914	1914 (Again the Gaddi was vacant from 1927 to 1937)	-
Grandhram Das	-	-	1938	-

1 It may be borne in mind that though the presence of so many tombs especially in Mandala indicates that the Kabir Panthi Sadhus would have been accustomed to be generally buried
Contd.

It is to be noticed that though the names given in all the three tables are mostly the same,¹ and yet the dates of their installation and thereby automatically their office tenures at least upto the period of Praghatnam differ sharply from each other. The calculation for this in Westcott's table is based on simply the traditional supposition that each of them (except Dhirajnam who was alive only for three years

within the campus of their working centres, and yet it is not at all sure that a guru buried at a certain place would necessarily have got also his gaddi there, because it is doubtful that those Sadhus who died while going on any tour or pilgrimage could have also surely got buried at their relative centres.

- 2 During this period there was a conflict between Dhirajnam and Ugranam with regard as to who should succeed Praghatnam. The case was decided by the Bombay High Court in 1894 A.D. in favour of Dhirajnam who was the legitimate successor and therefore the Gaddi was filled with him in that year.
- 1 The little difference among all the three tables is that Westcott begins his table with the name of Churamani leaving aside altogether the case of Dharamdas, and also no mention is made for the last two names; while in Key's table there is the lack of only one name, i.e., Grandhramuni. Hence, the table provided by Madarnath seems to be more upto date.

after having been installed to the Gaddi) held office for 70 years and 25 days, by which the installation of Churamani is drawn in 1694 A.D.¹ He has further mentioned about the statement of any Mahant, according to which, the regular office tenure for each guru was for 25 years and 20 days, and by which the installation of Churamani appears to have taken place in 1654 A.D. But it seems really not possible and reasonable, as is questioned by Keay,² that each guru would have held office for exactly any specified or calculated period. It is significant to note that even if we consider the assumption of the average of 25 years and 20 days for each guru correct, these dates go back no more than 1696 A.D. Hence, there seems to be no weight in the conclusion of Westcott that the Panth was founded some 278 years back from the installation - time of Ugranam, i.e., about 1628 A.D.,³ and neither in that of the general belief

1 Westcott's table and account, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

2 Keay, op. cit., p. 99

3 Westcott, op. cit., p. 72.

that Dharamdas was direct disciple or immediate successor of Kabir. Mentioning the fact that the average length of life in a country like India is short, Keay feels it difficult to suppose that the average tenure of office for these gurus would have been longer than 25 years, and therefore, he further suggests, either some names have been dropped out of the list or otherwise he was definitely not an immediate disciple of Kabir (whose date of death generally accepted is 1518 A.D.), but would have lived about the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th centuries. This conclusion seems to be also corroborated by the list of the Hathkesar gurus, as we shall see later on. But the conclusion of Kedarnath Divedi, which is based on the account produced in Raghavadas's *Bhaktmāla* (Samvat 1717 / A.D. 1660), is that Dharamdas would not have flourished before the beginning of the 17th Century. It is further stated by him that it was any part of the 17th Century when Dharamdas established his section of the Panth.¹

1 Kedarnath Divedi, op. cit., pp. 162, 164.

Therefore, it seems possible, as is suggested by Keay, that Dharamdas would have become a convert to the Panth while going on a pilgrimage to the north, and when he returned to his own land he would have gained many other converts and thereby would have become the leader of the Panth in this region. But the difficulty is that the case of Dharamdas is itself clouded with mystery, so as no clear and complete picture of him is possible to be concerned.¹

Anyhow, it is generally believed that Dharamdas was born in any Kasandh Pania family of Bandhogarh.²

1 The problem has already been discussed in the preceding chapter. It is interesting that just as the life - history of Dharamdas is clouded with various controversies, there is no clarity with regard to what was his actual relationship with his guru, Kabir. The descriptions provided on the subject by the following authors would not be out of interest:

- Westcott, op. cit., p. 71; Keay, op. cit., pp. 98, 104; Kedarnath, op. cit., pp. 169, 186.

It is further interesting that all such descriptions may broadly be divided into two parts - one, that he was Kabir's direct disciple and therefore succeeded him after his demise; and the other, that Kabir appeared before him miraculously after his death and instructed him for the organization of the Panth.

2 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 169. Keay also believes on it and thereby says that his descendants still inter-marry with this sect. But it appears from the account of Sukrit Dhyani (a Kabir Panthi work) that Dharamdas was the son of any Mahesh and was, in his infant stage, saved from death by a Gyani

Contd.

His wife's name was Ameena by whom, it is said, he had two sons named Narayandas and Churamani. It is further believed that the second son Churamani was born by the grace of Kabir because the first one Narayan Das had refused to accept him as Guru, and therefore it was Churamani who succeeded Dharamdas as the first Acharya of the Vansh Gaddi by the name of Muktamani.¹

However, the whole history of this section may broadly be divided into two phases - one, from Muktamani

(i.e., Kabir) who entered into his body."

With regard to the situation of Bandhogarh, however, it is reported by Keay that it lies in the north - west corner of Rewah State, not far from the town of Umaria, where there is now the coalfields and a railway station. He further adds that it was formerly the capital of Benghal Kings, but in 1597 A.D. it was taken away by Akbar and hencefore the capital was transferred to Rewah, and the State is now also called by this name. See, op. cit., pp. 97 - 98.

1 Ibid., p. 98; Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 169.

By mentioning the general traditional belief that Churamani was born in 1516 A.D., Westcott says that this date is apparently chosen to bring his birth within the life-time of Kabir.

- See, op. cit., pp. 71-72.

However, it appears from the Kabirpanthi accounts that it was Kabir himself who installed Churamani to the Gaddi, on the occasion of which he foretold that his descendants should sit on the Gaddi for 42 generations and also declared that the right to communicate Mantra would be confined to his descendants.

to Surat Sanshi; and the Second, from Haqam onwards. In the first phase of it, we get the lives of most of the Gurus glorified with miraculous and talismanic stories just like found in the cases of the Siddhas (ascetic practices),¹ while the second phase seems to be filled with various conflicts and clashes among the Kabir Panthi leaders themselves, as a result of which many of its sub-branches established sometimes even independently in many parts of the country.²

The legal wife of Surat Sanshi had no son and therefore Hansdas who is said to be the son of a Dasi (Slave girl) was installed to the Gaddi with the name of Haqam. But some of the Kabir Panthis could not tolerate the son of a Dasi on the Acharyapad. Sewadas

1 Kedarnath has provided a long description of it. See, op. cit., pp. 174-176.

This was, infact, the tendency of the age and therefore there would have been scarcely any medieval Saint excused from the enrichment of such stories. As to how the lives of the Muslim rulers and Saints during those days are glorified in a way beyond possibility is successfully depicted in Afshanai Shahan, a source work of the Lodi period. Besides, there are many stories narrated in Waqiat-i-Mustaqi, which shows how the traditions event within a short span of time developed.

2 P.R. Chaturvedi, op. cit., p. 306; Kedarnath, op.cit., pp. 176 - 178.

claimed against him for Gaddi, but the King of Nagpur gave his judgement in favour of Haqnam and therefore he remained on the Gaddi. Seeing this situation, the Mahant of Hatkesar detached from the Chattisgarh branch and Sewadas also established an independent branch in a village named Nadiya.

Another Shiksha among the successors of Dharamdas took place in 1894 A.D. when Praghatnam (a guru of the older branch) died at Kawardha (where he had his gaddi). There were two wives of him - one was legitimate and the other illegitimate having been born of a low caste. As both of them were having sons (by former Dhirajnam and by later Ugranam), there appeared the problem of succession, so much so that the case went to the Bombay High Court, wherefrom the decision was extended in favour of the first and the legitimate son of Praghatnam. Hence, Dhirajnam occupied the Gaddi at Kawardha in Samvat 1951/A.D. 1894. On the other hand, Ugranam after having been defeated in his object retired to Kudarnal, near Janjgir, and afterwards to a newly founded monastery at Damakhara in Raipur district.¹ Ugranam

1. Keay, op.cit., p. 101.

was very influential man and therefore, he, inspite of having been defeated in the case of succession, got the favour of majority of the Kabir Panthis, while Dhirajnam was not so popular among them.¹

However, after three years Dhirajnam died and the gaddi of the legitimate line was shifted to Banni, a village only few miles from Kawardha, where its popularity decreased considerably.² It was proposed by some of the Kabir Panthis that a Sadhu named Yuglanand (one of the disciples of Dhirajnam) should officiate as guru for the remaining terms, but objection to it was raised by many of them on the ground that he was not a descendant of Dharamdas. It was at this juncture that Ugranam was duly accepted as a guru, who was then

1 Key, op.cit., p. 101; Kadamath, op.cit., p.176.

It is stated by Key that Ugranam enjoyed the real homage of the followers of the sect who used to say that Dhiraj was simply the official guru while Ugranam was the guru of the people.

2 Key, op. cit., pp. 101 - 102.

in a newly established Math at Damakhern. Besides, the lady known as Dadi Saheb who was solely responsible for the aforesaid proposal continued to exercise influence at Kudarnal. Moreover, Yuglanand along with other discontented Sadhus retired to Bombay where they subsequently established themselves.

After Dayanand's death there appeared again a somewhat similar dispute in this section of the Pauth. There were three wives of him but none had any issue and therefore the gaddi became then vacant in the lack of the legitimate successor of it. To solve the problem, a large council was held in Kudarnal in Samvat 1985 / A.D. 1928. It was suggested by Vichardas that the Vansh Pratha should be converted into Nad - Pranali by ascending any able Nad putra (a person Nad by caste) on the gaddi, but this proposal was sharply objected by others. Anuragdas, the Mahant of Sewali, was of the opinion that so far the real successor of the Vanshgaddi was not available, some one of ability should perform the duties of it as a Diwan. At this juncture a committee based on twenty-four members selected by the present Kabir Panthis was formed, out of which only one was to be elected for the same. For this stood up Gosain Arjundas of Damakhern, Mahant Panchandas of Mau,

Mahant Kashidas of Rusera, etc. Among these, Mahant Panchandas gained the support of the majority of the members but he withdrew him willingly in favour of Kashidas, and thus Kashidas occupied the Vanshgaddi in Samvat 1986/A.D. 1929.¹ Then a council, known as Kabir council, was formed which was based on twenty-one members of the Pradhau Samiti and sixty members of Prabhand Samiti.²

Soon afterwards, however, a large meeting was called upon in chanpa, in which it was proposed that the Kabir council should be dissolved and instead of it a man of ability should be installed as Vansh Acharya by giving him the real authority of the Math concerned. But this was also opposed by some of the Kabir Panthis and consequently the Nad Vansh instead of Vansh Gaddi was formed in Kharasya especially by the help of Rajirao Kante (of Gwalior), Shastri Vichardas, Swami Yuglanand Bihari and Motidas (of Barauda). It is significant

1 It is to be borne in mind that Kashidas was not installed as an Acharya of the Vansh Gaddi but simply as a Diwan to manage the Math in lack of any real successor of it. It was due to this reason that his name is not kept in the table of the Mahants of this section.

2 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 177.

that henceforth there appeared the two currents side by side of a single force: On the one hand, Nad vansh was formed in Kharasya; and, on the other, the wives of Dayanand took up a child of any Nannhe sahib (of the same Vansh of Dharamdas) and placed him on Gaddi in Samvat 1996/A.D. 1938 by the name of Grandhra muniam. But as the child was infant, the mothers used to perform the duties of the Math as regente on his behalf upto Samvat 2010/A.D. 1953, and then, however, he was given the complete charge of it.¹ In this way, however, the Chattisgarh Section was broadly divided into two parts, some of the branches went towards the Nadvansh or the Vanshgaddi of Kharasya, while the others still remained attached with the so called 'older line' or the Vansh Gaddi of Danakhera.² It is significant that there are still some other Kabir Panthi leaders who claim to be the descendant of Dharamdas and therefore call themselves as Vanshgurus; One of these lives at Bandhogarh (in Rewah State), the original home

1 Kadamnath, op. cit., p. 177

2 Ibid., p. 178

of Dharamdas, and claims to be a descendant of Narayandas, the elder son of Dharamdas. But nothing is known about the followers of this line. Similarly, there are some others who live at Khetoli and Silondi, Village in the Jubbalpore district.¹ But nothing can be said in the present situation with regard to either their relation or difference to the branch of Damakhara.

Hence, the second phase of the Chattisgarh Section is full of various sorts of disturbances. It is, however, strange to note that even during this period of disturbance its popularity increased. This was largely because those who became discontented, in a way or the other, retired to the places other than their original ones and thereby established their own Matha, as a result of which emerged various sub-branches of it in many parts of India.² Its popularity

1 Kay, op. cit., p. 102.

2 The places where the branches of it, whether independent or dependent, established are reckoned by Kedar in two shifts (See, op. cit., p. 176 and p. 178), which are as follows: Kawardha, Damakhara, Banni, Sajar, Khair (Bihar), Barauda, Surat, Nagpur, Kudarnal, Ratanpur, Mandala, Sahsau (Reyast Chatarpur), Dhamdha, Poona, Bundelkhand, etc.

was so widened during this period that its Maths were formed even out of India in foreign lands. The production of literature concerning to it also went a head, and thus a large number of Kabir Panthi works appeared and got popularity every where.

After Hagnām, Pāknām occupied the Gaddi, popularised the Panth a lot by bringing unity in it. Many councils were called upon and thereby were formulated the necessary rules and disciplines which helped the growth of its popularity, when he died his son Praghatnam took up the task and tried bring it ahead. It was during his period that Panth was popularized in even the foreign lands like Africa etc. Then, Ugrasam was also very eminent leader of it. He popularized the Panth very well. In Samvat 1860/A.D. 1903, a large council of the Kabir Panthis was held, which continued for five months. As a result of this, a heavy amount of literature was produced and published rapidly. Besides the older works, many new works were also compiled and published like Kabir Siddhanta Bodhini of Mahant Sambhudas Indori. Kabir Sagar and Kabiropasana Padditi (edited by yuglanand Bihari) became so popular that many editions of it were published.

Then again in Samvat 1863-64/A.D. 1906-1907 a 'Sant Samagam' was held, in which the leaders tried to

solve the problem of modification and publication of ancient works. Hence a press known as 'Kabir Dharam Prakash Press' was opened in Dama Khara, in which, beside the Kabir Panthi works, various sorts of magazines were also published. In Samvat 1965/A.D. 1908, other councils were called upon in many places, as a result of which many other publications of Kabirpanthi works took place.

CHAPTER - IVDEVELOPMENT OF THE KABIR PANTH(b) Other dependent and independent branches:-

The popularity of the Kabir Panth is not confined to only these two divisions of it, but its centres have now spread in almost all parts of the country. Of course, most of them are still the branches of either of the two, and yet there are many which have established themselves as independent ones. There are still some other such sects which seem to have as such no relation with any any of the sections of the Panth, and yet they are counted among the branches of it. In the present condition, however, it seems difficult to determine as to which branch is related to which of the established sections. But roughly it may be said that the Lahar Tara, Maghar, Kabir Bagh (Allahabad) and others likewise are the branches of the Kabir Chaura section. Similarly, among the branches of the Chattisgarh

section are generally counted the Damakhara, Mandala, Kawardha, etc. Among those who have detached their relations from the aforesaid section are said to be the Hathesar, Kabir Chaura (Jagdishpuri), Kabir Nirnaya Mandir (Burbanpur), Kabir Math (Lukshimpur Baghicha), etc. It is to be borne in mind that inspite of the fact that they have now proclaimed themselves as independent ones, and yet most of their ritualistic practices and ceremonies seem to be similar to those maintained in any of the still attached branches of the Chattisgarh section. There are, however, some other branches of the Panth like the Fetuha (Patna), Bidupur (Muzaffarpur), Bhaktahi or Dhananti (District Saran), Acharya Gaddi (Bareilly, Jaunpur), Vachan Vanshi Acharya Guddi (Rusra), Ram Kabir Panth, etc., which maintain their own observances and practices often distinct from others, and therefore they are said to be exclusively independent ones: IT is significant that they have now established their own sub-branches in many places just as the other sections of the Panth.

I - The Branches of the Kabir Chaura Section

(1) Lahar Tara :

About two miles away from Kabir Chaura in North-west is the Lahar Tara or Lahar Talao, a shallow tank

overgrown with weeds, where, according to the Kabir Panthi tradition, the infant Kabir was found by Niru and Nima. There is a small courtyard in which there is a shrine which marks the spot. It is under the charge of a Pujari appointed from Kabir Chaura. It is governed and managed by the Mahant of Kabir Chaura.

(2) Magahar :

Magahar¹ is the traditional site of Kabir's death. The Kabir Panthi Math, which is situated on the bank of the Ami river and which is now given a separate direct road (built a year back), is divided into two portions - one is called the Muslim Kabir Panthi Math and the other that of the Hindus. It is generally believed that there was previously only one Shrine of Kabir which, according to his teachings, was unanimously visited by his followers of both the communities, and that it was due to the communal clashes later occurred between them that the Hindu Kabir

1 It is a village about 16 miles away from Gorakhpur, but in Basti district. From 1300 to 1567 A.D. it was the capital of the Samet Rajputs, as is reported by Westcott, op.cit., p. 67.

Panthis built for them a separate Math.¹ This may be supported by some references which we shall discuss subsequently. Anyhow, the two divisions of it are now distinctly visible there having been divided by a high wall. The maintenance of both of them has, however, equally been taken under the government since 1909 A.D., and therefore many of the buildings of both the Matha along with their enclosures have been now reconstructed or otherwise thoroughly repaired and furnished.

(a) The Muhammadan Monastery:²

It is in the hands of a family of Muslim weavers who claim to have had the charge of it from the time of Kabir's death. Kabir's shrine situated in the centre of the enclosure is built like a temple and surrounded by a platform, within which the exact tomb is always

1 Keay, Kabir & His Followers, p. 96; Kedarnath, Kabir Aur Kabir Panth, p. 165.

It is added by Keay that a mela (fare) was also held there with the efforts of the followers of both the communities but later on friction arose which led to the building of the second Hindu Shrine. In an affray between the Hindu and Muhammadan followers of Kabir, he further reports, a Hindu custodian named Mandas was also killed.

2 It was restored in 1567 A.D. by Nawab Fida Khan, the officer in command of the imperial army which occupied the city in that year. - Westcott, op. cit., p. 67.

There is now also a garden adjacent to the Math, which is maintained with a tube-well.

covered by a piece of white cloth. At its right corner, there is a small covered building where the custodian of the shrine has his gaddi but practically sits only when the ceremonies concerned are held there. In the back of the platform, on the same side, there is a much smaller tomb which is said to be the tomb of Kamal and which is now reconstructed. Within the enclosure there is another tomb which is said to be that of Bijli Khan, the Muhammadan Pathan ruler and one of the followers of Kabir, who is said to have built the rausa over Kabir's tomb. There are still other two tombs, one is said to be that of a Mujawar named Nematulla and the other that of his son named Abdul Ghani who is also said to have been a Mujawar there.

Though no list of Muslim office - holders is now available, the tombs of some mujawars over there indicate that it would have been maintained by them in continuous terms. This may be supported by the fact that the man in charge of this shrine is called 'Ghani Karan Kabir'.¹ The present Gaddi nashin is

1 It is reported by Key that during the time when he was preparing his work the office was held by a woman though practically managed by her husband. See, op. cit., p. 85 or 86.

Mansoorul Haq and the present mufawar is Abbas Ali. There are now still some other persons working in this Math on behalf of the government, for example three malis and one tube-well operator.

With regard to the economic resources of this Math, it is told by the present mufawar that there is forty or fifty high land in Karmson (a village near Khalilabad) in the name of Mansoorul Haq, the present incharge of this Math.

(b) The Hindu Kabirpanthi Math:

It is comparatively more graceful and well furnished. But the buildings newly constructed within its enclosure indicate that it would have been established in a later period. Besides, the very fact that it established not at once but in many instalments is evident from the following facts: Outside the enclosure and beside the main entrance, there is a board placed on behalf of the archaeological survey department, on which it is noted down that "this Samadhi Mandir was repaired under Acharya Guru Prasad in 1898 A.D." Then, there is an inscription from which it appears that the outer flourstone was placed on behalf of Shrimati Rama Devi (the wife of Lalchand) of Rajputana under Baba

Indar Das. There is another inscription which shows that the floor of the temple was built by Sewakdas ji Bhanuji Baghela of Kathiawar in 1953 A.D. Besides, the floor of the inner side of the exact Samadhi of Kabir and the Samadhi itself are now made of white marble, where several unreliable couplets of Kabir are inscribed.

Anyhow, Kabir's Samadhi (Shrine) situated on the one side of the enclosure is similar to though smaller than the shrine of the Muhammadan Math. The exact Samadhi of Kabir, which is always covered with a piece of red cloth instead of white one as is visible in the Muhammadan Math, is said to be built on the same spot where Kabir used to sit awaiting for death, which, in the light of the above discussion, seems to be doubtful. Similarly, the other Shrine found there and traditionally related to Kamal seems to be also not reliable. The enclosure also contains some quarters, just like the Kabir Chaura compound, for guest-sadhus, which are termed there as 'Sant Niwas'.

Of the possessions of it, there is a picture of Kabir (in which both Surat Gopal and Dharmdas are represented as kneeling before Kabir, while Kamal is

shown standing behind him with a fan in his hand)¹ and a topi which is said to have belonged to the former Pujari named Sewakdas ji Bhanji Baghela.

This Math is fully under the control of Kabir Chaura division², the Mahant of which comes here once or twice a year especially in the month of Aghan (November - December) for inspection and to administer as well the Jyoti Prasad (i.e., a Sacramental meal). Besides, the Pujari, by whom the whole Math is managed, is appointed by him and therefore he may be called the representative of the aforesaid division. There is no list available of the Pujaris concerned. Westcott has, however, quoted the Basti Gazetteer, wherefrom it appears that it was 1764 A.D. when a Hindu Mahant first arrived at Magahar.³ The present Pujari working there is named Lakshmandas.

- 1 It appears from the account of Westcott (op.cit., p. 69) that this picture was previously in the Kabir Chaura Math.
- 2 It seems not irrelevant to note that about a mile away from this Math in northward, there is another Math managed by a Pujari, which also is said to be under the control of the same division. It is supposed by the Kabir Panthis there that it was the original temple of Kabir.
- 3 Westcott, op. cit., p. 67.

Connected with this Math is a gallery across which is a garden belonging to the Math, from where, in the same direction, appears a place like a cave which is termed there as 'Bhūmidhara'. It is said to have been the original meditating place of Kabir, and the appearance of it also leads us to the same conclusion. In the back of the aforesaid Math, there is a small mosque for the Muslim Kabir Panthis.

It is reported by Kedarnath that a fair (mela) in respect of Kabir began to be held there since 1933 A.D. by the permission of the Commissioner of Gorakhpur named R.C.A.S. Hawart, but after three years, as he was transferred this system stopped.¹ It has, however, been now revived but its importance seems to be now no more than a small market.

