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SVDH MAHADEV SHRINE

Ayodhya Nath Kerni

Twelve Jyotirlingum located at different places in India are regarded very famous and sacred. Many devotees from all over the country visit these shrines to pay their obeisance. Jyotirlingums are- Vishaweshwar at Kashi(UP), Kedarashewar in Uttarakhand, Mallikarjun at Kurmool (AP), Bhim Shanker in Sahyadri Hills (Maharashtra), Mahakaleshwar at Ujjain (MP), Somnath at Surat (Gujarat), Vaidyanath at Deogarh (Jharkhand), Shri Nagnath in Gujarat, Ghushmeshwar at Ellora, Shri Trambakeshwar at Godawari (Nasik, Maharashtra), Shri Ramashwaram at Setubandh (Tamil Naidu) and Omkareshwara at Narmada. Besides above there are lot many other Shiva temples of great significance located through out the entire country.e.g. Shiva temple of Bhunsa (Nagod, MP), Shiva temple of Khoh (Satna Panna, MP), Lingraj temple of Bhubneshwar, Kandaria Mahadev of Khajurao (MP), Shiva Shrine of Amarnath (Kashmir), Daksheshwar Mahadev of Kankhal (Haridwar, Uttarakhand), Kotilingeshwara temple in Kolar (Karnataka), Kapileshwar Mahadev at Chennai, Manimahesh and in a small radius of Bharmour (HP) eighty four Shiva temples are located. As one looks around the Jammu region there are also many famous shiva temples oftenly visited by the devotees. Most ornate and beautifully composed Shiva temples are located at Jammu, Besholi, Bhaderwah, Udhampur, Kishtwar, Akhnoor, Reasi, Swankhan, Purmandal, Billawar, Chenani, Dushalla, Benisang and Sudh Mahadev.

Sudhmahadev is a small town located in the lap of lofty precipitous mountains called as Shivgarh. The peaks of the mountains remain capped with snow during winters and naturally convert to lush green meadows during summers. An atmosphere of serenity pervades the area of exotic beauty and natural bounties. Locals bring their cattle on the tops for the entire season in view of sufficient availability of green fodder. Gujjars have constructed their temporary houses on the tops to spend summer season with their cattle. A naturally grown product called 'Karsor' is used as vegetable and pickle is also prepared. The product is also supplied to market for sale. The small town Sudhmahadev is connected with road from Chenani at a distance of 23 Km in North east direction at longitude 75.21 E Lat 33.1 N Elev 1500 m.

The legend attached to the place of pilgrimage is very attractive and common among locals which states that once there lived a demon named Sudhanta near Nara (a secluded spot above Gaukaran where water falls from height). Goddess Parvati usually passed through one end of the forest to the other where she took a bath at the point called Gaurikund. On her return amid the forest she worshipped a Shiva lingam at the present location of temple. One day Sudhanta appeared with his demonic appearance before the Goddess. On seeing the demon with his dissolute and debauched intentions, Goddess prayed for the help of Lord Shiva and also could not avoid a loud shriek. Lord Shiva was busy in meditation on Shivgarh Mountain those days. Lord awoke from meditation and reached for the protection of Goddess Parvati. Lord hurled a big trident on Sudhanta



fatally. The throw was so heavy that trident was broken into three pieces and thereby caused a terrible death of the demon. Lord Shiva also asked Sudhanta that life could be further extended to him if he wishes to be alive again. Sudhanta eagerly expressed that he was receiving salvation in the hands of Lord Shiva and his last desire was that his name could be kept alive. Lord Shiva fulfilled his desire by granting his name Sudhanta before own popular name Mahadev. With the passage of time the place came to be called as Sudhmahadev.

The trident contains the inscription engraved on its shaft which is not fully legible. The writing contains three lines which are partially deciphered by Jagan Nath Agarwal " Sudhmahadev Inscriptions of the son of Vibhunag " (VI Paper series 194 Hoshiarpur 1967). The name of Vibhunag also appears in another trident inscriptions at Gopeshwar (Chamoli Ultrakhand) Sudhmahadev Inscription on trident is believed to be pertaining to Gupta period. According to Aggarwal Sudh Mahadev was fully developed as a place of pilgrimage during third century AD. The language of inscription is Sanskrit and also contains Brahma characters brought into use during Gupta period in north-west region. The trident already existed at Sudhmahadev much before Gupta period. Possibility cannot be ruled out that some naga ruler who visited Sudhmahadev during that period may have got engraved the inscription on trident. The translation of the partially read inscription is " Success has been attained in the year five of his own rule-----by the son of (Maharaja) Vibhunag the Lord of -----world----- but those who perish."

