



**The Poetry Of Kabir: "All know that the drop  
merges into the ocean, but few know that the ocean  
merges into the drop."**

*The Poet Kabir*

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Kabir, (meaning Great and one of the 99 names of God in Arabic), was a mystic and poet, born around 1440 whose work continues to be revered today by Muslims, Sufis, Sikhs and Hindus and is the founder of the Kabir Panth ("Path of Kabir"), a religious community mainly in India with approximately 10 million members. He was born in Varanasi to poor Muslim parents, although some say he was the child of a Brahmin widow and said of himself that he was "at once the child of Allah and Ram." He grew up learning his father's craft of weaving and very unusually for a Muslim, overcame obstacles to become a disciple of Saint or Swami Ramananda, the leading pioneer of the Bhakti movement, which promoted salvation for all. We cannot be sure of what religious teaching he received in Ramananda's ashram as Ramananda died when Kabir was 13 but we do know that he did not renounce his worldly life, as he married and had children, and was disdainful of professional piety which led to later persecution by religious authorities. This was further amplified by his progressive philosophy of social equality and his spiritual synthesis of Hindu ideas of karma and reincarnation and Muslim beliefs of one god and no idolatry or caste system. We do know that he had no formal education and remained almost entirely illiterate and expressed his poems as 'b???s' meaning utterances in Hindi although he borrowed from various dialects. His songs and couplets were part of a strong oral tradition in the region and although spread across northern India orally were also written down by two of his disciples, namely Bh?god?s and Dharmad?s. Kabir's style was inventive and imaginative and able to capture the attention of a wide range of Indians and provide a path to spiritual awakening which for Kabir was mainly about love and brotherhood and not to be divorced from daily life. "All our actions performed anywhere are our duties, and work is worship." His work is understood and accessible to generations of Indians, more so than any other Saint and in India remains one of the most quoted mystic poets of all time. His ability to simplify and use examples of our universal daily life to enhance our spiritual well being and acceptance of our own self make his work very relevant today as is apparent in this volume. Kabir is thought to have lived an exceptionally long life and probably died in 1518. It is said that his Hindu followers wanted his body cremated and his Muslim followers wanted his body buried and a fight therefore ensued. When they finally lifted the cloth that covered his dead body they found flowers and took half each for his last rites.

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