(3) Kabir Bagh, Gaya (Allahabad):

This is another important branch of the Kabir Chauri Section, where previously there were gardens of various fruits in two or three acres,² but now they

1 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 165

2 Ibid. p. 165

are converted into forming lands. Ram Rahas is said to have been the first Mahant of this place, who lived between 1782 and 1866 A.D.¹ Like the Hindu Math at Maghar, this is also under the control of the aforesaid Section.

There are many more monasteries connected with this section of the Panth in many parts of the country, for example in Nadiyad (Barauda), Ahmadabad etc., But most of its popularity is confined in the town areas of U.P. like Saharanpur, Hardwar, Ghazipur, Gorakhpur etc.,

1 For the details of his life-history, see Ibid., pp. 165-66.

He was born in a Brahman family in a village named Tikari (situated 15 miles away from Gaya) in 1782 A.D. His father, Pandit Bhagwan Deva Divedi, is said to have been the minister of Mitrajit who was then the King of Tikari. He was well versed in Sanskrit literature. Since 1812 A.D. he began to lead the life of a vairagi, and it was then that he, having been influenced by any Kabir Panthi saint, attached himself to the Panth and henceforth began to learn the Bijak from Guru Dayal Sahab of the Fatuha Math. He is also said to have learnt the Bijak under the guidance of Guru Sharan Sahab, the 14th Acharya of the Kabir Chaura. In his Panth Granthi there are several lines where he has mentioned the names of both the gurus. He died in 1866 A.D.

II - The Branches of the Chattisgarh Section

(1) Damakhara :

It is a village lying just off the main road from Raipur to Bilaspur about midway of them, and is about 16 miles away from Bhalapara Station on the main line of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway.¹ This is a very large and open village where along with the Kabir Panthis live the persons of other faiths also, and in one part of it is a temple of the Hindus.

Anyhow, the Kabir Panthi Math situated in this Village is said to be of that line of the descendants of Dharamdas which has the greatest following.² It is a very rich branch of the Panth, and the guru in charge there seems to be very fond of wealth just like the Suhrawardi Saints of the Muslim mysticism. He lives in a fair sized house and possesses a considerable wealth, and the extent of his luxury is that it is not easy to meet him for even his followers who are

1 Key, op. cit., p. 102.

2 We have already provided a table for the gurus while dealing with the Chattisgarh Section.

always expected to bring a substantial offering. Anyhow, close by the leading to the courtyard of his house there is a covered platform on which is the gaddi, where the guru sometimes sits to receive his followers. Adjoining the courtyard of the house there is a small building somewhat like a temple, inside of which the guru sits only when the mela is held.¹ In the proper Math (monastery) there is the arrangement for Sadhus of the sect to stay while visiting the place.

(?) Mandala :

At Mandala (also in the Central Provinces) the headquarters of the Panth is situated on the one side of the river Narbada. The sacred enclosure is in the form of a square, each side of which is having the length of about 30 or 40 feet. It is covered all around by a wall in a way that one side of it is being higher than others having with an arched gate-way. In

1 A large mela is said to be held there during the month of Magh (February) on the day called Basant Panchami. Then the guru sits on the gaddi and receives homage and offerings from his followers who all are fed on this occasion for three days from the bounty of the guru.

one corner of it there is a small building having been covered with a dome and thereby giving the impression of a temple.

In the enclosure there are two large Shrines and a small one which are said to be respectively those of the former gurus named Promodnam and Amolnam and the third one of the foster mother of Promod. In the front of these shrines there is a small chabutra on which is fixed a flag staff with a white flag. On each tomb is placed a pair of wooden sandals. Similarly, on the outside of the enclosure there are other three small tombs which are said to be those of the Sadhus of the Panth.

(3) Kawardha

Kawardha is the name of a town situated in the Central Provinces, which is often said to be a corruption of 'Kabirdham' i.e., Abode of Kabir, but this etymology seems to be doubtful. The Kabir Panthis now living there are of the opinion that Haqnam was the first guru who had his gaddi there. But there is now no guru, and the Mahant in charge has apparently relationships with the gurus of both Bamni and Damakhara.

The former residence of the gurus at Kawardha is in a narrow street and is not a very pretentious building. In the court yard of it there are four graves of the former gurus, and the fifth one, which is comparatively smaller, is said to be that of the mother of Haqam. All the five graves are built of heavy masonry and are in a straight row occupying the whole length of the courtyard.

But there are many more branches of this Section, which are spread in many parts of the country, like Kudarnal, Ramini, Kharasia, Ratanpur, Mau (Chapra), Dhandha, Poona Math, Kabir Ashram (Jamnagar), Kabir Mandir (Siya Bagh, Barauda), Kabir Mandir (Surat, Sanpa), Maths of Nagpur, Jubbalpore, Bharatpur, Gwalior, etc. Besides, it is said that its branches have spread in even some of foreign countries like Moriasos, South Africa, Ceylon, Burma, Bhootan etc.¹ But nothing is now known about them.

¹ The description provided by Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 209.

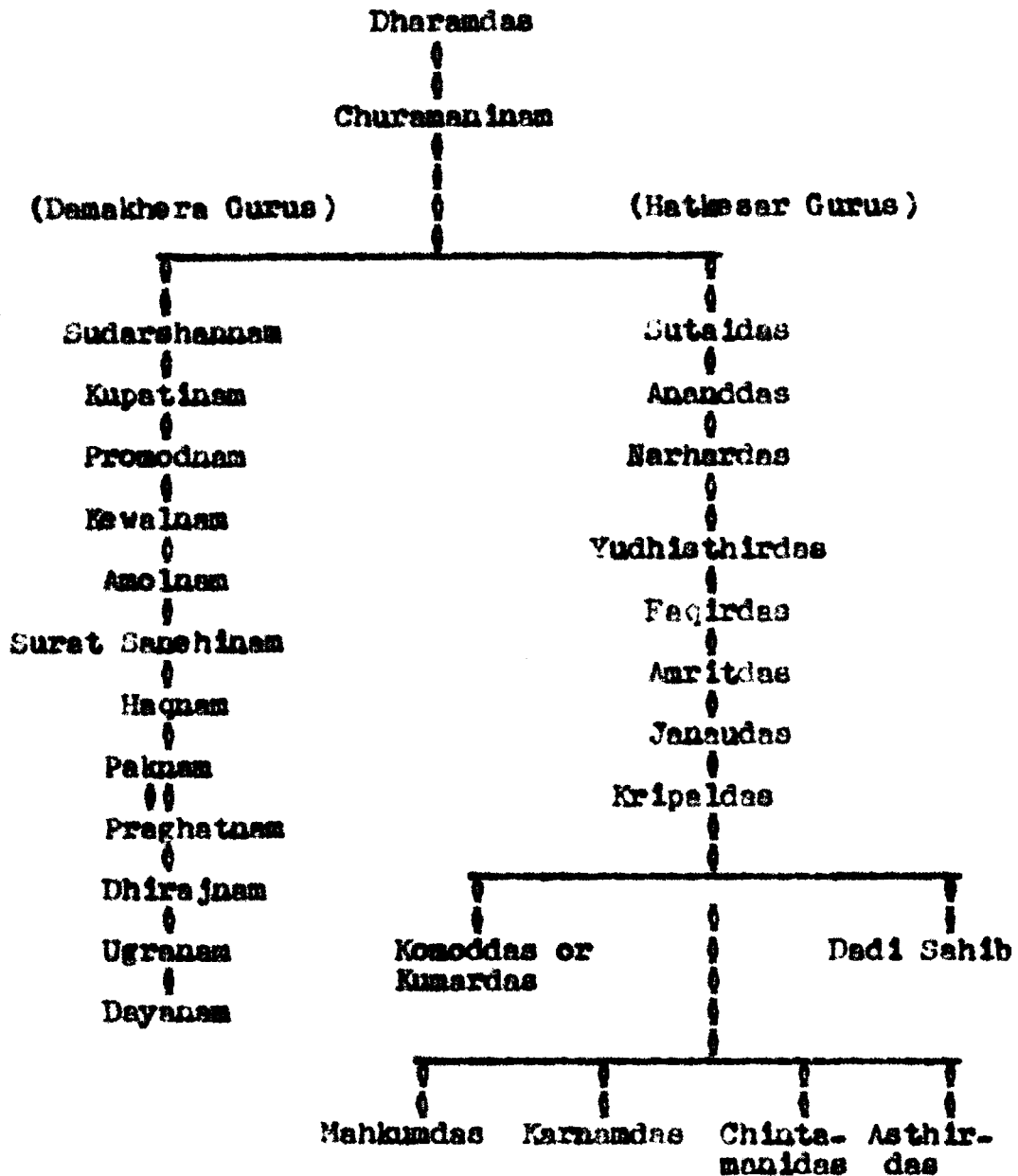
III - The detached branches of the Chattisgarh Section:

(1) Hatkesar :

The Hatkesar¹ branch may be considered as a separate offshoot of the Damakhara section. We have already discussed that there were two wives of Muktesani and both of them were having sons - by the first wife Sutaidas and by the second Sudarshannam. As the son of the first wife was born two days later than that of the second, Sudarshan succeeded the Gaddi. But the decision was challenged by the first wife on legitimate grounds, and when she got a failure in her case, she came to the south with her son Sutaidas and formed a Math in the village of Hatkesar. Therefore, it seems better to provide herewith a joint table for the gurus of both the branches.²

1 Hatkesar is a village on the northern outskirts of Dhamtari, a small town in the Central Provinces.

2 The table has already been provided by Kesay (op.cit., p. 100) and copied out by Kedarnath (op.cit., p. 179). In the line of the Hatkesar gurus some names between Narhardas and Vudhisthirdas are omitted. This seems to Kesay as confirming the late date for the establishment of Dharamdas, but Kedarnath is of the opinion that this is simply because their names are now not known to us, otherwise they were also existing. Anyhow, it is further reported by Kesay (op.cit., p. 101) and copied out by Kedarnath (op.cit., p. 180), that among the gurus of this line Vudhisthirdas, Amritdas, Janandas and Kripaldas were buried at Rudri (a small



towa about 4 miles away from Dhantari towards south-east. Faqirdas is said to be died while visiting his disciples in a place near Nagpur, so he was burried there. Then Kumardas and Dadi Sahab were burried at Hathesar, because they wished so and also because the enclosure at Rudri was practically full and there was no more place for other tombs.

It is to be noticed that upto the time of Surat Sanshi there was not only communications but also even the matrimonial relationship between the Damakhara and Hatkesar, and it was only after his death during the time of Haqum (who was illegitimate issue of Surat Sanshi by a slave girl) that the Hatkesar branch broke off connection with the older line, and henceforth both the branches used to manage their affairs separately. However, there seems to be still no theological and ceremonial differences between them, as we shall see subsequently while dealing with their teachings.

(2) Kabir Nirnaya Mandir, Burhaupur:

Keay includes it among the monasteries connected with the Kabir Chaura Section.¹ But the Kabir Panthis now living there reject the theory by arguing that this is an independent branch. On the basis of certain evidences it may be rather considered to have been previously attached with the Chattisgarh Section. It is

1 Keay, op. cit., p. 97

said that Puraṇ Saheb, the first guru of this branch,¹ used to take Punja from Paknam, a renowned guru of the Chattisgarh Section.² There are two traditions now prevalent in connection with as to how the Burhanpur branch established as an independent one: (1) that Puraṇ Saheb lived usually in Kawardha (a branch of the Chattisgarh Section) and issued from there Mantra to his disciples. As this was again the discipline of the place to which he belonged, he was, according to the decision of a local committee, kept in a room for some time as punishment. But meanwhile he composed a Stotra named Paknamastak, by the help of which he came out of the imprisonment. It was then that he went to Burhanpur and formed there an independent branch of the Panth. (2) That Puraṇ Saheb wanted Paknam's

1 It is reported by Kasy (Ibid, p. 97) that at this monastery lived about a hundred years ago a certain Puraṇ Saheb. Kedarnath has provided a brief life-history of him. See, op. cit., p. 181. According to him, Puraṇ died at the age of 32 years in 1837 A.D., by which it appears that he would have established in the first half of the 19th century A.D. He is said to have written commentaries on the Bijak and Nirnayasar and also is said to have composed also 127 verses for the work named Vairagya Shatak. His tomb is in the same Math of Burhanpur.

2 Kedarnath (op. cit., p. 180) has produced certain verses attributed to Puraṇ from Kabir Panthi Shabdawali and Nirnayasar in which the name of Paknam is repeatedly mentioned.

signature on his commentary on the Bijak, but as he was not allowed to do so he, having been detached from the former branch formed an independent branch in Buzhanpur.

It is reported by Kedarnath that there have been uptill now eight gurus in this branch, and, according to the brief life - histories subsequently provided by him for them,¹ the following table may be made provided that the informations are true and that there was no sort of interruption during the whole period under review.

1 Kedarnath, op. cit., pp. 181 - 82.

<u>Name of the Gurus</u>	<u>Date of death</u>	<u>Approximate time of office tenure</u>
1. Puraan Sahab	1837 A.D.	--
2. Hans Sahab	1853 A.D. (in Burhanpur)	16 years
3. Santosh Sahab	1863 A.D. (in Burhanpur)	10 years
4. Shri Ram Sahab ¹	1896 A.D.	33 years
5. Narottam Sahab ²	1920 A.D.	24 years
6. Kashi Sahab ³	1924 A.D. (in a village named Basai Areli or Jarai, some 30 miles away from Agra)	4 years
7. Chote Balak Sahab ⁴	1936 A.D. (in Burhanpur)	11 years
8. Ram Sarupdas	-	--

1 He was well read of Vedants and wrote a small book named Ikkis Prashna (21 questions). Besides, Sakhun Bahar Darpan was compiled under him by one of his ~~chief~~ disciples named Narayandas.

2 It is said that after Shri Ram's demise, his disciple Kalyandas was firstly installed to the gaddi, but due to his bad character he was banished from the Panth and he went to Sindhkhara where he accepted the religion of Garhaste. It was, however, after him that Narottamas occupied the gaddi. One of his chief disciples named Prem Sahab is known as the author of Timir Bhaskar.

3 There are so many works attributed to his name, some of which are as follows: Parakh Bodh, Panch Granthi, Sanyukt Nirnayasar, Vairagya Shatak, Kabir Parlokhaya, Vivek Sar, Vivek Chandrika, Nirpaksh Satya Gyan Darshan, Satya Gyan Bodh Natak, Tatwayukt Nibodh Vivek, Jai Chetan Bhed Prakash. It is further noted by Madarnath that their English translations have also been translated into Marathi and published.

4 It was during his time that Kabir Mandir of Burhanpur

Contd.

It is significant that though the branch of Burhanpur is not very old and yet a large number of its sub-branches have flourished in many parts of the country.¹ Though most of them have now been closed and yet in some places like Barra, Barhara, Chirai Bandh, Gatapar, Gulbar, Rasai, etc., its sub - branches are still alive.

(3) The Kabir Chaura, Jagdishpuri :

The Math is situated near the sea on its northern side. Kabir's Samadhi is inside of the Math, which is built so as to give the impression of a temple. In its south there is a tizla, in the mid of which there are tombs of Dharamdas, his mother Amina, Sita Ramdas, Mother Devaki, Surat Gopal, Ratna Bai, etc.

and the Math of Sindhkhara were reunited and he himself made his disciple named Ram Sarupdas the Acharya of both the places. Besides, it was he who helped economically to the publication of many works preserved at Kashi. It was then that Sakhun Bahar was modified and sent to Bombay for publication, and he himself published the Sandhya Path Mul.

1 Kedarnath has provided a long list of it. See, op. cit., p. 182.

This is considered to be an independent branch, though the systems of chauka and Arti are much similar to those maintained in the Chattisgarh Section.¹ It is interesting to note that towards the north of the main gate of the Math, there is an ordinary temple in which are placed the idols of Ram, Lakshman and Sita and they are regularly worshipped by the Sadhus of the Sect.

According to the Aaa Sagar (an unpublished work in Uria language), the Math was built some 4671 years back in the time of Indra Daman (a king of Orissa), but this argument seems to be not reliable also because the mention of the name of Dharamdas is also made there, by which it appears that the work itself would have been compiled after his emergence.²

From the same work, however, it appears that 170 gurus have been in Puri, and still some other names given in it are not illegible. But this long list seems

1 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 179

2 Ibid., p. 178.

to based on repetitions. The names of Govindas and Gobardhandas are thrice mentioned, and those of Madhava, Kamal Bezu and Karunakar have twice come, and still the name of Shyam is repeated for five times. Besides, there are some other such single names which are made two due repetition, for instance Ghan + Shyam, Biththal + Nath, Shyam + Sunder etc. They have come just one after the other. The Math, by many of it's instances like the Samadhis of the eminent personalities of the sect., seems to have been considerably ancient, but certainly not so much as mentioned in the Ass Sagar, also because even if we consider it having been built during the time of Kabir, his own time is not as much early only as is indicated there.

(4) 'Kabir Math' of Lukhmipur Bagicha, Rusera
(a village in Darbhanga District) :

The Math is said to have been founded in the time of Promod Guru. It was previously attached to the Chattisgarh Section but later on (after the death of Dayanam) as the conflict arose between them, it proclaimed itself as independent.¹ But almost all

1 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 124.

the religious and social regulations, disciplines and doctrines of it seem to be still very much similar to those maintained in the Chattisgarh Section.

The Math is economically satisfied, because, it is said, 150 Bighas of land are attached to it, eight gurus are said to have uptill now flourished there.¹

1. Khedidas, 2. Premdas, 3. Khushiyaadas, 4. Ishweridas, 5. Tulaidas, 6. Govindas, 7. Kashidas, and 8. Awadhadas. Out of these, the tombs of six gurus are within the boundry of the Math. Seventh guru, Kashidas, was made Acharya in Kharasia, so his tomb is not there; and Awadhadas is alive as a present guru there.

Many of its sub-branches have now been flourished in many places like Darbhanga, Munger, Muzaffarpur, Purinia, Saharsa, Nepal, etc.,²

1 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 184

2 Ibid., p. 184

IV - The Independent Branches of the Panth :

(1) The Thakahi branch, Dhanauti:

Another important division of the Panth has its head-quarters at Dhanauti, in the Saran district of Bihar (Chapra) Bhagwan Gosain¹ is said to have been the first Acharya of this branch. It is generally believed that he was firstly attached to the Nimbaraka order, but later on, having been influenced by the teachings of Kabir, he became his disciple even by the permission of his previous Guru.² It is perhaps due to this reason that his followers still maintain the Tilak of the Nimbaraka order. There is, however, much controversy with regard to the time of his establishment: Shiva Varat Lal is inclined to prove him the contemporary of Kabir,³ while Prashu Ram Chaturvedi is of the opinion that he lived 175 years

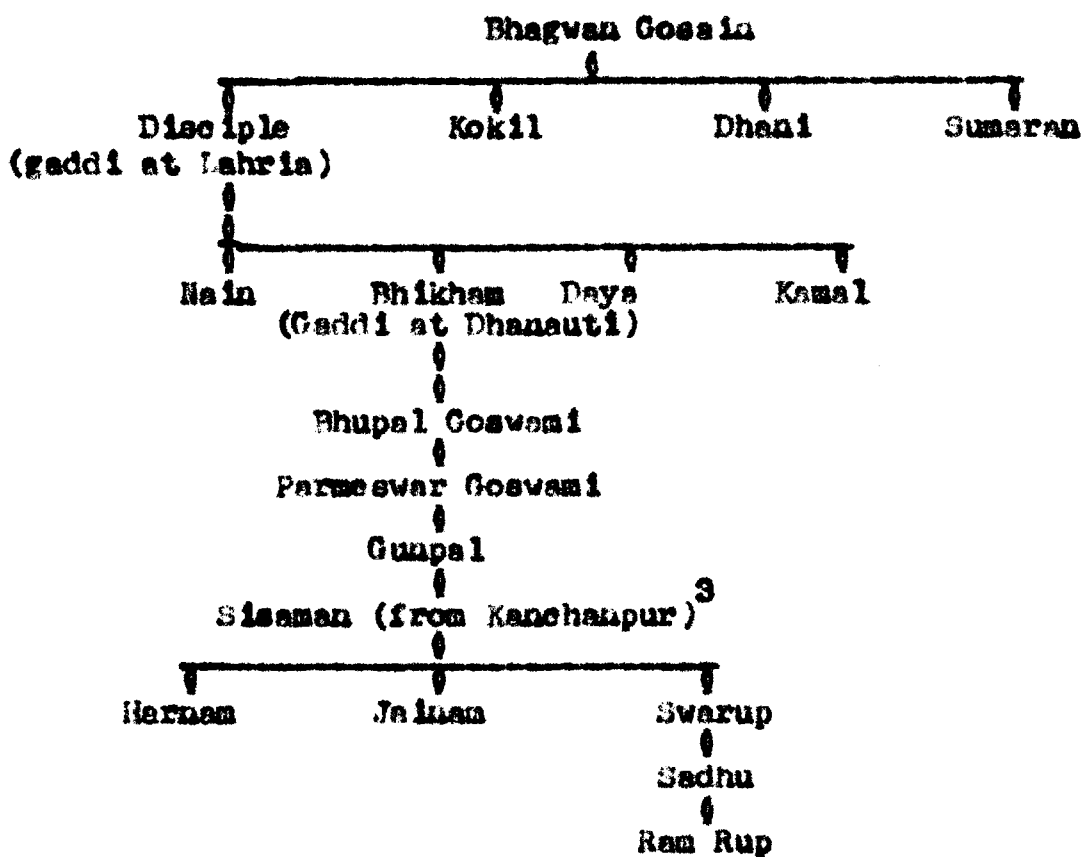
1 He is said to have been 'Ahir' by caste and an inhabitent of Pithaurabad in Bundelkhand.
Keay, op. cit., p. 106; Kedarnath, op. cit., p.166

2 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 166

3 Kabir Panth by Shivavarat Lal, pp. 21-22. It is related by him that Bhagwan Gosain lived with Kabir (after becoming his disciple) and in the tour of Bandhogarh he was with him. Besides, there are still other statements of him which show that both Bharsandas and he were Kabir's contemporary.

later than even Dharandas¹ who is generally believed to have flourished in the first part of the 17th Century, as we have discussed earlier.

Anyhow, let us now know about the gurus of this section, which might lead us to reach any conclusion. The following table is taken from the account of Keay.²



Contd.

It is, however, further related by him that it was Bhagwan Gossia who collected 600 Sabdas and Sakhis, which, according to him, is the original form of the present Rijak.

1 P.R.Chaturvedi, op. cit., p. 274; also Keay, op.cit. p. 106.

2 Keay, op. cit., p. 106

3 As Gunpal is said to have left the Gaddi and
Contd.

It is to be noticed that the length of the names of the gurus of this division is the same as those of the section established by Dharamdas, which indicates that both the divisions would have flourished somewhat simultaneously. But the difficulty is that the list provided by Keay differs sharply from that given in Bhaktipushpanjali of Hari Sharan Goswami.¹ And if we accept the latter source reliable and if we take an average office tenure for each guru as 25 guru years, the time of Gosain goes back to 1485 A.D.,

disappeared, Sisaman was called upon from the monastery at Kanohanpur to occupy the Gaddi at Dhanauti.

