

Sant Kabir: flame that scorched falsehood

By **Acharya Prashant** - June 8, 2025



Flame of fearless wisdom: Kabir's voice echoes through time, calling seekers to authenticity and courage.

Every era produces a few who seem not to belong to it. For their contemporaries, their being and expression seems overly bold, too inconvenient, too unsettling. Still, their words transcend centuries, like a wildfire that refuses to be put out. One such phenomenon was Sant Kabir. As Kabir Jayanti approaches on June 11, let us hear this roar of wisdom echo once again—deep, raw, and fearless. To speak of Sant Kabir is not to speak of a distant figure from the annals of Indian mysticism.

For those who can listen, he is not a poet from the past, but an eternal flame within — one that neither flickers nor flatters, but only illuminates. He is not merely a figure of medieval history; he is the unwavering fire that continues to speak to us. And to those who seek the truth, he is the most intimate companion. For those who have dared to look within, he is the voice that doesn't quiver, the mirror that does not lie.

A Saint Who Belonged to No One, and to Everyone

Sant Kabir lived in Varanasi, a city steeped in religious symbolism and authority. But he belonged to no sect. He bowed to no prescribed scripture. And still, he saw more clearly than the priests and preachers of his time. Hindu or Muslim—he confronted both. Whether idol worship or ritual slaughter— he spared neither. He rejected every identity imposed upon him. He had no caste, no sacred thread, and no fixed doctrine. He didn't ask people to become like him. He asked them to stop trying to be anyone else. Whom do you seek in temple and mosque?, he asked. The one you're searching for sits quietly inside you. Moko kahaan dhoonde re bande, main to tere paas mein. Na main mandir, na main masjid, na Kaabe Kailaas mein.

Wisdom in the Language of Soil and Smoke

While the Vedic sages spoke of Aham(ego) and Atma(pure Self), Sant Kabir spoke of grinding stones, pots, cotton, and wells. His metaphors came from village courtyards. And yet, the truth he uttered carried the same depth as Vedantic wisdom—perhaps with even greater urgency. His genius lay in how he made truth relatable without diluting its depth. His couplets are catchy to recite and unsettling when truly fathomed. And therein lies the catch: it is very easy to sing them for melody and forget their mission, which is to shake us from our slumber. Melody soothes. But Sant Kabir came not to soothe, but to stir us from our slumber.

The Restlessness of the Real Lover

As a weaver, Sant Kabir led a modest life, spending his days at the loom and offering his work in the marketplace. He conversed with people while working, sharing deep wisdom in the language of the masses. This daily routine too was an expression of his teaching. Speaking in the voices of his land, Sant Kabir wove the everyday into the eternal. His loom wasn't just for thread—it was for truth. As he spun yarn, he spun metaphors that could cradle the Infinite in the folds of the finite. Pots, rivers, grinding stones, and bridal songs—his wisdom found home in the humblest of things.

One of his most loved songs is of the naihar—a bride's parental home. On the surface, it may appear to express popular sentimental lyricism. But in Sant Kabir's hands, it becomes a spiritual metaphor. The naihar is the body, the world, and the inheritance of conditioning. And the sasural—the husband's home—is the realm of truth, of union with the Beloved. Naiharwa humka na bhaave — This worldly home no longer pleases me. It is not lament—it is rebellion. The heart, having tasted the Beloved, cannot return to borrowed comforts.

The seeker must rise, leave the familiar, and walk into the unknown. Sant Kabir's questions echo in every seeker's ear: Why adorn the house that is crumbling? Why live without understanding life? Love, for Sant Kabir, was not an emotion. It was a burning longing for truth. The true lover is not satisfied with customs and compromises. Though deeply at rest within, his songs celebrate restlessness—to challenge the false and break the chains of internal bondages.

Compassion That Cut Through Cruelty

Sant Kabir did not philosophize about non-violence. He thundered with spiritual urgency. He was among the rare voices of the time who fiercely condemned animal slaughter in the name of religion. Whether goat or cow, whether offered in temple or mosque—he called it what it was: hypocrisy cloaked in holiness. Mulaah tujhe Kareem ka, kab aaya farmaan? Daya bhaav hriday nahin, zibah kare haiwaan Did God ever command you to kill in his name? You've no compassion in your heart, and are acting like a beast. To Sant Kabir, compassion was not a ritual—it was the proof of spiritual integrity. And it had to extend to all living beings, not selectively. In a world that often sacrificed sensitivity at the altar of tradition, Sant Kabir stood firm—clarity was more sacred than culture.

Truth Is Not for the Crowd

You cannot walk two paths at once, he said. And he lived it. Sant Kabir did not seek validation. He did not crave followers. When they called him mad—Kabir baurana—it was society expressing discomfort with his freedom. He did not chase salvation in Kashi. He chose to die in Magahar—a place believed to deny salvation—just to prove that no geography, no holy stamp, decides your fate. Truth is not location-bound. It either lives in your heart, or it doesn't. And yet, at his death, both Hindus and Muslims who had shunned him tried to claim him. They wanted his body, but not his uncompromising wisdom. That irony remains. We sing Sant Kabir, but dare not live him.

Let Sant Kabir Rise Again

This Kabir Jayanti, let's not just light lamps—let's light what lies within. Let us allow his voice to unsettle us. He didn't come to comfort. He came to illuminate. Reciting his verses is easy. Living their truth is not. But that is the only true tribute— to allow his voice to reveal all that is false and borrowed. Let Sant Kabir rise. Not in garlands and chants, but in our willingness to walk alone—toward what is real and what is ours.

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