1. Kedarnath has discussed the problem at length, See, op. cit., p. 167. According to Keay's table, there were four disciples of Bhagwan Gosain - Kokil, Dhani, Sumaran and one unknown (so mentioned only as 'disciple'). But this unknown guru is not in the list of Pushpanjali. Keay is of the opinion that he established a monastery in a village called lahrin in Champaran district, while the latter source says that it was Nain Goswami who established there. With regard to Nain Goswami Keay relates simply that a man named Banwari, who had become the disciple of the unknown guru, had also in his turn of guruship four disciples named Bhikam, Nain, Daya and Kamal. Among them, only Bhikam set up his gaddi at Dhanauti, and the remaining three flourished else where in Bihar. Besides, there is no mention about Sadhu Goswami in Pushpanjali's list, whom Keay gives 12th place in his list and says that he was an unsuccessful leader and therefore was driven out from the office having been succeeded by the present Guru, Ram Rupdas.
- Contd.

and thus he becomes the contemporary of Kabir, which seems to be definitely not correct. But at the same time, however, the conclusion of Parshurem, that he established 175 years after Dharamdas, can also not be regarded as true¹, and neither should he be considered as a contemporary of Dharamdas, because otherwise this thing would not have been left unmentioned in the contemporary sources. Now, it may be concluded that Gosain would have flourished prior to Dharamdas but never during the time of Kabir. By reckoning an average of 25 years for the office tenure of each guru, Keay says that this process goes back 1600 A.D. or some eighty years after the death of Kabir for the founder of this branch.² The method of calculation might be wrong but the calculation itself seems to be close to reality.

Then, there is no mention in Keay's table about the names of Ghanshyam, Uddoram, Shri Daman Gurakar and Ganesh, while we find them in Pushpanjali's list. Moreover, the seventh guru named Kokil of the latter source is accepted by Keay only as a disciple of Gosain and not as a Mehant.

1 That Gosain did not established after Dharamdas is evident from the account of Anurag Sagar (pub. from Prayag), p. 91.

2 Keay, op. cit., p. 106

The Kabir Panthi settlement at Dhanauti consists of two monasteries -- a large one, where the guru and most of the Sadhus of the Cest live; and a smaller one, about half a mile away to the north, where only few Sadhus live. The latter may be regarded as a sub-branch of the former which is economically much more strong than the other one.¹ The larger one consists of a very large building which is situated in the parallel to the village street, having with two courtyards separated from each other by a wall behind it. In the Centre of it there is a tower of about 20 feet high, in the south of which is a long hall where the guru lives, and in the north is the entrance by an archway from the street. The courtyard is used for storage of farm produce and the verandas for cow sheds. On the other hand, however, the smaller one consists of only a plain dwelling house of a single storey with a verandah.

All the gurus of this division, who are unmarried Sadhus, are known as 'Bhakts' or 'Gossain', while their

1 Kedar Nath, op.cit., p. 167. It is reported by him that the former has got the property of about 500 Bigna land.

followers are called Bhaktah̄is. There is nothing in the math worth mentioning except an old manuscript of the Bijak which by itself is shown only to the Sadhus of the Sect. Though the Kabir Panthis living there do not differ in any essential points from other Sadhus of the Sect and yet they have their own arrangement for their Math. It is significant that the spirit of true devotion is dominating in their minds, and it is perhaps due to this reason that they do not consider Kabir as a divine character but rather simply as a true saint just like those living in the Muslim Math at Magahar. Besides, they do not rely much on the formal observances like those maintained in the Chattisgarh Section. They are so liberal that they sometimes study even the Ramayana.

Connected with this division of the Panth there are many monasteries in many places of especially Bihar like Naurang, Mansar, Turki, Danodarpur, Chanara (Dalia), Tadhwa, Barharwa, Sawayya, Baijuath (Motihari), etc.¹

1 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 168.

(2) Kabir-Math, Bidupur (District Muzaffarpur):

Jagoodas (b. 1481 A.D.) is said to have been the founder of this division of the Panth. It is believed that he was offered by his parents (named Jagardat and Kamaleshwari Devi) to Kabir in 1489 A.D., while he was at the age of 7 years, in any forest named Bankantha of Katak,¹ which is now famous as Shivapur and where there is also a Math. Hence, there are two places of this division famous with the name of Jagoodas, one is in Bidupur and the other in Shivapur. It seems that both of them are always inclined to dominate each other by showing their importance to the visitors.

1 It is also narrated that Jagoodas then came to a village of Andhra Dhari, some 16 miles away from Rajnagar of Bihar, where the queen of Raja Pratap Rhanu named Padmavati built a very large and beautiful building for him. But he kept there one of his disciples and himself set out for the village of Shobhan, Sasantpur, seven miles away from Samastipur in the west. There, he was again given 28 bigha land by the queen (though it is now only 5 or 7 Bigha attached to the Math). From there he went to Bidupur, where he expired soon afterwards.

- Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 168.

No list for the gurus of Shivapur is now available, though in Bidupur, according to the present Guru Ram Lakhan, there have been uptill now 17 gurus, and they are as follows:

1. Jagoodas, 2. Mathuradas, 3. Garbudas, 4. Vallabhadas,
5. Premdas, 6. Dharuidas, 7. Haridas, 8. Hathidas,
9. Pritamdas, 10. Premdas, 11. Santoshdash, 12. Mansadas,
13. Garibdas, 14. Sukhradas, 15. Jhoomakdas, 16. Amritdas
and 17. Ram Lakhandas.

It is also related by him that 6 gurus from Mathuradas to Haridas flourished in Katak and that it was Hathidas who was the first Acharya at Bidupur. This may be supported by the fact that the tomb of Hathidas together with those of other following gurus like Mansadas, Jhoomakdas etc., are found in Bidupur. The other possibility is, however, that both the Maths would have been established simultaneously under Jagoodas who would have kept his two chief disciples named Mathuradas and Hathidas respectively in both the places. But in this way Jagoo's time cannot go much in back dates. Taking into account the Bidupur Math with an average of 25 years for each guru, it may be said that Hathidas would have annexed in about

1693 A.D., by which it also appears that Jagoo's establishment would have taken place in the second half of the 17th century, and this seems close to reality.

This Math is economically satisfied to a large extent, because about a hundred Bigha land is attached to it.¹ Women are not allowed to be vairagial there, though they are so liberal that no sort of difference between the Hindu and Muslim Kabirpanthis is maintained there.

A large number of its sub-branches have now been established in the surrounding areas of Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Munger, Gaya, Lucknow etc. It is said that there are more than half a century mathas in Nepal attached to this division of the Panth, but nothing about them is now known.² In Bihar, however, there are still many monasteries attached to it.

(3) Fatua Math, Patna :

It is often believed by the Kabir-Panthis of

1 Kedar Nath, op. cit., p. 169

2 For details of it, see Ibid., p. 169.

this division that Jivaji¹, a contemporary disciple of Kabir, was the founder of it. It is also related by them that the Fatuha Math was previously attached to the Chattisgarh Section, but by the time of Ganeshdas,² the 14th guru of Fatuha, it became independent. Whether the time fixed by them for its independence is correct or not but the way in which they describe the turning of the case seems to be doubtful. They say that during the time when Ganeshdas was in power at Fatuha, a 'Punch Committee' based on eminent contemporary Mahants

- 1 It is said that Tattavaji and Jivaji were the two brothers, and that both of them were the contemporary disciples of Kabir, as we have seen earlier.
- 2 For a brief life-history of Ganeshdas, see Ibid., p. 183.

It is related by Kedarnath that Ganesh was born in an ordinary Kshatriya family of a village situated in Patna district. His parents died in his child hood. But as he was a talented boy he even at the age 20 years was well trained in the art of judging the horses, and therefore began to do their business. When he was economically satisfied by this job, he began his family life. But soon after when a son and a daughter were born, he having been a Vaishya went out of his home, trained at the Fatuha Math and finally occupied the gaddi of it.

was formed under Haqnam (who was then the chief guru at the Kawardha Math of the Chattisgarh Section) for the better administration of the Math. The president of it was to be a man of ability and who was to be known as 'Asa Mukhtar'. As Ganeshdas was on this post jealousy arose in the minds other contemporary saints who complaint to Haqnam that Ganesh was doing the business of horses without his permission and that the whole of its income he was keeping with himself. What was the reaction of it on Haqnam is not known, but Ganesh is said to have returned to Fatuha and never again went to Kawardha.

Any how, it is said that 23 gurus upto now have been in the Fatuha Math,¹ though their times are not known:

1. Tattavaji 2. Sattavaji 3. Purshottam 4. Kuntadas,
5. Sukhanand, 6. Sambodhdas 7. Devadas, 8.
- Vishvarupdas, 9. Vikrodhdas, 10. Mukuaddas,
11. Swarupdas, 12. Nirmaldas, 13 Komaldas, 14. Ganeshdas,
15. Guru Dayaldas, 16. Ghanshyamdas, 17. Bharatdas,
18. Mohandas, 19. Raghuardas, 20. Dayaldas, 21. Gyanidas
22. Keshwadas, 23. Hari Nandandas.

1 Kedar Nath, op. cit., p. 183.

The economic condition of this Math is considerably satisfied, because a hundred acres of land are attached to it.¹ The Kabir Mathi Sadhus living there stress much on education. A Sanskrit College at Fatuha and a High School at Naundhia are attached to it, and the whole expenses of them are said to be borne by the Math itself. But no more literature is available there except a work named Kabir Parichai (written by Guru Dnyai, the 15th Guru of this Section) which is regarded by those living there as of great importance. Its sub-branches are found in the surrounding areas of especially Chapra, Furnia (Muzaffarpur), Banaras and Gaya.²

(4) Vachan Vanahi Acharya Gaddi, Ruzra:

This Math is said to be founded by Krishna Karkha,³ and therefore it is called also as 'Krishna Karkhi Shakhā'. It is said to have been always an

1 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 123.

2 Kedarnath has provided a detailed description of it. See, op. cit., p. 124.

3 There are many works attributed to his name, but the most important among them is known as Panji Prakash. Only the 1st part of it has as yet been

independent branch of the Panth. On the last page of Panji Prakash (a Kabir Panthi work, compiled by Krishna Karkh), the table for the gurus of this division is given, which is as follows:

1. Kabir Sahab
2. Krishna Karkh (d. 1246 year) Samwat 1896/1839 A.D.
3. Pannardas or Danwardas (d. 1270 year) Samwat 1920/1863 A.D.
4. Jhakridas (d. 1283 year) Samwat 1933/1876 A.D.
5. Ram Bharosdas (d. 1310 year) Samwat 1960/1903 A.D.
6. Ram Tahaldas (d. 1330 year) Samwat 1980/1923 A.D.
7. Baldevadas (still alive perhaps)

This table differs slightly from that provided by Bachohetal dāsī¹ in his Kabir Panthi Vachan Vansh Pranshi,

published and the rest three portions are still in manuscript form preserved in the Math. According to this work, however, Krishna Karkh had emerged during the time of Kabir who himself made him his disciple. Besides, it is some times believed that Kabir after his demise appeared before him just like the case of Dharamdas and instructed him to carry on the 'Vachan Vansh'. Moreover, it is also said that he took Samadhi even when he was alive, but his tomb is not there and perhaps except him the tombs of all the gurus are there. See, Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 186. But all such accounts seem to be NOT reliable. It appears from the Shandik Jati Ka Itihās of Shyam Sundar Gupta, (p.90), that Krishna Karkh was born in 1807 A.D. in the village of Rusra, and his parents name were Brij Mohan Karkh and Lakshmiwati Devi.

1 Mentioned in Ibid., p. 186.

according to which, there were two more gurus in between Tahaldas and Baldevas naming by Akaldas and Palaldas. According to the Kabir Panthis living there, Akaldas was also a Mahant but due to some reasons he was soon terminated. With regard to Tahaldas, they say that he was not a Mahant but only a 'Adhikari'.

Anyhow, persons of all the castes even the Muslims are allowed to be disciples there and no distinction for them is observed. Kadaldas is said to have been an eminent Muslim Kabir Panthi there. But the post of guruship is given to only those who are from Shandik Venah.¹

(5) Acharya Gaddi Barayya, Jaunpur :

The Math is situated about 37 miles away from Kashi towards the west and 3 miles from Suriyawan Railway Station in an angle on the left bank of the river Varuna. It is an independent branch of the Panth, which is said to have been founded by

1 Shyam Sunder, op. cit., p. 91

Sadguru Madan Sahab.¹ But, as a matter of fact, the gaddi of it was practically established after his demise by one of his disciples named Doolampati² who contributed to it the whole property belonging to him. So he may be considered the real first Acharya of this division. Then Vivekpati and Guru Shyampati became respectively the Mathadish there. The present Acharya is Prakashpati.³ According to the informations available, the following table for the gurus of this division may be prepared:

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- 1 It is reported by Kedarnath that Madannam was born in a Kayasth family of a village named Kharauna, about 5 miles from Jaunpur. There is a work named Naam Prakash attributed to him, according to which, Kabir himself had appeared before him in the form of Radhapati to instruct him as to how the Panth should be developed. Kedarnath quotes some of such verses from the same work. See, op. cit., pp. 184-85. Besides, Shabd Vilas is also famous with his name, in which the devotional spirit is described in fullest zeal.
 - 2 Doolampati was a Brahman by caste and an inhabitant of Barayya. See, Ibid., p. 185.
 - 3 Prakashpati was born in Ghazipur district. He was firstly a teacher in any Middle School and later on became vairagi and began to visit several places upto Punjab. See, Ibid., p. 185.

<u>Name of Gurus</u>	<u>Died in</u>	<u>Tomb at</u>
1. Madan Sahab	1854 A.D.	Dumraun (Distt. Shahabad)
2. Doolampati	1882 A.D.	Barayya
3. Vivekpati	1922 A.D.	Barayya
4. Guru Shyampati	1950 A.D.	Barayya
5. Prakashpati	(present)	-

(6) Ram Kabir Panth :

This is also considered as a branch of the Kabir Panth, which is said to have been found by ayy Padmnabh.¹ He is mentioned in the Bhaktmal of Nabhadas as a disciple of Kabir.² But the Udapanthis believe that its founder was Gyanji who also is said to have a disciple of Kabir.³ It is significant

1 Prashuran, op. cit., p. 262

2 See, Bhaktmal of Nabhadas, p. 68.

3 It is related by the Udapanthis that his first Guru was Khoj Ji, but later on having been influenced by Kabir became his disciple. He been thought that the thief inside him was Ram and the person who taught for it was Kabir, and therefore he named himself Ram Kabir and also termed his Sect by the same name.

- Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 19.

that in Ayodhya also there is a sect of the same name, of which centre is in Hanumannivas. The Saints of this Sect relates themselves to any Brahman named Remyash whom Ramananda is said to have himself given the name of Ram Kabir.¹

Beside these dependent and independent branches, there are many such sects which are included in the Branches of the Panth:

(1) Dhami Sampradaya:

Prannath (1618 - 1694 A.D.) is said to have been the founder of this sect. It is also believed that after the demise of his Guru, he called upon a large meeting in Kalpi and by that time started the Pranami or Dhami Sampradaya.² His followers have faith in the Krishnaite form of the Bhakti and therefore seem to be having apparently no relation with the Panth. But in Mihiriraj Vani (a composition of 18000 vanis of Prannath), Kabir is in many places praised as a

1 Dr. Badri Narayan Shrivastava, Ramanandi Sampradaya Tatha Uska Hindi Sahitya Par Parbho, p. 196.

2 As to why the word Dham was adopted by him and how its meaning was later changed, is discussed by Prashu Ram Chaturvedi, op. cit., p. 534.

true teacher,¹ on the basis of which this sect is also related to the Panth.

(2) Satnami Sampradaya:

The Satnami Sect which explicitly owed allegiance to Kabir was comprised of, according to Khafi Khan, "agriculturists and petty tradesmen",² and, according to Saqi Mustaid Khan, "goldsmiths (* peasants), carpenters, sweepers, tanners and other mean and ignorable men of artisan castes."³

It was originated as an off-shoot of Bairagis firstly in Haranul-Mewat region about the mid of the 17th Century and then spread in Chattisgarh and Kotwa.⁴

1 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 188.

2 Khafi Khan, Muntakhab-ul-Iubab, Bib. Ind., 11, p. 260.

3 Saqi Mustaid Khan, Ma'asir-i-Alamgiri, Bib. Ind., pp. 114-15. The word 'Zargar' (goldsmith) might be originally an error for bargar (peasant).

4 Prof. Irfan Habib, The Historical Background of the Popular Monotheistic Movement of the 15th-17th Centuries: Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 188

The founder of the Kotwa branch was Jagjivandas whose time of establishment, according to Crooke, was 1682 - 1761 A.D. (See, Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Awadh, pt. 4, pp. 299-301). In this branch a system named Gayatri Kriya is maintained in which, beside other things, a sort of mixture made of human urine etc., is to be also drunken. (See Briggs the Chamars, p. 221, R.L.I. Series).

Hence, there are three branches of it respectively known on the names of these places. For the founder of it, it is said that he would have been either Jagjivandas or Virbhannu (founder of Sādhyā Sampradaya) or his guru named Udadas or Jogidas.¹ The Sadhus of the Sadhya Sampradaya mention their sect also as Sadhya Satasmi and it is perhaps due to this reason that the problem is misunderstood, also because both the Sects were formed almost simultaneously, i.e., 1729-30 / 1672-73.

(3) Niranjani Sampradaya:

There are three types of this sect -- (1) that which established in Gujrat, but nothing is known about it except certain informations available in certain scriptures, (2) that which appeared in Rajasthan having been founded by Haridas Niranjani, and (3) that which was popularized especially in Orissa.² The Sect as a

1 It is reported by Kedarnath (op. cit., p. 188) that the first one was of the Dadupanth, while the remaining three were from Sadhya Sampradaya.

2 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 188

whole is said to have been greatly inspired by Dharam Sampradaya.¹ Dharam or Miranjan was, in fact, a very old village datee which in course of time was absorbed in Buddhism. This was because Jagannath, who is said to be the form of Miranjan in Miranjani Sect, was also considered as an incarnate of Buddha in Buddhism.² But Miranjan (the earliest god of this Sect) is accepted in the Kabir Panth as Kal,³ and thus Kabir is proved by all means superior than him, by which it appears that at the time when the Kabir Panth was gaining ground this sect would have also developed side by side on the basis of certain Mul Katha.

(4) Kabir Vanshi :

This branch relates its origin to Kamali. As Kamali is said to have been the daughter of Kabir and

1 It is stated by Dr. Hazari Prasad Divedi that Dharam worship (which is a part of Buddhism) is still an alive factor in Miranjani Sampradaya. See, Madhya Kalin Dharm Sadhna, p. 81.

2 Kedarnath, op. cit., pp. 188-189.

3 We have already discussed that out of the Dwadash Panth one was Mul Miranjan Panth, which was formed by sending an ambassador named 'Manbhag' to carry on his Panth on the basis of Mul Katha (original story) and to corrupt the creatures. But what is Mul Katha and which one out of three Miranjani sects is called in the Kabir Panth as the Panth of Kal and also why this was included by the Anurag Sagar in Dwadash Panth, are all not clear.

as the followers of this sect consider themselves as her descendants, they call themselves as Kabir Vanshi. The sect comprises of only the Hindu Julahas and therefore their names are also just like of the Hindus.¹ They observe ordinarily the homely life having been busy in spinning and weaving. They are greatly inclined towards the Arya Samaj and many of them have now become Arya Samaji. They are found mostly in Meerut, Ludhiana and Hushyarpur.²

(5) Udapanthi:³

This sect is said to have emerged from the Ram Kabir Panth, and therefore the homely saints of it are called Udapanthi and the rest are known as Ram Kabir Panthi. Gopaldas was the disciple of Gyan, of whose

1 It is stated by H.M. Rox that Hindu Julaha saints say themselves the Kabir Vanshi. See, A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Provinces, Vol. I, p. 368.

2 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 189.

3 The Udapanthis say - (1) that the word Uda is made of Udar (generous) and so the followers of it are to be generous, (2) that this is made of the root of 'Ud' meant for Brahma, and as they are absorbed in Brahma they call themselves Udapanthi. But there is, as a matter of fact, no root like this and neither they are generous in religious and social matters, as we shall see subsequently.

disciple was Jivanji Maharaj who is said to have formed the Uda Dharam.¹ His Gaddi is in a village near Barauda. This sect is apparently not related to the Panth, but according to its daily practices and ceremonial it seems to be much close to any of the Kabirpanthi centres, as we shall see subsequently. There are two branches of it -- one that established towards the district of Karam, and the other towards Surat. It is said that the persons of Kurmi caste at Gujrat, who are in respect called as Patidari and whose title is of Patel, have mostly become the Udepanthi.² It is effective especially in Surat and Chota Nagpur.

After adopting the Sect one has to be detached from all of his previous relations so much so that even matrimonial relations are to be kept within themselves, and thus it has now become a sort of separate caste. They do not accept even water from persons of other caste, and neither, therefore, do they send their wards to colleges, though this sort of conservativeness has now decreased considerably. Children (both boys and girls) are to be tied with a Kanthi and given the

1 Kedar Nath, op. cit., p. 190.

2 Ibid., p. 190.

Mantra of Ram Kabir. All of them have to adopt Dwadash Tilak including the women candidates. They wear garland made of Tulsi. At the time when any one dies they recite Ram Kabir Mantra and also the Bhajan of Virah (separation) with which they perform all the practices concerned. It is strange that flames are not given in the mouth of the dead but rather beside it. They prepare at this occasion a sort of 'Sukhari' by mixing up Ghi, flour and Gur, and distribute it for a month or so. Its expenses are beared by the neighbours.

(6) The Panika Kabir Panth:

Kedarnath includes the Pankas¹ among the wilder castes like Kol, Bheel etc., and says that they have no

1 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 191.

As Kabir was discovered in the water of a tank and as a newly initiated convert is purified with water, so the Pankas say their name means Panika (i.e., from water). This has given rise to a doggeral rhyme about them:

Pani se Panka bhae, bundan raaha Sharir;
Age age Panka bhae, Pachhe Das Kabir.

(The Panka indeed is born of water, and his body is made of drops of water; 'First he was a Panka, and afterwards he became a disciple of Kabir'). It is also related that the people of the village of Manikapur (in Chattisgarh) had firstly become the Kabir Panthis and therefore they call themselves the Manikapuri Panka. But this seems to be only a hypothesis. As the inhabitants of Manikapuri they may be called

Contd.

social status having been considered as untouchable in the Society.¹ But Keay says that they are a Dravidian caste of weavers and labourers who are found in the central provinces. It is further related by him that they are derived from another caste known as the Gaudas, though they have now comparatively got somewhat higher position, and therefore they want as far as possible to disown their connection with it.² It is also stated by him that they are one of those lower castes which have been given by the Kabir Panth a somewhat higher spiritual ideal than the primitive superstitions and animism and thereby have been raised in the social scale.

It is reported by Kedarnath that the Panikās were previously attached to the Vansh Gaddi (of the Chattisgarh Section), but now they have formed a separate

Manikapur, but why they add Panka. In support of it, they say that there were five promising servants of Churamani. As they had no belief in caste and creed, the villagers began to humiliate them, but they were firm on their words. Therefore, their followers also called themselves Prandhari. When it emerged as a caste, the word Prandhari was converted into Panika.

1 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 191.

2 Keay, op. cit., pp. 110 - 111.

Sub-caste¹. There are, however, many divisions of them, out of whom two are described by Kedarnath. According to him, one is related to the Kabir Panth, which is known as Manikapuri Panika, while the other is not so.² It is not known when and why they were thus divided. Keay has however mentioned about some other groups of them. He says that the ancestors of Manikapuri came from Manikapur to Darbhanga State, about three centuries ago; the Saktas are those who prefer to belong to the Sakta sect, which simply means that they eat flesh and drink liquor, being unwilling to submit to the restrictions imposed by the Kabir Panthis; the Bajains are those who play on musical instruments, an occupation which tends to lower them in Hindu eyes; and the Domi Panikas are probably a section of the Dom or Sweeper caste who have somehow managed to become Panikas."³ According to him, the main distinction between the Kabira or followers of Kabir and the Saktas is that the former abstains from flesh and liquor while the later does not. Besides, the Saktas worship even

1 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 191

2 Ibid., p. 191

3 Keay, op. cit., p. 111

the ordinary village deities, while the Sabiraha do not, at least in theory, and have no religious rites except when a Mahant of their sect comes round to visit them. It is further reported by him that there is no inter-marriage between these groups, but if a girl of one section goes to a man of the other she will be recognized as his wife, though the regular ceremony is not to be performed.¹

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¹ Keay, op. cit., p. 111

CHAPTER - VINSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE AND PRACTICES OF THE
PANTH CENTRES

We have already discussed that Kabir was not an innovator of a new religion but rather simply a sincere devotee searching out the virtual means of salvation. Therefore, he did never try to work out any formula for the ideas he propounded, and neither, therefore, did he form any group of his own. But after his demise, however, not only his ideas were given a definite form but also certain rules and regulations were laid down by his followers, which even vary from place to place in the various centres of the so-called Kabir Panth.

Just as the system which has already been maintained long before by any of the spiritual orders (whether the Buddhism, Jainism or Muslim mysticism),

the Centres of the Kabir Panth have now also flourished in many parts of the country.

We have already discussed that there are two main divisions of it -- the Chattisgarh and the Kabir Chaura, and a large number of other centres which are either the branches of either of these two or have established independently. The ordinary centres are governed by the well established branches with which they are attached. A head Mahant is accustomed to dispatch his subordinate Mahants (like the Khalifas of a Muslim Sheikh) to the centres under him. Thus, like the Muslim mysticism, a sort of hierarchy have been formed in the Panth also.

Just like a Sheikh of the Muslim mysticism, a guru or spiritual teacher occupies a very prominent place in the Panth.¹ But unfortunately there is no proper arrangement for the appointment of a guru, and the systems applied for this purpose vary from place to place. In almost all the branches of the Chattisgarh Section the hereditary system is applied, where it has

1 The point would be illustrated in the next chapter while dealing with the teachings of the Panth.

become a sort of tradition that only the Mahants' son would succeed him. If there is no son of him, his wife adopts a child but only from the Vansh of Dharamdas, who is to be regarded as an heir of the Gaddi.¹ Besides, there are some other branches of the Pauth where the caste consciousness is dominating the appointment of a Guru. In the Vachan Vansh branch of Ruzra, only those Kabirpanthis who are born of the Shandil Vansh are to be installed to the Gaddi.

Contrary to these, however, there is no such systems in the Kabir Chaura Section, where either the Guru declares in his life-time the name of his successor from his disciples² or otherwise after his death a sort of election takes place.³ But in either case however, only those who are men of ability are installed to the

1 It is significant that a sort of regent-system has been established there. For instance, it is reported by Westcott (*op.cit.*, p. 78) that once a Mahant of minor age (of about sixteen years) was nominated for succession at Lucknow and, therefore, was associated with an unbeneficed Mahant till he was himself able to perform properly the duties of the office.

2 The Gaddi Neshin of the Muhammadan's Shrine at Naghar is accustomed to nominate his successor in his life time.

3 It is said that when a guru dies without nominating his successor, a council of the chief members of the section is called upon to elect a new Guru.

Gaddi. Similarly, in the branches of Burhanpur, Bidupur, Dhanauti and Kharasya (though an offshoot of the Chattisgarh Section) also only ability and qualification are considered necessary for it. It is, of course, true that most of the Mahants are not systematically qualified and yet they are accustomed to know much about the sayings of Kabir and to possess a detail knowledge of the rituals required for the performance of the religious ceremonies. Some of them are also having a good deal of knowledge about the Ramayans, Bhagwat Gita and even the Quran.

On the other hand, however, the appoint of the subordinate Mahants for the attached branches of a section are made by the Head Mahant concerned, though most of the branch-establishments (especially those who are far from the main section) have now introduced their own method of appointment. However, at the time of appointment they are given a betel leaf (Bira) to eat as a pledge that they would be sincere and faithful in performing the duties of their offices. Like the new interants, they are also required to make an offering a Cocoanuts. After appointment each Mahant receives, as signs of authority, a document known as Panja Paruana bearing the seal of the Head Mahant, and also a red cap

(Topi), a necklace of black wool known as Seli, and a special rosary known as the Panch Mal. Upon the document, however, the names of all the disciples admitted by him into the order are to be entered. The Mahant is required to present it annually to the Head Mahant both for inspection and the entry of new names.¹ On the occasion of a visit to any place the Mahant recites, at the celebration of the Chauka Service, all the names entered either upon his own Parwana or those of his predecessors in office, and writes the term 'Chalana Kar Gaya' against the names of those who have died. But in the case of a deceased Mahant the term which is used is 'Samadhi Le Li'.

However, with regard to whether a Mahant should be married or not, there is the divergence of opinion among the various sections of the Panth. Many of the Kabirpanthis believe that a celibate and ascetic life is of greater sanctity in comparison to the married. Therefore, the gurus of the Kabir Chaura section does not

1 On his annual visit to the headquarters the Mahant is required to present twelve cocoanuts and twelve rupees on his own account and one cocoanut and one rupee for each of the new names he wishes to be entered on his Parwana. He also makes over to the Diwan all offerings made at the Chauka services which were officiated by him during the year.

think it right to be married. Similarly, the gurus of Fatuha, Dhansuti, Burhanpur, Ruzra, Bidupur and Jaunpur also prefer a celibate life. The same system, some way or the other, is prevalent in Kharasya (an offshoot of the Chattisgarh Section) and Raipur (a 'discenting' branch of the Panth called the Nadia Panth):¹

Contrary to these, however, in almost all the branches of the Chattisgarh section the Mahants are accustomed to marry. But a Mahant can live with his wife only for the time until a son has not born, after which, she should become Bairagini (a female ascetic) and would be treated as mother even by her husband. Any how, wherever the system of marriage is prevalent the wedding ceremony is generally held according to the Hindu usages.

On the other hand, however, just as the system having been maintained long before in the 13th Century A.D. by the Muslim mystics in their mystic Centres,²

1 This branch is mentioned by Neay. See, op. cit., p. 107.

2 For details of it, see, Prof. Nizami, Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the 13th Century A.D., p. 214.

a guru (teacher) of the Panth has to deal with two types of disciples, i.e., 'Girhi' and 'Bairagi'. The former (also known as 'Sewak' or 'Bhagat') is allowed to live as house-holder (Girhast) and side by side to adopt the teachings of the Panth, while the latter has to renounce the world altogether by attaching himself permanently to a monastery concerned. Again, the former is expected by his guru nothing more than a fair and honest dealings with his fellow men and regular performance of obligatory religious duties, while the latter is demanded a complete renunciation of all worldly ties and selfless devotion to the cause of his faith. Therefore, those who want to be Bairagi have to be trained for a probationary period of one or two years. But, unlike the Muslim mystics, in some of the centres of the Panth especially those of the Chattisgarh section both men and women are equally entitled to be 'Girhi' as well as Bairagi.¹ But in most of the centres like Kabir Chaura, Fatuha and Dhanauti

1 Female ascetics are usually widows or otherwise the wives of the men who have already become Bairagis. If both husband and wife want to be Bairagis they have to be the parent of at least one son, because henceforth there would be no more matrimonial relationship between them and they would be regarded as brother and sister or, in some places, even as mother and son, as we shall see subsequently.

and Bidupur, women are not allowed to be Bairagis, though they may be taught there as 'Girhast', and therefore Westcott seems to have been wrongly informed that "there were (during his time) twenty five female Bairagis at Maghar (which is a branch of the Kabir Chaura section)."¹

Rules and Regulations of the Panth Centres:

At the time of initiation the Kabirpanthis (both the Girhis and Bairagis) are required to make the promises to take no meat and drink no wine, to perform properly the prescribed services of the Math, to tell never lies, to conceal never the property of others, and to bear never false witness against any one. They are not allowed to annoy any one even by begging, but should rather remain hungry. If they come across any living being which is hungry, they should give to it from their food. This humbleness of character brings them very close to the manners laid down by the Muslim mystics of especially the chishtia order.

Those who do not abide the rules of the Panth by irregularity of life or who in other ways offend

1 Westcott, Kabir and the Kabir Panth, p. 77.

against the traditions of the order, are severely censured by their guru; and if the crime of anyone is proved, he would be excluded from religious gatherings, his company would be avoided by other members of the Panth and even his salutation would be disregarded by the Guru. But this is very rare because mostly they are fearful to violate promises made in so solemn a manner, lest the wrath of God should fall upon them. However, it is said that once a seller of oil, who drank some wine and ate some flesh, was expelled from the Panth and also he fell ill. After six months when he recovered he was readmitted into the Panth. But after a year or so he repeated his offence and died in consequence. Another member, who committed a similar offence, is said to have lost the use of a hand.¹ Similarly, as none except the Head Mahant is authorised to invest anyone with the Kanthi of the order, when an ordinary Mahant of Kanpur having been arrested by the police destroyed his Kanthi and after having been freed he invested himself with a second Kanthi, this irregularity was at once reported to the Head who at once took action against the

1 Westcott., op. cit., p. 80.

offender alongwith another member of the Panth who was supposed to have connived at his offence.¹

Daily Services conducted in the Kabirpanthi Maths:

The service of Puja in the Kabir Chaura Math is conducted twice a day in the morning and evening.² After having bathed in the morning all the Sadhus assemble in front of the main temple (Mandir) where takes place the worship of Kabir's picture and his Charan Paduka (i.e., a pair of wooden Sandals representing the feet of Kabir) along with the Arti service² and the recitation of many sorts of mantras. Afterwards, they visit the Samadhis of the saints over there and then return to the same place to conclude the service. Now, in their presence Kabir's verses are recited with explanation and elaboration by the Guru on his Gaddi. It is to borne in mind that as the Muslims repeat daily the Coranic verses and the Brahmans the Gayatri, so the Kabirpanthis are required to repeat the bymans both in the morning and the evening.³ Those who

1 Westcott, op. cit., p. 81.

2 The Arti fire is the flames of burning camphor which is waved before the object of worship.

3 These hymns in their original form are contained in Crooke's Tribes and Castes of Northern-Western Provinces and Oudh, Vol. III, pp. 75-76.

visit the Math during the day are supplied with three teaspoonfuls of the charnamrita together with three Tulsi leaves.¹

But the services conducted in the Chattisgarh section is comparatively much elaborated and complicated. The Sadhus living there are busy throughout the day in conducting the puja services as well as reciting many sorts of Bhajans even with their physical needs.²

Management of the Maths:

A Mahant is generally very busy in his Math. His duties are two folded (1) to visit all the disciples once or twice a year,³ and (2) to manage the Math. With regard to the second he is responsible, on the one hand,

1 The Tulsi leaf is sacred to Vishnu. Therefore, some of the Kabirpanthis do not use it explaining that Kabir's Ram meant not for the incarnation of Vishnu but for the Supreme Deity Himself.

2 There are, in fact, a set of mantras spread in their daily life. Yugalchand Bihari has provided a detail description of the whole system observed there in this context. See, Kabiropanana Padditi, (pub. Bombay, Samvat 2013), pp. 165-177.

3 The Mahant's visit to his chelas (disciples) is to note their spiritual progress, to instruct and teach them further, and to receive new interants if qualified. In lieu he is provided with some money at least for his travelling expenses.

for all sorts of ceremonies (from a large fair down to the Tinka Arpan) which are to be performed in his presence, and, on the other, for all the general managements of the Math. To assist him there are many other officials like the Diwan, Kothari, Bhandhari, Pujari etc.¹ The Diwan looks after the account of the Math, the Pujari is responsible for conducting the daily worship (Puja) and Chauka Arti (whenever needed) and their articles; and the Kothari, who manage the articles, gives daily the necessary articles to the Bhandari who prepares the food.

Economic Resources:

The financial condition of most of the Kabirpanthi centres seem to be considerably satisfied. The branches like Kabir Chaura, Damakhara, Fataha, Bidupur and others

1 The present officials at the Kabir Chaura Math are as follows: Diwan-Ganga Sarandas; Pujari- Sarjudas; Kothari-Ramdevadas; and six Bhandharis (three in the morning and three in the evening). There are some more of minor officials. It is significant that the chief officials are mostly Brahmans by caste, and therefore, though men of all castes are allowed to live together, the Sadhus of lower castes are to prepare and eat their food separately from others.

likewise may be called self-sufficient, as the whole affairs of them are regulated by their own income. The Damakhara is a very rich branch. The guru incharge there lives in a fair sized house and possess a considerable wealth. The extent of his luxury is that it is not easy to meet him for even his followers who are always expected to bring with them a substantial offering. Besides, it is said that in most of the Maths of Gujrat there is unlimited money and property, and the position of the Mahants over there is considered no less than a small king or a fental lord.¹

As economic resources, most of the centres seem to have got their own land properties either at the same place or somewhere else. The Kabir chaura is said to have its land property near Maghar. It is significant that both the Hindu and Muslim Kabirpanthis of that place have their separate land properties side by side in the neighbouring villages. We are personally told by the present 'Mujawar' of the Muhammadan Shrine at Maghar that there are more than forty or fifty bighas of land

¹ See the description provided by Kedarnath, op.cit., p. 190.

in Karnua (a village near Khalilabad) in the name of Mansoorul Haq, the present incharge of the shrine. Similarly, the land property of Balua Manjharis (P.C. Sahjanwa, District Gorakhpur), which is attached to the Hindu Kabirpanthi Math, amounts no less than three hundred and fifty acres which are managed and cultivated by some of the Sadhus in every season. This is chiefly under rice cultivation, which, according to the report provided by Westcott, supplied in 1900 A.D. to the Kabir Chaura Math with 750 monds of rice and the Naghar Math with 500 monds.¹ Besides, the Kabirpanthi settlements at Dhanauti, Bidupur, Jagdishpur and Rusra (a village in Darbhanga district) are said to have consisted a land property of 500 bighas, 100 bighas, again 100 bighas and 150 bighas, respectively, as we have already discussed while dealing with them separately.

On the other hand, however, there have been built up some eleven well-furnished flats attached to the Math of Kabir Chaura, which having been on rent earn collectively about rupees 2000 per month. Besides, most of at least

1 Westcott, op. cit., p. 67.

the well-established centres like Damakhara, Kawardha, Burhanpur and Kabir Chaura have now set up their own presses, from where are published every year many books and papers, which seems to be a great source of income for them. Then the book-stalls set up in many of the Kabirpanthi centres would also have been contributing much to the economy of them.

Besides, in most of the centres there is the system of alms - taking. We know that in both the Maths of Kabir Chaura and Maghar there is placed before the Samadhi of Kabir an alms - box in which persons visiting the place give some money according to their will and faith, which consequently amount very largely. Besides, a Head Mahant is accustomed to visit both the Girhis and Vairagis at their residential places, where they provide the Mahant with the goods of daily requirements and also with a sum of money according to their capacity but usually never less than his travelling expenses. But the most important role is played by the Girhi or the householders who contribute very largely to the economy of the order by which the Bairagis are themselves supported. As all the numbers of the Panth try to supply material requirements of the Math concerned to the best of their capacity, with the increase of their number the income is also

going increasingly very high. Besides, the subordinate Mahants are also accustomed to make substantial offerings to the head concerned we have already seen that on annual visit to the head quarters, an ordinary Mahant is required to present twelve coconuts and twelve rupees on his own account and one rupee with one coconut for each new name he wishes to entered on his Parwana. He is also required to hand over to the Diwan all the offerings made at the Chauka Arti services at which he has officiated during the year. Besides, having been successful in an aim by the Guru's prayer, the ordinary people also give certain presentations to him.

Investment of Money:

Almost all the Kabirpanthi Maths are accustomed to serve the guests who visit the Maths. In the main centres like Kabir Chaura and Chattigarh, the Sadhus (both Girhi and Vairagi) come and live for several days. Besides, the Bairagis, who live permanently in the Math, are naturally to be supplied, apart from things of daily use. The daily meals, with even the ordinary. We know that in these centres there is a proper arrangement for Kothari, Bhandari etc., who are responsible to prepare

the daily meals which amount very largely. These officials themselves take the meal and side by they are provided with a nominal salary. In such centres there is also the provision of publishing the editions of the old Kabir-pauthi literature and their commentaries and even monthly magazines from their own presses, as we have seen earlier.

Besides, they are also accustomed to take up the social services, i.e., the ready made treatment of the patients. By the Mahant himself or by his order, his disciples move sometimes in the society to preach publicly and so to propagate the siddhanta (doctrines) of Kabir.

Customs and Ceremonials:

In almost all the established sections of the Panth, there is the provision of a Mela (or fair) which is celebrated with a great pomp and show. The annual fair of the Kabir Chaura Section is held in the month of January, which lasts for several days and when the large courtyard of the Math is crowded with devotees. At this occasion a full chauka service followed by the

Jot Prasad and the substantial meal is performed and the new disciples are admitted into the order. Some other minor fairs are also held there in the months of Phagun and Bhadon, which roughly correspond to the month of March and August. Some of its branches like Maghar also celebrate certain fairs. It is reported by Kedarnath that a fair in respect of Kabir began to be held there since 1933 A.D. by the permission of the Commissioner of Gorakhpur, but after three years, as he was transferred, this system stopped.¹ It has, however, been now revived. Though its importance is now no more than a market, and yet it is celebrated twice a year at the Pooran Masi (i.e., the full moon) of Aghau and Bhadon which correspond to the months of November and August. This lasts for three days -- two days for Bhaddara and one for chauka. The whole system of the Hindu Math is conducted according to what is maintained in the Kabir chaura. The head Mahant personally comes on this occasion to Maghar and takes part in it. But the religious fair of the Muhammedan shrine at the same place, which is said

1 Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 165

to be held on 27th day of the month of Rajab, seems to be much close to those of any shrines of Muhammadan saints. It is significant that not only this but almost all the practices observed there are more or less identical to the Muslims, as we shall see subsequently.

Anyhow, a large religious fair is also said to be held in the Damakhera during the month of Magh (February), when all the present devotees are fed for three days from the bounty of the guru. Besides, such fairs are also held in many sub-divisions of the Chattisgarh section, for instance at Rudri (near Dhamtari, in the Central Provinces), and at Kudarmal (a reputed burial place of Churamani) which lasts for about seven or eight days.

The Tinka Arpan Ceremony:

The ceremony of initiating new members into the Panth is known as Tinka Arpan which corresponds in a way to the Christian Baptism, as is suggested by Westcott.¹ However, at the opening of the service, the candidate is required to make the necessary promises which he has

1 Westcott, op. cit., p. 82.

to fulfil in his further life.¹ Then Bhajans are sung by all the present devotees and side by side half of the Mantra is whispered into the left ear of the candidate by the Guru who afterwards gives in his two outstretched hands placed together, some grass, Paa-leaves and white flowers. Then a Bairagi leads the candidate to another spot where he asks him to fell the articles upon the ground. Having moved from there the candidate again places his hands together into which the Bairagi pours water from a brass vessel. With the first handful of water he rinses out his mouth, and with the second he washes his face. Then both of them come back to the Guru who now gives a Kanthe to the Bairagi who takes it round the assembly and gives it to all the present members in turn. Having been so touched by all, it is returned to the Guru.² He then lets it fall on

1 The members of the Panth fear to violate the promises done by them at this occasion, lest the wrath of God should fall upon them. It is said that once a seller of oil drank wine and ate flesh, as a punishment of which he was expelled from the Panth and immediately he fell ill. After six months when he recovered he was readmitted into the Panth. But after a year he repeated the same offence and died in consequence. Another member who committed a similar offence is said to have lost the use of a hand.

- West-Cott, op. cit., p. 80.

2 The whole process is called Gawahi (witness).

to the neck of the candidate, as he kneels before him. To conclude the service he now whispers the whole Mantra in his right ear.¹ Soon afterwards, the new disciple is strictly prohibited to take ever on any condition the fruit of the fig tree (Gular). On enquiring the reason, he is told that the fruit contains many flies and cannot therefore be eaten without much destruction of life.

Now, from amongst the food articles already placed beneath a clean cloth, the Guru takes a coconut and gives it to the candidate who, by touching it with his right shoulder, breast and forehead, returns it to the Guru, having with a fee of one rupee.² Then the

1 In the Kabir Chaura Section only one mantra is communicated to the candidate, i.e., the Guru Mantra, while in that of the Chattisgarh are applied two known as the Guru Mantra and the Tinka Arpan Mantra, and three more subsequently in response to inquiry, viz. the Panch Nam, the Sat Nam and the Har Nam. Even the Guru Mantra commonly applied in both the Sections differs slightly in its form. In the Kabir Chaura Section no reference of the name of Dharamdas is made as far as possible. The other difference between them is that in the latter section the ceremony is never repeated, whereas in the former it is performed twice, once by the candidate's personal Guru and again by the Head Mahant in the Kabir Chaura Math. This is because the subordinate Mahants of this Section are not supplied with a Parwana and also because even a bairagi is authorized to initiate new members.

2 In the Chattisgarh Section the candidate presents only one Coconut with a money offering of not less than one rupee, but in the Kabir Chaura Section he is required to present no less than sixteen coconuts

Guru, having washed the cocoanut with betel leaves dipped in water, breaks it upon a stone, cuts it up into small portions and puts them in an open dish. He next pours into the hands of the candidate some charnamrita¹ (i.e., nectar of feet) which he reverently drinks. Finally, the Mahant, placing on a Pan leaf a Parwana,² a portion of cocoanut, some Patasa (a small sugar wafer), Gur (a rough preparation of sugar), raisins and currents, gives the whole to the candidate who eats them all frequently.

and with each of them a money offering of not less than four annas. Out of these sixteen cocoanuts, four are broken at the Tinka Arpan ceremony, six are sent to Maghar, and three are again broken at each of the two Chauka Arti ceremonies to be held in the months of Phagun and Phadon.

- 1 Charnamrita, the Amrita of the feet, is the name given to the water in which have been washed the feet of the Head Mahant (who is regarded as Kabir's representative upon earth). This water is regarded so sacred that if any portion of it remains unutilized that is drunk by the Mahant himself.
- 2 The Parwana, which is regarded as the body of Kabir and said to be a passport of the Guru's heavenly mansion, is the name given to the betel leaf (nut of the areca palm) especially prepared at the headquarters during the celebration of the Jot Parshad. A pile of betel leaves of sixteen handbreadths in height is arranged upon the ground. At night time a pewter saucer is placed upon a especially prepared spot, and the dew collected in this vessel is known as Amar (i.e., water directly derived from heaven). In the morning the Mahant meditates in front of the pile of

Contd.

When the candidate thus becomes a member of the Panth, all the present devotees are provided with the same compound of food articles excluding the Parwana. It is significant that the coconuts fragments are supplied only to the members of the Panth and not to any of the outsiders.¹ This ceremony is followed by a feast in which, however, members of other religions are also allowed to take part. Now, reverence is paid to the Guru and Parameshwar (God) and many Bhajans are sung in honour of God and Kabir.

The same process is applied for both the Girhi and Viragi, and the difference between them is that after the ceremony the Girhi returns to his family whereas the vairagi is bound to live permanently in the Math.

betel leaves and with the Amar writes upon the topmost leaves the sacred name of God. The betel leaves thus consecrated are made up into small pieces about a quarter of an inch square and distributed among the Mahants for use at a celebration of the Jot Pershad or for presentation to a candidate at the time of his initiation.

- 1 Any portion of the coconut which remains over is carefully preserved by the Guru and given to the Kabir Panthis of other places visited by him henceforth, with reference to the name and residence of new disciple at whose initiation it was offered.

There is no specific time for the initiation of the Girhis, but Bairagis are admitted, for example in the Kabir Chaura Section, at the occasion of the annual Mela (fair) which lasts for about a week and of which principal purpose is said to be the admission of new Bairagis into the order. The other difference between them is that those who want to be Girhis are required to observe a fast of a single day whereas the Bairagis have to observe a fast for twelve days eating in evening a light food, i.e., a little Gur (Crude Sugar) and rice cooked in milk.

On the other hand, however, beside the new entrants made at the head quarters, the subordinate Mahants or those appointed at sub-branches are also authorized by the Head Mahant of the section to which they belong to initiate new members. In the Kabir Chaura Section even a Bairagi may initiate new members of the Panth. But none except the Head Mahant is authorized to invest any one with the Kanthi of the order.¹

1 It is reported by Westcott (see, op.cit., p. 21) that a Mahant of Kanpur once fell into the hands of the police, who at once destroyed his Kanthi. As soon as he was freed he invested himself with a second Kanthi. This thing was at once reported to the Head Mahant and the offender the other member of the Panth who was supposed to have connived at his offence, were both immediately excommunicated.

The Chauka System :

Chauka is the term applied to the portion of ground especially prepared for the consumption of food.¹ This as a service is held on every Sunday as well as on Purāṁṁasi (i.e. the last day of any lunar month) or otherwise on any occasion of necessity whether of a fair (Mela) or of appeasing the soul of a dead. Besides, it may also be performed at any time if some one is willing to defray its expenses. Hence, there are many sorts of chaukas which are performed in almost all the centres of the Panth. But the practices applied in the Chattisgarh section seems to be comparatively more systematic, where Chaukas are divided into four types - Anandi, Jamauti or Solah Sut, Chalawa and Ekottari. The Anandi Chauka is performed for a purpose of initiating new members into the Panth, while the rest three are motivated mainly for private purposes, for example the

1 The whole ground measuring five or seven yards square is cleaned and divided into several squares, in the centre of which is again measured out a smaller space of about two and a half yards square. It is covered over with an owain (Chaudwa), the colour of which is generally white, but red only at the occasion of celebrating the memory of a dead.

Jannanti chauka is performed when any one person in order to get an issue or in respect of that he has already been provided with it. Similarly, the Chalswa is held in the memory of a deceased Kahirpanthi, and the Ekottri also for the same purpose but in the memory many predecessors (usually numbering hundred and one). Hence, the expenses of the Chaukas performed for private purposes are defrayed by the persons concerned, while the other on the basis of subscription.

As these chaukas are performed for different purposes there are certain differences in their formation also, so much so that even the articles used and applied in them vary from each other especially in their quantity.¹ In fact, the procedure made for the arrangement of each of them is very long and complicated. Anyhow, leaving aside the funeral chauka which sharply differ from others, all the three are arranged more or less in the same manner. The only well marked difference among them is that in Jannanti fifteen and in Ekottari one hundred extra lotus flowers are made, in addition

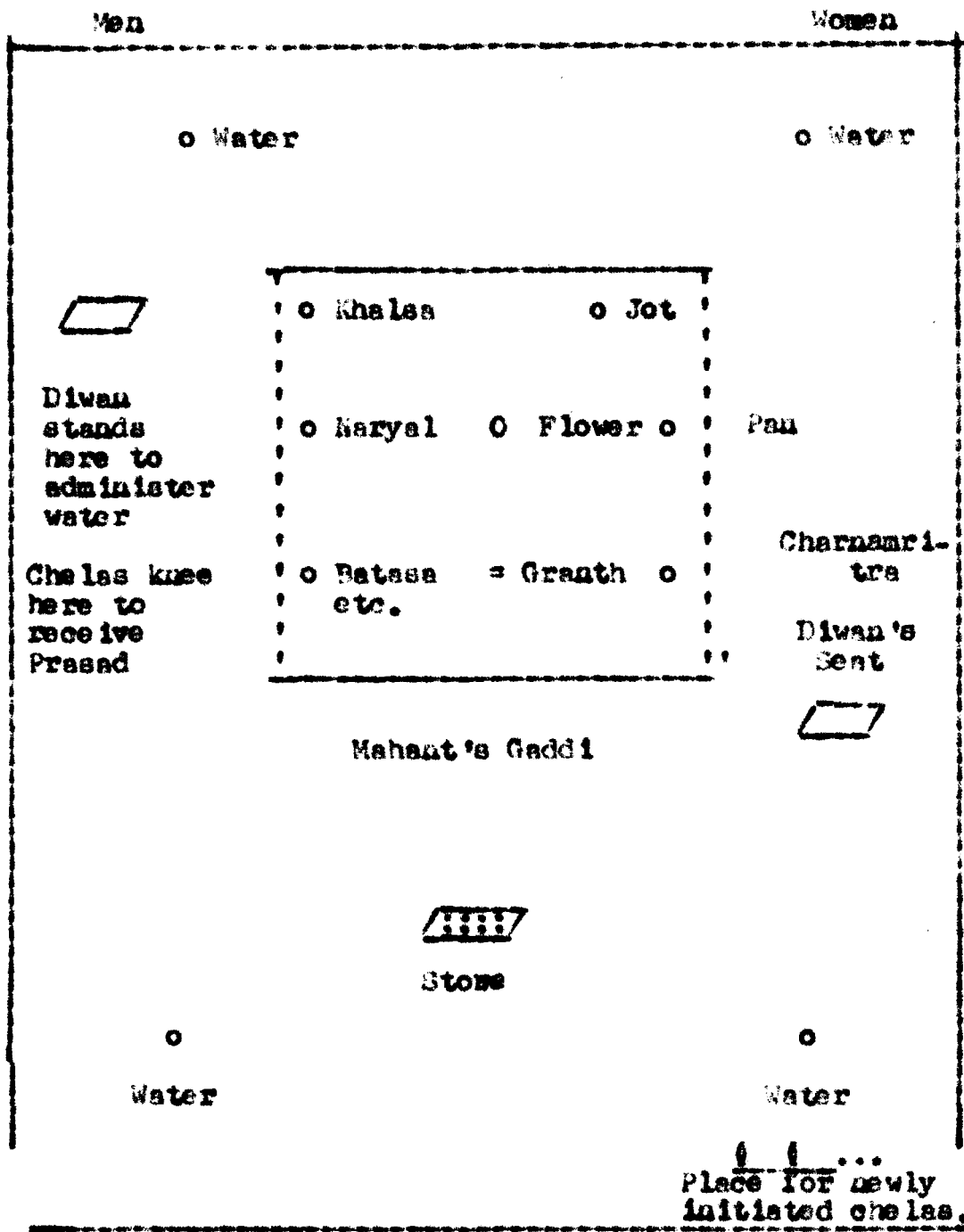
¹ Nedar Nath Divedi has provided a detail description of it. See, op.cit., pp. 198-202.

to the nine ones of the Anandi, on northern and eastern sides in order to place on each of them the additional Artis of the same numbers, inspite of one which is commonly kept on the northern side of each chaukas. This only of each chaukas are burnt (in the beginning) and disburnt (at the end) by the Mahant and the rest, in the cases of Jammanti and Ekottari, are regulated by the Diwan. But all the Artis (whether one of the Anandi, sixteen of the Jammanti, or hundred and one of the Ekottari) are brought up and moved on simultaneously.

However, the full Chauka service, for example in the Kabir Chauka section, is performed in its annual fair which is held in the month of January and which lasts for several days.¹ Then the presence of the Mahant and all the members is a must. All who attend the service are required to observe a fast of the day,

1 A full Chauka service is also said to be held there twice a year in the months of Phagun and Bhadon, which roughly correspond to the months of March and August.

though they are allowed to drink water or water sweetened with sugar at the time of severe thirst. The whole Chauka service, which starts at about 8.0'clock in the night, is to be performed under the personal guidance of the Mahant. To assist him there is a Diwan, and some times also a Pujari, who must be well aware of the whole system. When the Mahant is not present many of the services are considerably curtailed, because the officiating chela (disciple) is provided only with a service book containing a portion of service and he is not allowed to go beyond that. Besides, the brief servicing is also maintained on Sundays whether the Mahant is present or not. However, following is a chart which would give an idea of the arrangement of a full Chauka service:



The Mahant sits in the enclosure, facing the congregation with the service book before him. On his

right hand within smaller square are placed, (1) a small metal box containing charnamrita and Parwana, (2) a dish containing hundred and twenty five betel leaves arranged around the edge with a single leaf in the centre on which is to be a piece of camphor, and (3) a pillar composed of dough, constructed with a hollow top, in the centre of which placed a stick enveloped in cotton wool. During the service Ghee is poured over this stick which is then lightened so as to serve as a candle throughout the ceremony. On the left hand of the Mahant are placed, (1) a dish containing Batassa and Gur, (2) a coconut, and (3) a Khalsa (large round brazen vessel) containing water. Besides, at each corner of the inner portion of the Chauka is placed a small earthenware jar containing water, on which rests an earthenware plate containing grain, and over this is placed a lamp fed with linseed oil.¹

1 The water of the earthenware vessels is used only when the supply of water from the Khalsa is proved insufficient. Besides, the grain in the plate is to absorb any oil that may fall from the lamp and so preserve the purity of the water. There is a similar arrangement in the case of Khalsa.

At the conclusion of the service, which the Mahant reads out of the book, he lights a candle standing in the centre of the candle stick made of dough. He then lights a piece of camphor on a stone set beside him. Now, he taking the coconut washes it by water and then breaks it upon the stone, and finally lights the piece of camphor in the centre of the Pan dish. Then the dish is passed round and all the present devotees place in it a small offering which collectively is taken over by the Mahant for the use of the Math. He then takes half of the flesh of the coconut and by cutting it into small pieces places in a pewter plate. Now all the presentees make an approach to the Mahant in turn and receive into the palm of their right hand a betel leaf, a fragment of coconut, a little Gur and some Patasha.¹ This they eat as they kneel before him, exercising the greatest care lest any portion should fall upon the ground. When all have received the Prasad, the Mahant prays a little privately and then some loudly and finally closes the service with a short address urging all to lead good lives. Now, the

1 On great occasions there are hundred of presentees, men and women. Both sit on rival sides facing the Mahant, but come up in any order to receive the Prasad.

Mahant does reverence to the Chauka, and afterwards he himself is obliged with reverence by all the devotees. This part of the service, which is interpersed with the signing of many sorts of Bhajana, concludes at about 3 a.m.

After an interval of an hour or so this service is followed by the other of a more solemn character, which is known as 'Jot Prasad'.¹ The already prepared dough having been mixed with additional flour, Ghee fragments of coconut, etc., is again kneaded up. Out of this the Mahant makes a number of small wafers (Puri) measuring about two inches in diameter. When all are prepared he again starts the service by reading a short address. Then private prayer or meditation is observed. At this instance those who feel themselves unworthy to proceed further with the service retire to a distance, and the remaining members approach the Guru placing their hands together and receive in their right hand a little charnamrita, a portion of Parvana and also one of the wafers. Then they go near to the Diwan who from a khalsa pours into the palm of their right

1 Jot is the flame of candle, and the Prasad a consecrated food. This food provided at the occasion is regarded as the special gift of Kabir, and therefore those who receive it will obtain eternal life and happiness.

hand a few drops of water which they drink respectfully and retire to a distance. Finally, an attendant pours water over both their heads to cleanse them from the contact with their lips.

This service is followed by a substantial meal which is conducted on the basis of subscription. But most often its bill is paid by any wealthy member of the Panth. However, it is at the celebration of this service that the new Bairagis are also admitted into the Panth, which rather constitutes the principal purpose of the service.

But the Phandara, which is held in the Muhammadan shrine at Maghar on 27th day of the month of Reish, differs from the system of the Kabir Chauza. This seems to be rather identical to those of any of the Muhammadan shrines. At this occasion, however, the Guru (called as Gaddi Nashin) visits the shrine, and a sacred feast is held in his presence. At the opening of the service he proceeds to the shrine followed by the Diwan (called the 'Mujawar') who carries a large dish containing Khichari (i.e., rice cooked with lentils). Another man (called the handali) carries an earthenware vessel of water covered with a white

cloth. These are placed before the shrine. Upon the tomb incense is burnt in a fire of cowdung, the ashes of which are passed through a piece of fine muslin and kept in a brass vessel, and finally distributed among those who make an offering (whether in the shape of amount or goods) to the shrine. After the prayers (just like Fatima of the Muslims) done by the Guru in which all present take part,¹ The Diwan distributes among all a small portion of the Kichari, and the bandali pours into the palm of the hand of each a few drops of water, which they drink. The remainder, if any, is taken over by both of them. Finally, some more prayers are offered by the Guru, and thus the proceedings come to an end. It is said that some money and clothes are also distributed there on behalf of the Gaddi Nashin on this occasion.

Now, as the system of funeral Chauks differs from others and as it is largely performed every where, it would not be irrelevant to describe it in a little

1 It is said that some times the recitation of the Gora (i.e. Gora shani) is also held there at this occasion.

detail. At the opening of the service the Mahant prays silently for the deceased to be safe in his here after journey. Then, after having been sung the five sorts of funeral Bhajans, all the present devotees do reverence (Bandagi) to the Guru and the white cloth representing the dead body.¹ Afterwards, a cocoanut, which has already been preserved for this purpose,² is washed by the Mahant and given to any relative of the deceased or otherwise to any member of the Panth who is the disciple of the same Guru of whom the deceased himself had been. This man, after applying to his forehead, shoulders etc., returns the Cocoanut with an offering to the Mahant who then breaks it upon a stone on which the camphor is burning. Now, having mixed flour etc. with the flesh of this cocoanut are prepared small cakes which are distributed among the Kabir Panthis.

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- 1 Since the awning over the ground is of red colour instead of white, a piece of white cloth is placed over the chauka to represent the dead man's body.
 - 2 Upon the death of a Kabir Panthi two fresh cocoanuts are soon purchased, out of which one is carried by the barber with the funeral procession and finally placed by the side of the dead body just before cremation or burial, and the other is reserved as an offering for the funeral chauka to be held subsequently. Number of cocoanuts offered at this occasion may vary from one to nine according to the capacity of the family concerned, and each is to be submitted with a separate substantial offering. But in the Chattisgarh section only one cocoanut is purchased for the whole purpose.

On the other hand, however, all the Kabir Panthis even on their death bed could receive from their Mahant the charnamrita and Parwana. Since the former certifies the chela's utter devotion to Kabir and the latter constitutes his passport to the Guru's heavenly mansion, they are regarded essential for the dying to receive. Therefore, wherever the Guru lives at a distance certain amounts of such prashada is usually placed with one or more of his disciples. These supplies if remain unutilized may be used in a Puram Masi Chauka which due to any reason cannot be attended by the Mahant. It is to be borne in mind that only the Mahant is entitled to administer or prepare such Prashad.

In almost all the branches of the Panth the dead bodies are generally buried just like the Muslims, though sometimes they may also be thrown into the water, but usually they are never cremated. The custom of burial is largely because of Muhammedan influences,¹ but

1 The system of burying the dead bodies is itself very much similar to what is maintained by the Muslims. After digging the earth, a white sheet is spread over the bottom, on which is kept the dead body which again is covered by another white sheet. Then the tomb is filled with the same sand so as it looks like a chabutra. On this the Mahant sits and prays solemnly for the salvation of the dead. Then other present members recite loudly the mantras relevant to this occasion.

It is traditionally explained that the bodies of saints who have died to the world have already been purified and therefore do not require the cleansing of fire. It is significant that not only the saints but also even ordinary Bairagis are buried as well. The only exception only in few places is in the case of ordinary Girhi (householder) Kabir-panthis who, if not have received Bairag, may be cremated.

Anyhow, after the death of a Kabirpanthi, his relatives are accustomed to wear very simple dress and to shave the hair, a system which is applied even nowadays especially among the lower classes of the Hindus. Then the Bhandara or the relevant chauka is held at any time according to their convenience.

Importance of the Chauka system in the Panth:

The Chauka system is regarded by the Kabir Panthis as Satvik yoga, which, according to them, is a must for salvation. It is also regarded by them as the vanisher of three main sins like, Mai, Awaran and Vikshep. These three sins are, in fact, removed by three systems -- Upasana, Cryan and Karam. When mind is corrupt that is called Vikshep sin which is removed by Upasana (worship). As the Kabir Panthis discard

the system of idol worship, they stress on meditation and the worship of Guru instead, to remove the vikshep sin, which is done at the time when the chauka service is performed. Besides, if a man is illiterate or his mind is corrupt by it, that is called the Awaran sin which is also to be removed at the same time. Finally, Karam is divided into two forms, Vihit and Nihit. Vihit is again divided into four forms, Nitya, Naimittik, Kanya and Prayaschit. When a person, by accepting his sins, tries to remove it, that is called extra-ordinary Prayaschit; but when some one tries to get rid from sins done in previous lives, that is called the ordinary Prayaschit. The latter is removed by going on pilgrims which also is of two types, Sthak and Jangam. Kabir Panthis believe in the latter which is obtained by meeting the saints who themselves are regarded by them as Jangam pilgrim. At the time of Chauka service various saints unite and discussion takes place on the subject of spiritual life. This is useful for all the present devotees. This is also regarded useful for ordinary men who might be caused by this system to be inclined towards the Panth.

Importance of Coconut and other things likewise in
the Panth;

There are many traditional explanations of it but briefly its significance in the eyes of the Kabir Panthis lies on (1) that it has got a face resembling to that of a man, (2) that its surface is divided into three parts recalling Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu, (3) that the formation of its flesh takes place gradually in the very manner as that of human body, and (4) that it differs from other fruits in containing no seed.

But the most powerful and largely accepted view is that in ancient ages animals were sacrificed in Yoga etc., in order to get salvation, which is considered by the Kabir Panthis inhuman and unhuman, and therefore they brought forward the idea of sacrificing coconut, instead. They regarded it as a bloodless sacrifice and also a peaceful offering presented to the Supreme Brahma to secure permission to enter into the heaven. But some of the Kabirpanthis consider it the head of Shaitan or Kāl, and therefore they do not use in their practices.

Similarly, white owing (Chandawa) used as a cover over a chauka is regarded as a symbol of Satya Purusha's being eternal Chatrapati, and the light of

Arti as that of the enlightened self. Besides, the white part of Supari is considered as a symbol of Satogun and the red that of Rajogun, and both these forms are supposed to be thus presented to Guru by the disciples who go to his shelter having with Supari. Similarly, the Prasad and its Awaran kept in the mid of a chauka are supposed to be the symbols of Guru Prasad and Amar cheer, respectively. Besides, the charnamrita is regarded as a certificate of the chela's utter devotion to Kabir, and the Parwana as a passport to the Guru's heavenly mansion.

Dress and distinctive marks:

Almost all the Kabirpanthis are accustomed to wear white dress,¹ langoti or loin cloth and anchla, along with a red cap.² But the Mahants generally wear a small embroidered cap and some times a high-peaked

1 The white dress is regarded by the Kabirpanthis as the symbol of inner purification and knowledge.

2 The Muhammadan members of the Faith wear caps of different shape to those worn by the Hindu Bairagis.

cap something like a bishop's mitre. Besides, they are accustomed to wear a long white robe without sleeves, along with a peculiar type of Panshala but only in some places on special occasions. Moreover, they also use to have with them a chauri or whisk, a chauba or silver stick, and a staff called a Kauri, along with a special type of rosary known as Panch Mal and a necklace of beads (known as Kanthi or Seli)¹ made of Tulsi wood. The Kanthi, which is invested only by the Guru at the time of initiation and which is used like the rosary with thoughts of prayer while remembering God, is regarded so important in the Panth that all the followers (whether Girhi or Bairagi)² are required to have it as a must. If it is lost, the person concerned must have to replace it as soon as possible, because

1 This Seli is very similar to that worn by certain followers of Guru Nanak. The only difference between them is that in this Seli there are three lassels placed together in the centre with one on either side, while in Nanak's Seli five lassels are placed at regular intervals.

2 Women are also allowed to wear the Kanthi but not before the marriage.

otherwise he will not be allowed to worship or even to take food. But the Guru is again the only authority of its replacement,¹ and therefore if the devotee is very far from the Guru's resident he may wear for the time being one large bead (Hira) strung on substantial thread, instead. Besides, all of them are required to adopt a sect mark, known as the Dwadash Tilak, which vary in different groups of the Panth.

In almost all the branches of Chattisgarh section, the mark is usually a single broad streak of white, which is made of a kind of paste mixed with Sandal wood, from the top of the forehead down to the nose. But in the branches of Kabir Chaura, Bidupur and Burhanpur, a wide mark is used from the top of the nose up to the forehead. In the Bhaktahi branch, there is the system of using a bindi in between the two straight lines on the forehead, which tally to some extent to what is maintained in the Nimbarka Sect.

1 It is said that once an ordinary Mahant, who was arrested by the police, destroyed his Kanthi, and when he was forced, he invested himself with a second Kanthi. This irregularity was at once reported to the Head Mahant who soon took action against the offender along with another member of the Panth, who was supposed to have connived at his offence.
-- See, Westcott, op. cit., p. 81.

On the other hand, however, there is again the divergence of opinion among the various groups of the Panth with regard to the problem of shaving and cutting. The Mahants of the Kabir Chaura division do not shave, though the Bairagis attached to it are allowed to shave entirely or not at all. But in the branches of Dhananti, Futuha and Bidupur, there is no rigidity of this sort, rather in the Futuha the cutting and shaving is necessary for the Mahants. In the Chattisgarh section, however, it is based on the will of the Head Mahant.

CHAPTER VITEACHINGS OF THE VARIOUS SECTIONS OF THE PANTH

We have already discussed that Kabir did never try to establish a new religion of his own, but rather to search out simply the virtual means of salvation. Therefore, the faith propounded by him can by no means be called his own innovation also because it was simply an outcome of the essential and constructive ideas found common in both the religions. It was, however, after his demise that the religious ideas thus reproduced by him was given by his followers a definite form, which subsequently stood in a way even against his own fundamentals. The traditions with regard to him developed because of two reasons - (1) various groups of his followers tried to explain his verses with peculiar traditional narrations which differed from place to place; and (2) when a huge amount of editions

and re-editions of them were subsequently published from various centres of the Panth, further variation among them was but natural. This divergence of opinion was again maintained by them in even their popular. Subject matter of representing Kabir as a divine character. Now, all these things collectively brought Kabir's original ideas to a place where there appeared many shapes of them contradicting each other. Hence, the system of differentiation remained not confined between Kabir and his later followers but extended to among various branches of the Panth themselves. On the basis of principle and devotion the whole Panth may be broadly divided into two main sections - one, represented by almost all the branches related to the Chattisgarh section alongwith the Barrayya Acharya Gaddi of Jaunpur and vachan Panah Gaddi of Ruzra (who have now proclaimed themselves as independent) and the other, represented by the Kabir Chaura section alongwith the branches of Fataha and Burhanpur.

Concept of God :

In the Vedanta philosophy the Supreme Brahma is said to be one and without attributes (nirgun), but considering the problem of worship, He was also later on

described as being Saguna or having attributes. This dual monotheistic concept led to numerous forms of idolatory and ultimately enabled men to have individually a personal god or goddess.¹ Even the uncompromising monists like Shankarachary and Ramanauja had to allow idolatory for the Hindu pantheon and thereby had to regard it as a help in obtaining the knowledge and experience of the identity of the soul with God. Besides, there is no trace in even Ramanaunda's teaching of his having given up this practice. It was only Kabir who for the first time stood as a strict monotheist² by

1 It is interesting that even some of the Muslim mystics were having faith in this dual monotheistic concept of God. Hr. Tarachand has dealt with the problem very well while delineating the later development of the Islamic history, and some of those names which he has put in this context are Mansur Ibnu-al-Arabi and Jili. It is further stressed by him that the practical side of Ibn-al-Arabi's pantheistic philosophy was that there are several gods and that they can be worshipped in innumeral ways.

- see, op. cit., p. 74.

2 It is due to this reason that the revolution led by Kabir and others like him is termed by Prof. Irfan Habib of the Popular Monotheistic Movement which, according to him, is to be distinguished from the conventional Bhakti movement itself. See his article, The Popular Monotheistic Movement of the 15th - 17th Centuries A.D.

rejecting the system of idol worship. He declared clearly and repeatedly that God is one and there is no attribute of him.¹

To some extent this concept of Kabir was inherited by the Kabirpanthis. But the literature of especially the Chattisgarh Section speaks that there are two types of God, one is 'Niranjan' and the other 'Sat Purusha'. The former is 'nirgun' but incarnates whenever needed in the form of 'saguna', while the latter is beyond the nirgun and saguna, and therefore he never comes to the world.² As the Sagun worship is comparatively easy than that of Nirgun, even those Kabirpanthis who believe in Nirgun aspect of God give him the form of attribute in a way or the other. The 'Sat Purush' of the Chattisgarh Section is believed as the inhabitant of any Amarpur, who is sitted on a white throne having over his head a white Umbrella.³ To elaborate this

1 There are some references in Kabir's verses also, where he appears speaking of the Hindu deities with peculiar stories (for instance, see the verse, contained in Kabir Granthawali, p. 307). But they all seem to be unauthentic and wrongly attributed to him contained in the same source (op. cit., p. 149, verse 190), God is represented as beyond Sagun and even nirgun. For further details, see the first chapter of the present thesis.

2 The whole thing is well described in the Gyan Bodh (p. 20), where the 'Sat Purusha' is identified with the name of Sahab, which was very favourite to Kabir also.

3 See, the Dharamdas Ki Shabdawali, p. 37.

theory a 'Sat Lok' much above the earth is also imagined and described in many poetic ways.¹

Kabir's God is in power from unknown time to endless time.² The same concept is maintained by the Kabir-panthis of the Chattisgarh Section. They believe that when there was nothing, Sat Purusha was present in Amar Lok in whom all items of the universe were then concealed.³ But the Burhanpur Section has criticised this view by saying that when all the things were created after the universe, how can Brahma be present even before.⁴

Like Kabir, his followers have also used several names indicating one God. In some branches of the Panth,

- 1 Dr. Kedarnath has provided a very interesting chart of the whole theory. See, op. cit., p. 225.
- 2 See, the Kabir Granthawali, p. 149, Verse 180.
- 3 See, the Sarvag Sagar, p. 120; The Anurag Sagar, p. 13.
- 4 See, the Contention of Guru Dayal contained in the Kabir Parichaya, Sakhi 112.

He is called 'Param Purush' and 'Satyanam'.¹ But they are not very sympathetic with the name 'Ram', rather in some places he is condemned having been identified with Kal.² This contradicts Kabir's concept of Ram who is described by him as the Supreme God of without attributes. It is to be noticed that there are other such names (like Niraujan, Om, Shunya, Khasam Sahab, Sahaj, etc.) which were used by Kabir more or less in the same sense but were given peculiar shapes in the Panth quite contrary to the views of Kabir.³

We have already discussed that Kabir had no faith in the incarnation theory. He has even condemned that Rama was the incarnate of Vishnu. Theoretically, the Kabir panthis of especially the Chattisgarh Section are also not the believer of this theory,⁴ so much so that

1 See, the Gyan Sagar, p. 58; the Anurag Sagar, p.77

2 See, the Anurag Sagar, p. 68. The poet of Atm Bodh (p. 27) is, however, somewhat sympathetic with this name.

3 Kedarnath Divedi has discussed the problem very well. See, op. cit., pp. 221 - 225.

4 Both the Saguna concept of Brahma and incarnation theory are condemned in Garua Bodh, p. 66. But, it also appears from the same source (p. 20) that there are two types of God, one is Niraujan and the other Sat Purusha. The former is Nirguna but incarnates whenever needed in the form of Saguna, while the latter is beyond even Nirguna and therefore. He never comes to the world.

they even hate the names of Rama and Krishna by identifying them with Niranjana or Kain. But practically even Kabir himself is treated by them as an incarnate of Supreme Brahma. His Samadhi, picture and Charan Paduka are worshiped just as the idols of any Vaishnava temple. Even the present Guru is treated as an incarnate of Brahma. The same spirit is maintained in the Kabir Chaura Section and its subordinate branches.

Monism :

Shankaracharya (who flourished in the South in the ninth century A.D.) is regarded as an uncompromising monist. He tried to popularize so much his own concept of Advaita or monism that even the idea of personal God was undermined in his philosophy, in which, however, he failed because of its being beyond the common approach. Ramanuja (who lived in the 15th Century A.D.) opposed Shankara by claiming that his idea of Visishtadvaita or the modified monism was the only true representation of the Upanishads. It is stressed by Dr. Tara Chand that this sort of Ramanuja's monism was nothing but an out-come of a prolong contact between Hinduism and the mystic groups of Islam.¹ It is obvious that the Muslim

1 Dr. Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 74.

mystics had a well developed concept of monism. Under Mansoor it went steps further by adopting the well - planned idea of Wahdat-ul-Wajud or Hama Ust which led to the voice of Ana! Haq (I am God). Mansur felt that the whole universe is the manifestation of God and thereby explained thus:

"I became that which I love, and that which I love becomes mine, we are two spirits imposed in one body, to see me is to see Him, to see Him is to me."¹

We have already discussed that the same spirit some way or the other was maintained by Kabir who declared thus:

"Wherever, wherever one looks, there, there is He the same; He is found in every vessel."²

The same theory of monism is accepted and further elaborated by the Kabirpanthis also. It is expressed by Puraan Sahab, a great Mahatma of Chattisgarh division,

1 Dr. Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 74

2 See, the Rijak, Sabda, 27; the Adi Granth, Asa, 11.

that whatever is visible in the world all are the manifestation of God.¹ Somewhere else he further says that as there is no reality of a tree without seed and vice-versa, so is the case between Brahma and the universe. As a creator He creates the universe, and as a created He becomes contained in every vessel.² At this stage Madan Sahab, another great personality, goes to the extent of holding the view that even every vessel is itself God.³ That the human soul is the manifestation of God or that the divine is infused into it, is well depicted by him somewhere else.⁴

But the whole theory is rejected by the Branch of Burhanpur where there is no place for Advaita or

1 See, the Nirnaya Sar, p. 17.

2 Ibid., p. 27. The author of Kabir Panth Granthi (p. 545) has provided a very good simile for it. He says that as all houses are contained in a village, there can be no reply to the question as in which house is contained the village. So is the case between Brahma and the Universe. See also, Ibid., p. 547, where the case is clarified by another simile of the relation between cloud and water.

3 See, the Shabdvilas, p. 75.

4 Ibid., p. 32. This thing is known in Hindu terminology as "the illumination of buddhi by Purusha," and the Muslims call it the stage of "Anal Ilag".

monism at all.¹ This branch is purely materialistic and rationalistic and therefore it tries to find out reason in every thing. The concept which it holds with regard it is that as no pot can be made without sand, no creation is possible without reason. Moreover, as the work is always different than reason, both the creator (God) and created (world) can by no means be the same.² It is also stressed there that if God is formless and without Maya or Ichha (will), how can He be able to create the world, because the work without Ichha and Ichha without form is not possible and worth emagination.³ The philosophers of the Chattisgarh Section also accept the view of will power in Brahma but

1 See, the views of Guru Dayal Sahib contained in Kabir Parichaya, pp. 105, 244; and also Timir Bhaskar, pp. 7-9.

2 See, Niyayannam, p. 9. It is also stressed why the creator of the world is not visible whereas the pot maker is visible. Ibid., pp. 34, 35. Then as the pot maker cannot be in the pot, how Brahma is contained in the Universe. Ibid., p. 40. Guru Dayal declares that the world is created and governed by Maya See, Kabir Parichaya, Sakhi, 107.

3 This view is repeated by expressed in this Section. See, Panchgranthi, pp. 345, 270; Niyayannam, p.10; Iqbal Prashna, p. 37.

reject the theory of form just like Kabir. It is stressed by them that when Sat Purusha desired to create the world, He firstly born a girl named Ashtangini by His will.¹

Sometimes Kabir, having been inspired by the ideas of Muslim mystics, holds the view that the nature and essence of God is Light, as we have discussed earlier.² But there seems to be no trace of this sort in the Kabirpanthi literature. Anyhow, this concept of accepting God in the form of light led Kabir to believe Him also as transcendent (i.e., beyond approach).³ He went to the extent of believing God even beyond knowledge, voice and feeling. It is in this concept that most of the Kabirpanthis follow him very widely.⁴ But the followers of the Burhanpur

1 See, the Anurag Sagar, p. 14, 20.

2 For instance, See the verse contained in Kabir Granthawali, # p. 279.

3 See, Kabir Rekhta No. 36. It is expressed by him in a verse (contained in Kabir Granthawali, p. 90 Verse 6) that just as non-speaking man cannot say about the taste of what he eats, similarly the qualities of God cannot be described by anyone.

4 See, the view of Chattisgarh Section contained in Brahma Nirupanam, p. 6 d. Slok 54:

कसाऽथनीयं त्वं ज्ञानेनप्यगमं तथा । मःपुंगुमेवस्य तस्य सत्सुगमं सुसम ॥

Section oppose this theory and remark that if God is beyond all these how did He come to be known to the world.¹

On the other hand, however, we have already discussed that Kabir's God, inspite of being omni present and transcendent, is close to the heart of the devotee who can have intercourse with him. But again there seems to be no trace of this sort in the Kabir-panthi literature.

Concept of Soul and its relation with God:

Kabir's concept of soul is much less systematic than what we find in Kabir-Panthi literature, and yet the following verse indicates that he was the believer of its super human character. He saysthat "the Jiva (Soul) is neither man nor god, neither itself is born of others nor it gives birth to others....."²

1 Kabir Parichaya, Sakhi 15 also see, Sakhis 110 and 208 where Guru Dayal's views are represented. The concept of Prem Sahab is contained in Timir Bhaaskar, p. 84.

2 See, the Kabir Granthawali, p. 301.

It is significant that a similar view is held by the Mahants of the Chattisgarh Section. By accepting its reality as Atma and Parmatma both Pooran Sahib also declares that it is not born of anyone.¹ Besides, almost all the branches of the Panth are unanimous in accepting the soul from unknown time to endless period, and thus they co-relate its essence to that of Parmatma (God). According to the Chattisgarh Section, before creation the whole world was concealed in the formless soul just as all the branches of a tree is hidden in its seed. But then it once happened that it became tiresome of its previous position and thus its transmission in the world took place. But now again it wants to regain its previous position and it is this attempt which is going on for a long time and ultimately will be

1 See, the Nirnaya Sar, p. 5; the Jivadhara Rodh, p. 78.

merged in the same divine form.¹ That Jiva is from endless time and that all the things are created out of it, is held also by the branches of Fataha² and Burhanpur. The latter suggests its process in a quite materialistic way of the relation between man and woman.³

Besides, just in accordance with the philosophy of Kabir,⁴ the Kabirpanthis of especially the Chattisgarh Section have accepted the soul in the form of knowledge

1 According to the description provided in the Kabir Mansoor, the soul made of five sound elements (viz. boldness, humbleness, goodness, thought and reality) and three qualities (viz., Vivek, Vairagya and Guru Bhakti), was firstly in the form of reality. After having thought on its beauty it became so much happy that it forgot each and every thing. As in this complicated condition it lost its qualities, the five sound elements were converted into the forms of five worldly elements, i.e., Sky, air, fire, water and earth, respectively, which again were provided with twenty five natures. Now the soul fell into suspense and when in this condition it was looking upward continuously to Shunya its own shadow adopted the form of a woman. By the relation between them, which is known as that of Maya and Brahma, the creation of the whole world began to take place. To remove suspense and to regain the previous position of oneness (Advait), it produced vedas. But until and unless it does not regain its previous qualities, it cannot be freed from the chain of life and death. The Vedas provide only the means of salvation and not the salvation itself which is possible only by the help of a true Guru, i.e., Kabir who came in the form of body only for this purpose. See also, Jivadhara Bodh, p. 70; Parakh Vichar, p. 47. Bansoodas Kabirpanthi - Vansh Panjika Vastavik Tattava Athva Mokshopan, p. 35.

2 Kabir Parichaya, Sakhi - 254.

3 See, the Tattava Nijbodh Vivek, p. 45.

4 See, the Kabir Granthawali, p. 205.

and happiness and also as light. But the question arises as to how this light fell into worldly circles. To reply this Kabir has put forth the imagination of Maya, and the same plea is taken by the Chattisgarh section, as we have seen just above. That the soul is in the form of knowledge is believed also by the Kabir Chaura section and that of Burhanpur,¹ though they do not accept it in the form of happiness. The argument which they put forth in this connection is that the happiness is not in the essence of the soul but rather comes to it out wardly.² Then the concept of the Chattisgarh Section that the soul is contained everywhere is also criticized by the Burhanpur Section which takes the plea that if it is so then how can the worldly chains and the freedom from them (i.e., salvation) be proved on it, since the individuality is a must for it.³ It is at this stage that the question whether

1 See, the Panch Granthi, pp. 127, 655, and Tattavayukt Nijbodh Vivek, p. 49, respectively. To prove this many sorts of similes have been put forward by the Burhanpur Section. See, Timir Bhaskar, pp. 195, 197, 201, 205.

2 See, the Panchgranthi (of Banaras Section), p. 616.

3 See, the Timir Bhaskar, pp. 130 - 138.

the soul is one or many comes up. Kabir believed in its unity and proved it by the support of mirrorism or transcendentalism. This concept is fully followed by the chattisgarh division which proves it by the simile that as the water of an ocean becomes wave one by one and showers upon earth in instalments, so is the case of the soul which, having been previously formless, adopted form of bodies in various terms.¹ But the Kabir Chaura Section does not agree with it, and therefore Raghavadas of Nashi stresses in his preface to the Panch Granthi that souls are different and they have neither come out from any other source nor would be merged with any.² Acharya Guru Dayal of the Futuha Math goes to the extent of holding the view that the souls are millions in number in even a single body.³ It is also argued by him that when one and Advait soul is every where, who would preach to whom.⁴ A similar plea is taken by the Burhanpur Section which says that the concept of Dvait (dual) is a must for preaching, and if

1 See, the Jivadharm Bodh, p. 679.

2 See, the Panch Granthi, p. 37.

3 See, the Kabir Parichaya, Sakhi, 109.

4 See, Ibid., Sakhi, 69.

all the souls are one why feelings (of Sadness and happiness) differ from person to person.¹

However, the whole spiritual concept of Kabir was based on the idea of the unity of God, unity of soul and the ultimate unity of both. In this concept he is bold enough to declare thus:

"I and thou are of one blood and are
one life."²

He often compares the relation between God and Soul as that of waves and the sea. More or less, the same view point is held by the Kabirpanthis. The followers of the Chattisgarh Section speak that if God is a bird, then the soul is its shadow.³ Bides, Pooran Sahab goes to the extent of declaring that there is no difference between Atma and Parmatma.⁴ But most often it is held

1 See, the Timir Bhaskar, pp. 120, 136.

2 See, the Kabir Bijak, Ramani - 11.

3 See, the Jivadharm Bodh, p. 78; the Amarnaul, pp. 200, 264; and the Agam Nigam Bodh, p. 23.

4 See, the Nirunyasar, p. 5.

in the Chattisgarh Section that the soul is a portion of God.¹ Kabir also believed that the soul is a part of divine power and therefore would after death return to it.²

However, it appears from the authentic verses of Kabir that he was not in favour of the theory of metempsychosis or transmigration of soul, whereas we get a well-developed system of it in the Kabirpanthi literature. According to the account provided in the Kabir Mansoor, both Atma and Parmatma are tied with some thing or the other - if one is tied with the shortage of life, the other with its longevity; one with ignorance and the other with knowledge. By efforts the soul may itself become Brahma who Himself has rather come down in the form of Jiva because of His sinful acts. Now, being static on the post of Brahma, Jiva itself may govern the universe. Hence, there is only one thing which becomes again and again from Jiva to

1 Anurag Sagar (p. 82) declares thus:

“ यह जीव अहे पुराण को अहे ”

2 See, the following verse attributed to him

जल में डुंभ डुंभ में जल है बाहर भीतर पानी ।

फूटा डुंभ जल बलहिं समाना यह तत क्ययीं जानी ॥

Brahma and from Brahma to Jiva.¹

But Acharya Guru Dayal of the Futuha Math rejects the theory by saying that Jiva is not the image of Brahma, because if it is so both of them would have been free from the feeling of happiness and sadness.² The same view point is held by the Section of Burhanpur which takes the plea that if Brahma is formless how there can be His image which is possible only on the basis of substantial individuality.³

However, the ordinary members of the Panth believe that the souls after death enter into the Heaven (Paikunth) or Hell (Narak) and remain till they have been sufficiently rewarded or punished for the deeds done in the form of body. They then return to earth, but always clothes in a human body. This succession of lives continues till the soul, having been free from all sorts of desires, becomes absorbed in God.

1 See, the Kabir Mansoor, p. 1111

2 See, the Kabir Parichaya, Sakhi 160

3 See, the Timir Bhaskar, p. 131

Concept of Maya

Unlike Shaakaracharya who considers it as an illusion, Kabir has stressed on its reality by saying that both the soul and God are the parts of a single force which are separated by 'maya' and if it is thrown aside they would be reunited as such.¹ Kabirpanthis have also followed this concept but with certain differences in the various groups of them. The Chattisgarh section says the Adya's other name is 'maya', which is the girl of Sat Purush, and when Niraujan came across her Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh were born. But in the branches of Futaha, Burhanpur and others likewise, it is considered no more than an imagination.²

However, Kabir has bitterly condemned 'maya' by calling with several bad names, like Dayan, Mahathagni etc., as we have seen earlier. He represents it in the

1 See the following verse attributed to him:

जल में कुंभ कुंभ में जल है बाहर भीतर पानी ।

फूटा कुंभ जल जलहिं समाना यह तत् क्ययां जानी ॥

2 See, the Kabir Parichaya, Sakhi - 187.

shape of powerfully beautiful and charming lady or rather most often as a seductive pros who, according to him, attracts the people at first towards her, and thereby gives them, by her cunningness, the wrong way or the way of sexuality. At one place he says that "the world has been burnt by the flames of 'maya', although it looks like golden made." Following the same stand point, the Kabirpanthis are also very much emphatic in criticizing in many ways its mischievous acts.¹ Like Kabir they also say that it is not easy to get rid of Maya because its net thrown upon men is very complicated.² According to Madan Sahab, Maya is a 'female haber' which is misleading the world by adopting various seductive shapes.³ Dharamdas describes its mischievous acts in the back ground of us to how men are wrapped in colours in an occasion of Holi festival.⁴

1 See, the Gyan Prakash, p. 26; the Amarnaul, p. 214.

2 See, the Amhu Sagar, p. 18, the Gyan Prakash, p. 52.

3 See, the Shabd Vilas, pp. 53-54.

4 See, the Dharamdas Ki Shabdawali, pp. 61-62.

Guru Dayal Sahsb also calls it with many bad names, like Dayan, Bhutani (witch) etc., which, according to him, misleads the people.¹ The followers of the Chattisgarh Section go to the extent of declaring that Maya is so powerful that it is misleading men even in the shape of long haired saints or Nagas etc.² They say that not only this but also even reality and non reality, goodness and badness, all are the forms of Maya,³ which are spread every where in the universe.⁴ Besides, like Kabir, they also hold the concept that the whole universe is created due to maya which is also responsible for the emergence of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.⁵ It is also stressed by them that just as the relationship between a tree and its shadow, Brahma and maya are also inter-related with each other.⁶ They

1 See, the Kabir Parichaya, Sakhis - 57, 61, 85.

2 See, the Atm Bodh, p. 37.

3 See, the Jivadharm Bodh, p. 1914; the Ugra Gita, p. 52.

4 See, the Kabir Mansoor, p. 625

5 See, the Ambu Sagar, p. 9; the Sarvag Sagar, p.139; Ugra Gita, p. 42.

6 See, the Ugra Gita, p. 42

further say that maya is hidden in and therefore comes out from the soul itself¹, and all the crude forms of soul (i.e., Sex, anger etc.) are the forms of maya.²

Like Kabir the followers of § Chattisgarh division have also held the concept that there are two forms of maya - Moti (fat) and Jhini (small); the former again of two types -- Kanak and Kamini.³

Cosmological Theory:

With regard to the cosmological theory, it is obvious that the description attributed to Kabir is much less systematic than what we get in the Kabir-panthi literature.⁴ But specifically the literature

1 See, the Ugra Bhavataran Bodh, p. 61.

2 See, the Jivadharm Bodh, pp. 5, 8, 16-18; the Vivek Sagar, pp. 78-79; Valrag Satak, Sakhis - 50, 51.

3 See, the Sarvag Sagar, p. 146; the Jivadharm Bodh, p. 15.

4 We have already discussed that there are so many references in Kabir's verses dealing with the subject, which are found not only in the Piṅak and Adi Granth but also in several other places, and which considerably vary from each other. Some of them are based on ancient Hindu cosmogonies, while others are close to the Islamic concept.

related to the Chattisgarh section alongwith the Burhanpur branch seems to be much advance in providing its detailed description. Of the Math of Gaya, which is included in the Kabir chaura Section, there is a book named the Pan Granthi (of Ram Rahas Saheb), in which only at one place the Cosmological system is described. This description seems to be very identical with that of the Burhanpur branch.

However, on the description available in the literature of the Chattisgarh Section there seems to be much impact of the Vedic Puranas, whereas both the Kabir Chaura and Burhanpur seem to be very moderate and rationalistic in their out look. It is also noticeable that even the important relevent works of the Chattisgarh Section, viz., the Kabir Mansoor, the Gyan Sagar and the Anurag Sagar, very somewhat from each other.

It appears from the comparative study of these three sources that the Anurag Sagar and the Kabir Mansoor are very much close to each other in dealing with the subject. Since the former was composed much earlier than the latter (which was written even after the Gyan Sagar), it is quite possible that the author of the latter would have developed its own view point on the basis of the account produced in the former.

However, the only well-marked difference between them is that according to the latter, it was Brahma who having been created at first produces at a time six sons (named Sahaj, Ankur, Ichha, Soham, Achint and Akshar) and then again one also named Niranjan or Kal Purusha from an egg: whereas according to the former, sixteen sons were produced at a time by the will (Ichha) of Sat Purusha, among whom one was Pharam Rai or Niranjan. Following this is the common description in both the sources, which is precisely as follows: Niranjan now came in contact with 'Addy' (a girl, produced by the will of Brahma) and produced three renowned sons named Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. He brought the four Vedas also into existence, by the study of which Brahma came to know about the great 'Purush', i.e., Niranjan Himself. Though all the three tried to find Him out but only Vishnu succeeded. Now, all the three, Vishnu, Niranjan and Maya (i.e., Addya) were merged into a single form, and thus the cyclic order of creation was determined. When these are separated, the creation takes place: and when they are merged, the creation system vanishes. Following this is further elaboration but only in Kabir Mansoor, according to which, it was Kabir who incarnated in different shapes in all the three decades by the will of Sat Purusha to solve the problems of Jiva.

But, the account of the Gyan Sagar, which seems to be much identical with that of the Vedic Purans, vary sharply from both the sources. The long incident of the Puranic type described in it after the emergence of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh, is no more available in either of the two remaining sources.

Besides, some sorts of supplements were also prepared subsequently especially under the Chattisgarh section in order to get such accounts to be understood properly. The most important among them is the Vansh Panji, in which all the creatures are given the symbolic forms and thereby described in a quite biological and psychological way.

On the other hand, however, the view point on the subject held by the Mahatmas of the Burhanpur Section seems to be quite different than all these sources. We have already mentioned that this is very materialistic and materialistic branch and therefore it tries with critical eyes to find out reason in each and everything. According to it, nothing can be done without will (Ichha) of which emergence is possible only from a substantial body. So, to say that this formful world is the creation of a formless Brahma is

just an imagination and therefore can by no means be real and reliable. According to them, it is also not reasonable to hold the concept that all the creations would be damaged at a time, since an endless thing never comes to an end.¹ In fact, the philosophers of this section are of the opinion that the reality is confined only in the five elements (viz. Sky, air, fire, water and earth) which, having been always in nature, are neither produced nor governed by any one else, and yet they are going on in a cyclic order.

Some way or the other, the same concept is held by the Mahatmas of the Kabir Chaura Section. According to them, when the five elements and their corresponding twenty-five natures unite, comes out the Pind and thereby creation takes place. The whole universe is governed by man and woman who are termed as Niranjan and Maya, and nothing can be produced in lack of either of the two.²

This sort of difference between Kabir and the various centres of Panth and collectively among themselves

1 See, the Iqbal Prashana, pp. 23-24.

2 See the Panch Granthi, p. 42.

is not confined to the subject of the process of creation but extended even to the concept of creator. We know that as a strict monotheist Kabir has always held the concept that the whole universe is created by Brahma. The Chattisgarh section seems to have also followed the same concept. It is expressed in the Anurag Sagar that just as the shadow of a tree all the elements of the world were previously hidden in the personality of the Sat Prusha and later on came out as a shadow of him.¹ But the branches of Kabir Chaura and Furhanpur do not have faith in any creator whether Brahma or anyone else.

Just in accordance with Kabir's philosophy, the Chattisgarh section also believes that as waves come out from ocean and then again absorb in it, so is the relation between God and the Universe.² But both the Kabir Chaur

1 See, the Anurag Sagar, p. 13, some times the creator is also indicated there as Niranjana. See, the Gyan Bodh, p. 20.

2 See, the Agam-Nigam Bodh, p. 2. Similarly like Kabir it also believes in the dual nature of the world i.e., apparently real but virtually or ultimately not real. See, the Amar Mul, p. 255; and the Jivadharm Bodh, p. 31.

and Burhanpur hold the concept that the world is produced and governed by itself and therefore it would continue in a cyclic order and would never come to an end. Similarly, the five elements considered by Kabir and the Chattisgarh Section as ultimately unreal, are accepted by both these sections as the only real things, which bring them near to the Sāukhya philosophy.

Now, it may be concluded that the Chattisgarh section is much close to the over all concepts of Kabir. The only well-marked difference between them is that the accounts of latter having been coloured in the Puranic ways of description are much more elaborated and systematic in comparison to what we find in Kabir's own literature. But there seems a great departure from either of these two in the descriptions of Kashi and Burhanpur.

Concept of Bhakti (devotion):

With regard to Bhakti or devotion, Kabir's influence seems to be extended more specifically on the Chattisgarh Section and that of the Dhanauti or Bhaktahi than else where like Kabir chaura etc. There are still some other branches like Burhanpur which do not have faith in any ultimate power, and therefore their devotional practices

are confined to their Gurus and other saints. Anyhow, among those who believe in spiritual powers, Bhakti or devotion is regarded as the most important factor among all means prescribed for seeking out spirituality.¹ In the Chattisgarh Section, the Bhakti is observed even in two ways - Nawdha Bhakti and Nardi Bhakti.²

However, it was the extent of Kabir's purity of heart towards the pure devotion that he did not lay any emphasis on even the theory of 'Karma' or good action. He believed that the true devotion would itself illumine the devotee's heart with all sorts of good actions.³ The same spirit, some way or the other, is found in the Kabirpanthi literature but in a developed form. It is expressed in the Karam Bodh that the whole world is tied with many kinds of Karma, some of whom may lead men to 'Baikuntha' (where they are provided with the fruits of the deeds done by them in their lives)

1 See, the Gyan Prakshh, p. 20; the Gyan Bodh, p. 24; and also the Bhawtaran Bodh, pp. 47, 47, where the shape of a real Bhakti is well depicted.

2 Dr. Kedarnath has discussed them both at length. See, op. cit., pp. 271-73.

3 See, the Kabir Granthawali, p. 246.

but none are helpful to a permanent salvation.¹ Besides, in the Ambu Sagar of the Chattisgarh Section, the true Bhakti is defined as better than even apparent worship.² Like Kabir they are also very much emphatic in discarding the ritualistic practices in the performance of the real Bhakti.³ Similarly, just as Kabir was extremely against the system of monopolisation of religion either by the Hindus or by the Muslims, almost all the centres of the Panth have disapproved the system at least theoretically if not practically.⁴ It may be pointed out herewith that almost all the spiritual means prescribed in the Panth are found only in theory and not in practice. In practice they have become ritualistic more than the real spiritualistic, as we have already seen and would see subsequently.

1 See, the Karam Bodh, p. 165; For further instances of their selfless devotion, See the Agam Nigam Bodh, pp. 18-19; Jivan Bodh, p. 31; Atm Bodh, pp. 32-33.

2 See, the Ambu Sagar, p. 37.

3 See, the Bhaktaran Bodh, p. 47; the Jivadharam Bodh, p. 95; the Gyan Bodh, p. 26.

4 See, the Jivadharam Bodh, p. 93.

We have already discussed that Kabir was not satisfied with the traditional system of learning, and therefore he thought it better not to even touch a pen or paper.¹ He was so steadfast in his selfless devotion that he considered even the knowledge of scriptures as secondary,² rather he believed that the true Bhakti would itself illumine the devotee's heart with all sorts of knowledge. But in the Kabirpanthi literature knowledge has occupied a very prominent place, without which, it is said, even the true devotion is not possible. It is stated in Jivadharm Bodh that without crossing the stage of knowledge one cannot even enter into the domain of the Bhakti.³ Sometimes, it is also believed as the means of salvation.⁴

1 See, the Bijak, Sakhi - 188.

2 He says: "Nav Nidhi (i.e., nine sorts of devotion of the Hindus), Vedas, the Book (i.e., the Quran), all these are cloaks of falsehood....."

3 See, the Jivadharm Bodh, p. 41 for further definitions of it, see ibid., p. 72, and the Amar Mul, p. 207.

4 Madan Sahab has compared it with a soap for spiritual purification and perfection. See, the Shabd Viles, p. 7; also the Anurag Bagar, p. 145.

In view of so much importance of knowledge, its classification into many branches has taken place in the literature of especially the Chattisgarh Section, so as even their importance and numbers increase and decrease from one source book to the other. In Kabir Bani are mentioned four types of knowledge, viz., the Brahma Gyan, Anubhava Gyan, Tovacha Gyan and Chudra Gyan, and also described the fruits to be attained from each. According to it, the persons having the first type of knowledge go to Auchit lok, those of the second one to Akshar Lok; but those of the third one, because of their faith in formal observances, cannot be free from transmigration, and those of the fourth one, because of their faith in Mantras etc., are the occupants of the hell.¹ But in the work named the Muhammad Bodh, are described five types of knowledge, viz., the Chudra Gyan, Vacha Gyan, Anubhava Gyan, Brahma Gyan and Sahaj Gyan.² It is to be borne in mind that the two i.e., the Brahma Gyan and the Chudra Gyan, are common in both the sources, and yet the Brahma Gyan of the Muhammad Bodh occupies a place inferior that the

1 See, the Kabir Bani, p. 115.

2 See, the Muhammad Bodh, p. 9.

Sahaj Gyan, whereas in the former work it is described as of highest value. Besides, in the Karam Bodh also five types of knowledge are described¹ but the names given to them in this work (viz. the Mati Gyan, Shuruti Gyan, Awadhi Gyan, Man Prajaya Gyan and Kawal Gyan) are different than those of either of the two above sources. As the first and the third sources have not defined properly the types of knowledge mentioned by them, it seems difficult to compare them with those of the Muhammad Bodh. However, the definitions provided by the poet of this source with regard to its own five types of knowledge, are as follows:

- (1) The Mati Gyan: This is related to wisdom, in which all sorts of craftmanships may be included.
- (2) The Shuruti Gyan: The person who is the master of all the scriptures (Shastras) is to be regarded as a man of Shuruti Gyan. He may be aware of even the things of all the three decades.
- (3) The Awadhi Gyan: By the help of this one may know even the things concealed in the hearts of others.

1 See, the Karam Bodh, p. 179.

- (4) The Man Prajaya Gyan: By the help of this one may know whatever he wants.
- (5) The Kewal Gyan: This is the best type of knowledge which, according to the author of Amar Mul, is obtained only by the help of a Guru.¹ Nothing of the world is hidden from the eyes of the person who has got this knowledge.

Besides, in the Dharam Bodh, various symptoms of knowledge are described.²

On the other hand however, the concept of Guru or spiritual guide occupies a very prominent place in the literature of the Kabirpanth. We know that Kabir himself was very much emphatic to describe his importance.³ In his verses the Guru occupies the place no less than

1 See, the Amar Mul, p. 201. But somewhere else, in the same source (Ibid., p. 249), 'Atma Gyan' is regarded as the best knowledge and said that those who obtain it remain no more as human being and become themselves as Brahma.

2 See, the Dharam Bodh, p. 9.

3 He says that those who have no Guru, "their efforts will be of no avail", and that "they will be washed away by the current who do not take hold of the arms." See, The Kabir Bijak, Nirgun Kau Ang, pp. 23, 24. Besides, as to how much he was keen in searching for a true spiritual teacher is evident from the account of Dabistan-i-Mazahib (MS.) p. 200.

Govinda (God), rather sometimes he describes his position even higher than God.¹ This concept of Kabir is based on extreme simplicity and sincerity, which is unanimously inherited by all of his followers whether of any divisions of the Panth. But wherever they have tried to paint to paint Kabir's picture as a prophet sent by God to save the world from the misery of sinful acts, they come very close to the Shia concept of Imam and that of the Sufi Shaikhs.²

It is interesting that in spite of the fact that Kabir was not the believer of incarnation theory, his own personality is painted by the Kabirpanthis as an

1 See, the Adi Granth, Asa - 3; the Bijak Remaini - 77.

2 It is told by Dr. Tara Chand (op. cit., p. 52) that there were certain extremists among the early Shias who emphasized that even prayer, charity and pilgrimage, should be performed in the respect of Imam who was regarded by them as the living representative of God and as a semi-divine personality on whom the world depends for its existence". He further adds that the whole significance of Imam thus produced by them was inherited by the Sufis and it was then that the position of a guide or preceptor (pir or Shaikh) was considered by them as a pivot round which the whole machinery of sufism was to be moved. (For further illustration, See Ibid., p. 91).

Somewhere else (Ibid., p. 152) it is also stated by him that "in the Panth of Kabir, the Guru holds the same position as in any Sufi order."

incarnate or portion of Sat Purusha (God), who, according to them, manifested in the world not in this age of Kal but also in all the three preceeding ages (viz., Satyug, Dwapar and Treta) respectively with the names of Sukrit, Manindra, Karunamaya and Kabir, to save the human soul from the misery of Kal and Niranjana.¹ It was perhaps to support this theory that the miraculous and tatismanic stories of his life and death would have come in light. Not only Kabir's picture but even that of Dharamdas is painted more or less in the same colour. It appears from the account of the Kabir Mansoor that Kabir had fixed his four favourite disciples named Dharamdas, Chaturbhujdas, Bankeji and Sahteji, in all the four directions to preach the doctrines of the Panth;² but, according to the Gyan Bodh, all these were only the names of Dharamdas who manifested in all the four ages just like his guru.³

1 Parmananddas, Kabir Mansoor, pp. 20-21 Dharamdas is also said to have confirmed the theory of Kabir's spiritual leadership by declaring that "He is an incarnation of the Absolute, who revealed himself to the world." Quoted by Tarachand, op.cit., p. 151.

2 See, Kabir Mansoor, p. 90.

3 See, the Gyan Bodh, p. 35

It is further stressed in the same work that it was only Dharamdas who was foretold by Kabir to be succeeded for forty two generations (each holding office for 25 years and 20 days) who would have the power of human salvation.

Under these circumstances, it was but natural for Kabir to be worshipped by his followers. In the main temple of Kabir Chaura not only Kabir's Charan Paduka (i.e., a pair of wooden sandals) are kept but his picture is also hung, which are worshipped with Arti flame twice a days. Besides, the remembrance of Kabir's name is regarded by both the main divisions of the Panth as the main root of salvation. So the present Guru, as the living representative of Kabir, are submitted by his followers not only the body but also even the senses. Many of the Bhajans used in public worship are addressed to Kabir as well as the present Guru to whom a marked reverence is also paid.¹

This system is also followed by the branches of Jaunpur, Bidupur and Rusa. But the branches of Fataha, Burhanpur, and the Muhammedan Shrine at Maghar, do not regard Kabir as a divine character but simply as a pir or preceptor. They also deny to accept the legends of his birth and death and disregard his worship.

1 Such reverences paid by them many times a day are well described by Kedarnath Divedi, See, op.cit., p. 194.

Now again coming to the point of Bhakti, however, the first stage it is that of self - mortification or that in which a devotee purifies his mind or self for spiritual advancement. There are various means prescribed for it in various religious systems. As regards the case of Kabir he is said to have observed the Yoga system¹ inspite of the fact that he, as a 'grihasti' (householder), has always criticized and even condemned it, as we have already seen. In fact, his theory of self - mortification was only on the basis of having control over passion desire and all such worldly affections which can be harmful to pure devotion. On the other hand, however, there are many Yoga-systems prescribed in the Panth centres. The Rajyoga, in which a deep meditation is needed, seems to be very popular there.² Besides, they also observe the Dhyana Yoga and the Lai yoga . But the most popular among them is the Sahaj yoga which only is said to be observed even amongst the worldly affairs. As regards the Hath Yoga, they seem to be not very much inclined towards it but

1 The belief that Kabir was a yogi is so popular that there is controversy among some of the modern scholars in even accepting as to which sort of yogi he was, as we have discussed earlier.

2 See, the description provided in the Jivadharm Rodh, p. 186.

rather sometimes it has been condemned by them.¹

However, the other necessary thing for a devotee is to have extreme faith in God and to dedicate each and every thing in His service. We know that as a firm believer of emotional devotion Kabir has justified it best. To follow him, the Kabirpanthis have also stressed to have an over all faith on God only.² Besides, like Kabir they are also very much emphatic to stress on dedicating each and every thing to the will of God, so much so that there should be no consciousness for even self or nafs.³

Besides, a deep consciousness of Sin and a profound sense of unworthiness before God are also regarded by Kabir as much in the process of spiritual perfection, as we have seen earlier.⁴ Some way or the other, the same spirit is found in the Kabirpanthi literature also.⁵

1 See, Ibid., pp. 85, 101; Shehd Vilas, p. 99.

2 See, the Anurag Sagar, p. 143; the Dharamdas Ki Shabdawali, p. 29, on p. 24 a devotee is said to be the slave of God.

3 See, the Ara Bodh, p. 1, the Sivadharm Bodh, p. 41.

4 For instance, see the Kabir Granthawali, pp. 142, 153.

5 See, the Dharamdas Ki Shabdawali, pp. 21, 24.

Similarly, there are also the reference in Kabir's verses of the constant repetition of God's name (i.e., Sufi's *dhikr*) not ritually but in true sense, as we have seen earlier. The Kabirpanthis have also given it a very important place in their devotional process. It is stressed in the Dharam Bodh that the constant repetition of God's name in loneliness leads a devotee to be constant by nature from all sorts of worldly affections.¹

But the most important and necessary factor of spiritual life is love. We have already described that as all sorts of pains and difficulties occurring in the process of spiritual advancement are caused by love, almost all the mystics have regarded it as the most essential factor in accomplishing the highest aim. Kabir was also the believer of the same, and therefore he has repeatedly declared it as superior than even acquiring the religious knowledge (as discussed earlier), and so is the case of the Kabirpanthis.

But, with regard to the way of its description, there seems to be some noticeable differences between the Muslim mystics and the saints of Indian origin. We know that in Hindi poetry God is described as lover and man as beloved, while the sufis except some like Rabia Basary have adopted just the reversed position by calling

¹ See, the Dharam Bodh, p. 178.

Him beloved and themselves as lovers. Beside this difference of gender, in Hindi poetry the inclination of love or affection emanates from God towards man more strongly than what man himself has towards Him, and most often man is described as having no inclination like this and the wholesome response is of God; while the Sufis appose this attitude by calling themselves as having much attention towards beloved or God and He Himself is most often described as having no care for lover or man.

There is no doubt at all that both Kabir and his followers have maintained this traditional approach of Hindi poetry by calling God as Father, Husband etc., but as regards the concept of the emanation of love or affection, Kabir sometimes and the Kabirpanthis most often seem to be more inclined towards the ways set forth by the Muslim mystics, as we shall notice subsequently. Besides, the Muslim mystics have always described the approach of love only in terms of couple relation, while both Kabir and his followers have gone steps further by describing it also in terms of father and son, master and slave, and even Husband and wife.¹

¹ Dr. Tara Chand has rightly remarked that Kabir's God is the Father, the Lover and the Husband (Pritam) and therefore, according to him, the individual must seek Him as the son, the beloved or the spouse..." See, *op.cit.*, p. 161. For further details, see the verses of Kabir contained in the Dharamdas Ki Shabdawali, pp. 12, 20, 24, 26, 29.

Anyhow, Kabir regards love as a sort of wine, which takes in his verses the form of 'Prem Ras' and sometimes also of 'Ram Ras'. He himself is drunk by this sort of wine, which is mixed with hardness and sweetness, and prescribes it for all those who want to proceed spiritually onwards.¹

Similarly, the followers of Chattisgarh section also call it 'Ram Ras' but most often 'Ami Ras'.² But still there is a well-marked difference between the approach of Kabir and that of his followers towards love. Kabir's love is spiritual more than physical, while the

1 See, the Kabir Granthawali, Chitmani Kau Ang, Sakhi-49, and especially the references contained in his 'ulatwasian', where he speaks as to how one goes out of senses and what sort of things does he observe in the stage of spiritual intoxicacy. For instance, see the following verse (Contained in the Kabir Granthawali, p. 16):

हरि रस पीयां जानिये, कबहुं न जाय हुमार ।
 मे म्हां घुक् गिराँ, नाहीं तन की मार ॥

But sometimes, he seems to be even much in advance than this, when he goes to the extent of declaring that one who observes love in its complete form not only himself becomes immortal but also even the reality of lover and beloved becomes one and the destiny of both runs on parallel lines, as is evident from the following verse of him (contained in Ibid., p.17):

हरि मरि हँ ता हम हँ मरि हँ ।
 हरि न मरे हम काहे को मरिहँ ॥

2 See, the Bhawtarau Bodh, p. 48.

Kabirpanthis appear treating it from the other way round, as we shall notice subsequently. For instance, it is expressed by Dharamdas that "my husband has gone somewhere and did not give me anything."¹ This seems to be purely the materialistic approach, otherwise the lover has spiritually provided his beloved with the pains of separation which themselves are much more precious than anything else. Hence, this sort of expression can by no means come to the standard of what is expressed by Kabir in this context. But sometimes, when the Kabirpanthis, in the process of describing the unbearable pains of separation, visualize every where the vision of lover, they reach spiritually to the level of Kabir.²

To begin with, however, there are two distinct stages prescribed by the Muslim mystics in the process of love, viz., 'Firaq' (i.e., separation) and 'Wisal' (i.e., Union). They both are following by Kabir by

1 See, the Dharamdas Ki Shabdawali, p. 12 Sabd 2; and also Sabads 3 and 36, wherefrom, in 8036 way or the other, the same impression comes out.

2 See, the Kabirpanthi Shabdawali, p. 59, Sawayya 6; also p. 61.

the terms of 'Virah' and 'Viyug' and therefore there seems to be no weight in the assessment contained in the Khazinal-ul-Asfia that he taught the Sufi doctrine of 'Wisal' but was silent with regard to the counter part of it.¹ In fact, Kabir's own concept of love was very deep (as he considered it both 'Sadhan' or means and 'Sadhya' or object), and therefore he could not follow the well planned system of it found in Sufism -- the various stages as to how one passes on from superficial love (i.e., Ishq-i-Majazi) to the real one (i.e., Ishiq-i-Haqiqi). And this was because in the Santya Sahitya as a whole there is no place for Ishq-i-Majazi as it was considered by them no more than an illusion. This exception is observed in the literature of the Kabirpanth also, though it describes the rest things in a more elaborated and systematic way than what we find in Kabir's literature itself.

Anyhow, the first stage is described in the Kabirpanthi literature as having been obtained only by

1 See, the passage of it quoted by Westcott, op. cit., pp. 15 - 16.

the help of Guru. This is very critical stage in which the devotee becomes curious and remains thus restless till its removal. We have already mentioned that Kabir's concept of love is spiritual and emotional more than his followers. For further instance, even in the condition of separation Kabir's love allows neither himself to observe any one else than lover (or God) nor lover to be observed by any one else than him.¹ But the Kabirpanthis do not come to this standard, though they want constant observation of lover without interruption of anyone.² Besides, sometimes it happens that both Kabir and his followers begin with getting the affectionate attitude of lover but later on the latter fails in describing the complete form of Union (Viyog) because of the fear of mother-in-law or sister-in-law,³ while Kabir seems to be not at all afraid of any one. The other difference between them is that Kabir in the condition of separation feels all the things burning with him, while the Kabirpanthis have no idea like this,

1 See, the Kabir Granthawali, p. 19, Sakhi - 2.

2 See, the Dharamdas Ki Shabdawali, p. 12, Shabd - 3.

3 See, Ibid., p. 15, Shabd - 13.

rather some times they feel that the worldly things are even causing increase¹ment of their pains. This idea put forth by them seems to be very identical to the spirit of the classical dramas of Kalidas like *Shakuntala*, *Meghduta* etc. But inspite of all such differences, the Kabirpanthis seem to be no less back than Kabir in describing either the troubles of the way or the restlessness of separation for *vijog* (Union).²

Besides, the stage of *Vijog* or *Wisal* (i.e., Union) is also very well depicted by Kabir but most often in the term of marriage between him and his lover (God).³ The same spirit seems to be followed by the Kabirpanthis who also describe it with the same symbol of marriage.⁴

1 See, the Kabirpanthi Shabdawali, p. 6^o.

2 Kabir's experiences to this context may be seen in the Kabir Bijak (Remains - 15, 16), and of those of the Kabirpanthis in the Dharamdas Ki Shabdawali, (p.15, Shabd 14) and Kabirpanthi Shabdawali (p. 58, Sawayyas 1, 2 and also pp. 58, 62).

3 See, the Kabir Granthawali, p. 13, Sakhis 13, 16 and p. 1.

4 Dharamdas Ki Shabdawali, pp. 51, 48.

But the difference between them is that: when Kabir's separated soul is married with her lover, she becomes completely absorbed in Him, so as there remains no more difference even between the destiny of both, while in the Panth the soul even after union is described as retaining her identity from the lover.¹ Besides, both of them seem to be unanimous in describing that when in extremity of separation one surrenders his self, he at once gets the vision of lover even within himself.² But the beautiful and pleasant atmosphere of lover's resident depicted in the Kabirpanthi literature,³ seems to be no more in Kabir's verses.

In the extreme of devotional spirit, like Kabir his followers have also most often had no consideration for even Heaven and Hell. But this spirit is not found in all the centres of the Panth. Some centres like that of the Chattisgarh have blind faith in them, while others like Fuzhanpur, Kashi and Fataha have got no regard for

1 Kabirpanthi Shabdawali, p. 49 63.

2 See, Ibid., p. 49.

3 See, Ibid., p. 49.

them as they consider them only an imagination. It appears from the literature of the Chattisgarh division that there are four stages of salvation 'Balokya', 'Sarupya', 'Samlpya' and 'Sayajya', which are to be obtained by different categories of devotees.¹ They also believe that even above them all there are some 'Dweepa' like 'Achintya', 'Sohang', 'Ichha', 'Anaur' and 'Sahaj', above whom again and even beyond other heavenly things is the Lok of Sat Purusha which is called Amardham (from where Kabir comes to the world whenever needed by the order of Sat Purusha).² It is further believed by them that those who enter in the first four heavens are only provided with the fruits of their good deeds performed in the world and afterwards were sent again to the world, but those who enter into the Satya Lok get rid of the chains of life and death for ever. This is the real stage of salvation which is obtained rarely and with such difficulty.³

1 See, the Kabir Bani, p. 107.

2 Kedarnath has provided a very interesting chart of the whole system. See, op. cit., p. 235.

3 See, the Gyan Sagar, p. 2.

Similarly, the cursed situation of the Hell is also described by them in the same dramatic manner. They say that beneath the earth there are seven sorts of hell named Atal, Vital, Sutal, Mahatal, Rasatal, Talatal and Patal, in which are situated eightyfour kunds where the sinners are given different sorts of punishment according to their sins.¹

Besides, those who believe in the system of salvation prescribe, just like Kabir, certain things for its attainment, and the Chattisgarh section goes steps further by including in them Pan Parwana as a certificate to go to the 'Amar Lok'.² Kabir's aim was only to have control over passion, desire etc., which brings altogether a change in life and which, according to him, is itself salvation. But in the eyes of the followers of the Chattisgarh division, even superior than this is to obtain eternal happiness which

1 See, the Amar Singh Bodh, p. 76.

2 See, the Amar Mul, p. 209; we have already described the system and importance of the Pan Parwana.

is possible only after occupying the Sat Loka. They say that those who perform devotion by the help of the Vedas cannot go beyond than getting at the most the fruits of the first four heavens, while those who perform their services according to the principles laid down in the Swasurved would be destined to go to the Amar Lok where all sorts of eternal pleasure are provided in their realistic and fullest form.¹

On the other hand, however, the followers of the Burhanpur branch give an altogether different theory with regard to the problem. According to them, there are three kinds of 'Karma' (action) - Sanchit, Prarabd and Kriyaman, and when all these are performed in their respective terms, the chain of life and death itself breaks down, and thus the person concerned naturally gets the perfect salvation.² This condition is termed as 'Sahaj Viritti' by Ram Rahas Sahab who has also described certain symptoms of it.³

1 See, the Jivadharam Bodh, p. 93.

2 See, the Timir Bhaskar, pp. 266 - 67.

3 See, the Panch Granthi, p. 321.

Besides, almost all the branches of the Panth have described the importance of the Parakh as the only ideal of their supreme happiness. This stage is regarded by them as different and even higher than that of 'Tattvam Asi'.¹ By considering the latter as one of the reasons of transmigration, Puraṇ Saheb says that it can be removed only by the way of Parakh.² Some way or the other, the same view is held in the Chattisgarh Section³ as well as in that of Kashi.⁴ But, according to the Burhaupur Section, the soul in its original form having with its original qualities is itself Parakh just like the sun and its rays, and the difference occurs only when it forgets its qualities.⁵

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- 1 See, the Jivadharm Bodh, p. 76, 'Tat Tvam asi' is the term of SANSKRIT and the preaching of Upanishade, which may be translated as 'Thou art That', i.e., Thou (the human soul) are one with That (Divine spirit).
 - 2 See, the Nirnaya Sar (ed. by Raghavadas) pp. 20, 98.
 - 3 See, the Jivadharm Bodh, p. 77.
 - 4 See, the view held by Ram Rahas in the Panch Granthi, p. 47; Raghavadas has also described its importance in his preface to the same work, p. 22.
 - 5 See, the Parakh Vichar, pp. 47-49, 53.

CHAPTER - VIIRESUME AND CONCLUSIONS

Kabir's teaching was so heart - touching and powerful that it was largely appreciated during his lifetime and especially afterwards. But he did not form any sect of his own and the Panth-establishment is a later development by his followers who flourished subsequently in various centres of it. It is interesting that inspite of the fact that there is no certainty with regard to the origin and development of the Panth the prevalent branches of it, almost all of them, relate themselves for their origin to any of the disciples of Kabir, who, according to their traditional accounts, had established their branches having been most often directly instructed by Kabir himself. However, on the basis of certain references available it may be assumed that the Panth would have been founded by any of his followers in any

part of the 17th century and would have been developed in the 18th century on-wards in so many centres.

There are two main divisions of the so-called 'Kabir Panth' -- the Chattisgarh (in the Central Provinces) and the Kabir Chaura (Kashi) which seem to have been the earliest branches of it. There are many sub-divisions of them both, which have now flourished in many parts of the country. The well-known branches attached to the Kabir Chaura section are the Lehar Tara (Shivapur), Naghar (Gorakhpur), Kabir Bagh (Allahabad), etc. Similarly, the branches which are generally alleged to the Chattisgarh section are the Damakhara, Mandala, Kawardha, Kudarmal, Bomini, etc., The branches which have now detached their relations from the aforesaid section are said to be the Hatkesar, Kabir Niranya Mandir (Burbanpur), Kabir Chaura (Jagdishpuri), Kabir Math (Lukshimpur Baghicha, Ruzra, District Darbhanga), etc. Besides, there are still some other branches which are said to have originally established as independent ones just like the Kabir Chaura or the Chattisgarh. They are the (1) the Bhaktahi at Dananti (District Saran), (2) Fatuha (District Patna), (3) Bidupur (District Muzaffarpur), (4) Vachan Vansh (Ruzra), (5) Acharya Gaddi (Parayya, District Jaunpur), etc.

But the popularity of the Panth is not confined to only these branches but rather a large number of Maths, having been attached to any of the established branches, have not spread in many parts of the country.¹ The Maths related to the Kabir Chaura section are said to be spread in especially the town areas of the cities of U.P. like Saharanpur, Hardwar, Kanpur, Jhansi, Bulandshahr, Ghasipur and Gorakhpur. Similarly, the Maths related to the Chattisgarh Section are spread almost every where in the Central Provinces, for instance, like Kudarnal, Ratanpur, Hatkesar, Mandala Vanni, Dhamdha, Kharasia, Kawardha Sagar, Parkota, Khaupa, Hardi, Nagpur, Jabbalpore, Bharatpur, Gwalior etc. Besides, so many Maths related to the centres of Dhananti and Bidupur are found in the province of Bihar. There are also some other Maths which are attached to the centres of Fatuha and Gaya.

Besides, the Maths related to the centres of Saurashtra and Gujarat are spread in Ahmadabad,

1 Bhattacharya, Hindu Castes and Sects, p. 496; also the description provided by Kedarnath, op. cit., p. 209.

Khambat (or Khambayat), Nadiyed, Barauda, Bherauch, Surat, Jambagar, Rajkot, Joonagarh, Bhowanagar etc. These Mathas seem to be largely under the impact of the Chattisgarh Section, because they consider Kabir no less than Rama or Krishna. Anyhow, there are many more Mathas of the Panth which are found in Bombay, Poona, Haidrahad, Multan, Lahore, Karachi, Bangalore and Gohati. Sometimes it is also related that the Mathas of it have spread in even some of the foreign countries like Morisco, British Guyana, South Africa, Ceylon, Burma, Bhootan, Kabul etc., which are said to be mostly attached with the Chattisgarh Section.¹

Hence, the popularity of the Panth seems to be not confined within the Country but extended even to the foreign lands. But, as a matter of fact, most of its popularity seems to be still confined in U.P., Bihar, Central Provinces and to some extent in Gujarat. The reason why it could not get the same seat of popularity else where in the country, was largely because of the set back inflicted by the powerful local

1 See, the description provided by Kedarnath, op.cit., p. 209.

religious systems. We know that in Bengal and Orissa, the Dharam sect and Vaishnava Sahajiya are much popular. Then, in Punjab Sikhism and in the South Vir Shaiva thought and Vaishnava Dharma are very powerful. So the set back to the Paath in these places was but natural. But still there are some Kabirpanthi Maths in Siyalkot and Gurdaspur.¹

With the establishment of such a large number of Maths in many parts of the country, the followers of the sect also increased rapidly, so as their number reached to hundreds and thousands and subsequently to many lakhs. According to the Indian Census Report of 1891 A.D.,² the total number of the Kabirpanthis only in U.P. was 955. This Census Report tells us not only about their number but also about the places of their activity during those days, which may be figured as follows:

1 H. A. Rose, A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North Frontier Provinces, p. 19.

2 Quoted by Yadarnath op. cit., pp. 208-9.

<u>Places</u>			<u>No. of Kabirpanthis</u>
Dehradun	..	..	34
Bulandshahr	..	..	258
Agra	..	..	8
Bareilly	..	..	15
Muradabad	..	..	36
Pilibhit	..	..	72
Fatehpur	..	..	9
Allahabad	..	..	12
Jalaunpur	..	..	3
Gorakhpur	..	..	40
Tarai	..	..	4
Faizabad	..	..	16
Muzaffernagar		..	6
Aligarh	..	..	114
Farukhabad	..	..	2
Bijnour	..	..	2
Shahjahanpur		..	57
Kanpur	..	..	18
Hamirpur	..	..	8
Jhansi	..	..	8
Ghazipur	..	..	209
Basti	..	..	8
Lucknow	..	..	16

A comparative study of the whole table shows that their numbers in Bulandshahr, Ghazipur and Aligarh were

much higher than elsewhere. But many of the places (like Kashi, Gorakhpur etc.) holding even the main branches of the Panth have been left aside altogether. However, it appears from the Census Report of 1901 A.D. that the total number of them throughout the country was 850,000 out of whom 500,000 were living only in the Central Provinces.¹ Further more it is reported by Brigs that there were no less than six lakh Kabirpanthis only in the Central Provinces in the year 1911.² As the converts are still being made, their number is still increasing to a larger extent no less than a million.

Among the persons belonging to the Panth, there are also the Brahmans who have got important positions in various centres of it. But the majority are the converts from the lower castes. As Kabir belonged to a weaver's family, most of the Kabirpanthis have come

¹ See, Rashal's Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, p. 237.

It is stressed by Westcott (op. cit., p. 2) that the actual number would have been even more than what is contained in the Census Report for 1911.

² W. Brigs, The Chamars, p. 305. 27.

from the weaving castes, and therefore it is often called as "the Weaver's Religion". Anyhow, in the Central Provinces a large number of them seem to be derived from the weaving castes such as the Pankās, Balāhīs, Korīs, Kosalatīs and Mahāras. There are, however, some others from other low castes such as Zallīs or oilmen, Dhobīs or washermen, and chamāras or leather workers. There are still of some other castes from whom a Brahman may take water, such as Ahīras, Kūrāīs, Todhīs, and Kachhīs, who are farmers and cultivators."¹

Kabir was simply a religious teacher rather than a religious philosopher, and therefore he did never try to form a new religion of his own but rather to search out simply the virtual means of salvation. Therefore, the faith propounded by him can by no means be called his own innovation also because it was simply an outcome of the essential and constructive ideas found common in both the religions. It was, however, after his demise that the religious ideas thus reproduced

¹ See, Ibid., p. 109.

by him were not only given by his followers a definite form but also certain rules and regulations were laid down, which stood in a way even against his own fundamentals. It is to be born in mind that this sort of differentiation between Kabir and his followers is not a new thing but a phenomenon having been applied for a long time with all such cases. We know that Gautam Buddha had established his religious system against the Vedic dogmas and ritualistic observances, but in subsequent periods all these things were infused in it even attributing to his name. Besides, the ascetic practices with miraculous stories would never have been applied by Gorakhnath at least so severely as are attributed to him. This was largely because just beside their varied and extensive influences local traditions were also working on, which collectively painted their picture in a colour for which they themselves were not ready. But, the strange thing is that in spite of the fact that neither Kabir's period is so far nor his field of work was so extended as those of Gautam Buddha and Gorakhnath, his picture was also painted more or less in the same colour.

As a champion of the true Bhakti or devotion Kabir was very much emphatic in denouncing the dogmatic

and ritualistic practices prescribed by the religious authorities. But contrary to his ideas, the Kabirpanth is filled with all sorts of ritualism. It is interesting that not only this Panth but all such sects like Sikhism and others began with liberalism and were absorbed in ritualism. One of the main reasons of it might have been that they tried to form a group of their own distinct from others, which naturally would have led them to make a separate frame - work of their own. Any how, contrary to Kabir's condemnation of fasting, the Kabirpanthis are very much emphatic in observing the Poorama Varat by regarding it as the main root for salvation. Even a book named Poorama Varat has been published from the Chattisgarh Section, which is recited just as the recitation of Anant Varat of the Vedic religion. Not only this but there are many other fastings which are observed by the Kabirpanthis. Similarly, they perform the Arti service twice a day almost in the same manner as is regulated in the Vaishnava temples. Some strotas are also prescribed by them to be read out at the occasion of this service.¹ Besides, Kabir has totally rejected the

1 These strotas are contained in Kabiropanana Padditi pp. 265, 267.

system of reciting Mantras, whereas in the Panth a sort of net of these Mantras is spread even in daily physical needs.¹ The spiritual life of the twice born castes is recognised and they are subjected to the rules of caste from the time when they receive the Mantra and the Sacred thread (Janeo) from their Guru. Similarly, only those who have received the initiatory Mantra and a Kanthi (i.e., rosary formed of beads of Tulsi wood) are admitted as the members of the Panth. The Brahmanical Mantra invested to a new Brahman candidate is not allowed to be communicated on any account to those who are not Brahmins, and so is the case with the Kabirpanthis. And also, like any Hindu caste the initiatory Mantra whispered into the ear of a new interant of the Panth serves, on the one hand, as a bond of union with other members of it and also suggests for a privileged position, on the other. Besides these Mantras, some Gayatrias like Adi Gayatri, Prabhat Gayatri, Madhyana Gayatri, Senadhya Gayatri etc., have also been prepared,² which are used

1 All such Mantras may be seen in Ibid., pp. 163, 165, 166.

2 For the contents of these Gayatrias, see Kabiropanana Padditi, pp. 158-61.

in the Matho many times a day just the Brahmans repeat the Gayatri prescribed for them. It is significant that most of these Samirans, which are identical in form with vedic hymns and differ in a subject matter, are attributed to Kabir himself.

Moreover, just as the Brahmans wear upon their forehead the sign of God whom they worship, the Kabirpanthis are required to wear the mark of Dwadash Tilak, which even differ from place to place. Besides, there are many other formal observances in the Panth like Tinka Arpan, Chauka service, Pan-Parvans, Jot - Prashad etc., with which many traditional explanations (mostly miraculous) are added. In this context, it would not be irrelevant to quote the following verse of Kabir:

"Saith Kabir, why perform so many ceremonials?
 You (wear) tilaks (i.e., Secret mark)
 on your forehead, (carry) rosaries in your
 hands, and (put on) sectarian dresses. People
 think that God is a play thing."¹

1 See, Adi Granth, Bhairav - 6.

But contrary to this Kabir is himself worshipped by them. His picture and Charan Padooka are worshipped twice a day just as the idol worship in many centres of the Panth. Besides, it said that in the Kabir chaura of Jagdishpuri there is a temple in which are placed the idols of Ram, Lakshmana and Sita and they are regularly worshipped by the Sadhus of the sect.

It is significant that this sort of differentiation is not confined between Kabir and his followers but extended to among various branches of the Panth themselves. In view of principle and devotion they may be divided into two main sections - one, represented by the branches related to the Chattisgarh section alongwith the Parreyya Acharya Gaddi of Jaunpur and vachan Bansh Gaddi of Ruara; and the other, represented by the Kabir Chaura section alongwith the branches of Patuha and Burhanpur.¹ Both the two main sections of the Panth, the Kabir Chaura and Chattisgarh, have

1 Though the Burhanpur Section established much later than Kashi and Patuha, it seems to be now much more advance than both of them.

always tried to maintain their individuality on the basis of organization and character, so much so that even in Rajputana, where both of them exist side by side, the former is known as 'Mul' (i.e., original) and the latter as 'Bachan Banah' (i.e., stem of the world). Then, although the Mul Section draws more disciples from the better castes, and the Bachan Banah from the lower, the followers of the latter speak rather contemptuously of the former, saying that they have not found Kabir. Similarly, the former does not recognize the gurus of the latter and neither its followers visit the holy places of the latter. It is noticeable that a sort of difference is maintained in even the pattern of their names - the word used after the names of the followers of the Kabir Chaura is 'das', while those of Chattisgarh apply 'Nam'. Then, the Dwadash Tilak applied by the Kabirpanthis also differ and a sort of differentiation is also maintained in their dresses.

Coming to the other point, however in the Kabir Chaura section when new interants are admitted he is provided with Kanthi and Tilak, and some Mantras are whispered in their ears. Side by side takes place the

Puja (worship) and a brief Arti service just before which is observed the system of Tinka Arpan. More or less the same practices are observed in the Chattisgarhi branches, though in a more elaborate and complicated form. But in the branches of Fataha, Dhananti, Burhanpur and others likewise, there is no system like this except that the Mahant at the time of admission whispers some Mantras in the ears of new comers and then the Prashad is distributed among all the present devotees. With regard to the Chauka service, both the main divisions of the Panth, Chattisgarh and Kabir Chaura, along with perhaps Bidupur also, accept its spiritual importance and thereby celebrate it on both the occasions of happiness and sadness. But the branches of Fataha, Dhananti, Burhanpur and Jaunpur, do not have much faith in it. Even wherever the service is observed, there seems to be a lot of difference from the arrangement of its articles down to preparation and performance.

There is again difference among various centres of the Panth in holding the view of Gurus' importance. In both the main divisions of it there is the system of worshipping Kabir's picture, his Charan Padooka (a pair of wooden sand) and Sasadhi. But in the branches of

Dhananti, Furhampur and Futuha, only the Arti is given to the alive Gurus. There is again difference between these branches and the above two main divisions of the Panth with regard to the modes of giving Samadhi to the Gurus. But there is a sort of unity among all the branches in the system that the Mahants are to be given Samadhi and the dead bodies of ordinary members are to be thrown into water, and that none of the Kabirpanthis would be cremated after death. Besides, the Chattisgarhi branches seem to be much more emphatic in comparison to others in describing the spiritual importance of varat (fasting), ceremonies, Mantras etc.

On the other hand, however, the varied and dynamic aim of Kabir was motivated as a protest against the classification of religion and society. He tried to make a sort of banner under which all the classes of people with their different trends of thought could move together. This theory of Kabir needed further extension but it was narrowed down by his followers. Theoretically, there is no consideration in the Panth of caste and creed, but practically it is not so. Members of lowest castes, such as Mehtars, Dome and Dhobis, are not permitted to wear Kanthi's of the Panth. Besides, it is said that previously all the

Members of the sect took food together at the conclusion of a chauka service, but now at least in some places, if not all over, different chaukas are arranged for different castes of people,¹ though a man embracing the order is required to leave his previous caste and its observances altogether.² In the Kabir Chaura, however, it is said that at the chauka service all the members do take food together. But still usually the Muslim followers have to arrange their meals separately. The same system seems to be maintained in the Fataha Math where the Muslim followers are taught freely but the arrangement of their living and fooding is separate. In the branches of Vachan Vash and Bidupur, however, there seems to be no rigidity like this.

1 Kasy, op. cit., p. 109.

2 It is due to this binding that in some places the Kabir panthis belonging to a particular caste try to form a separate group within the caste. But the members of lower castes like the Mahars and Pankas are still accustomed to take food and to inter marry with the people of their caste even outside the sect.