In the genealogy of Chenani kings there happened to be two kings named Ram Chand. Ram Chand-I was the son of Mir Chand and Ram Chand-II son of Kedar Chand, last king who ruled the Jagir till 1947. During the period of

Ram Chand-I who ruled for thirty years about five hundred years back, Shiva temple of Sudhmahadev was constructed. Once king Ram Chand-I thought to know the depth of trident. He ordered his men to dig up the trishul and digging work was carried out for two days. During the night in a dream the king had the instructions from Lord Shiva to immediately stop the digging. He also sought the advice during the dream to prepare a sword of the iron piece but automatically fallen from the trident. The sword will foretell him of the victory or defeat during a war. In case sword is placed under all the weapons and comes up automatically then there will be victory otherwise defeat. This sword was being used by some of later generations and presently whereabouts of it are not known.

In view of constant inflow of devotees repairs, renovations and maintenance of temple continues since its construction. Considerable additions were also made. The marble flooring was done during 1939 by a Shiva devotee. There is a small temple of Guru Gorakhnath just opposite to Shiva temple having provided with the marble idol of Gorakhnath. A small Ganesh temple has also been constructed to its north side. Nandigans are erected at different points. A havan kund is held in the centre of a hall to offer oblations to the deities.

There are two live Samadhis of Baba Roopnath and Baba Bhoop Nath. Both the above mehants have gone to Samadhi while living. The samadhis of other Mehants are Baba Mangal Dass, Manbasa Nath, Bhandar Nath, Champa Nath, Vaikunth Nath, Balak Nath, Shiv Nath, Nurat Nath, Mishri Nath, Gopal Nath and Dhuni Nath. The fire lit by Baba Roop Nath still continues. Dhooni remains burning. The ashes are never removed from Dhooni despite burning a large quantum of wood. The small kund never gets filled with ashes inspite of burning of fire round the clock.

For past few years the management of the Shiva temple has been taken over by the Dharmarth Trust. The maintenance of temple is being carried out properly and regularly. A big hall was constructed for the convenience and stay of devotees. The utensils and other facilities are being provided to the devotees who organize Bhandara.

On the full moon day of Jyeshtha month each year a mela is organized for three consecutive days. Thousands of people gather from the area around and far away places to celebrate the festival. Many buses are provided direct from Jammu to Sudhmahadev and back on Mela days for the conveyance of devotees. Arrangements for plying of buses from Udhampur are also made. The stalls are arranged to impart knowledge of increasing agricultural production and growing of various vegetables since the area around is most suitable for growing vegetables.

During the night, folk lore, playing of flutes and beating of drums followed by dance by the locals dressed in best Dogra attire reflect the inherited culture of the region. The Dogri classical songs called 'Bhakh' are also sung by the groups of singers during night. Though a considerable change has occurred in the dress and fashion for few years yet the inherited old fashion could be traced among only some locals during the festival. After mid night devotees start proceeding to Nara where water cascades down the mountain side under which devotees receive the holy bath and again return to mela venue. There are other significant holy spots located near by : Gaurikund, Gaukaran, Pap nashini Bauli, Haridwar and Budhsudh etc. The mela concludes after three days. A wrestling match is also organised during the festival where wrestlers from local area and far away places participate.

Kabir and his Philosophy

D.R.Bhagat

The period from 14th to 17th century was a period of Bhakti movement in India especially in North and Central India. Many saints born during this period preached their idea of devotion to one God. The prominent saints of this movement were Ramanand, Ravi Das, Sur Das, Meera Bai, Namdev, Guru Nanak and Kabir. Among all these great saints, the appearance and disappearance of Kabir Ji was a mystery. He appeared on a lotus flower in a pond called Lehar Tara Talab in Varanasi and left the world in Maghar now in Gorakhpur without leaving his body. He was brought up by Neeru and Neema, the Muslim weavers of Varanasi. He is also regarded as the most revolutionary saint of the Bhakti movement. Ramanand was his Guru. He being brought up in a low caste family had to face much humiliation in the hands of orthodox Brahmins while preaching his ideology.

Kabir was a great mystic poet. He preached his ideology through his poetry. The language of his poetry was straightforward and understandable by the common people. His verses were direct revelation of truth and full of spirituality. He believed in simple life full of purity. He was against false rituals and superstitions of both Hindu and Muslim religions which have no relevance with the enrichment of the human soul. He said that both are ignorant of reality. He satirically denounced Brahmins and Mullahs and thus won the hearts of poor people who were the victims of their exploitation. He preached that the salvation cannot be attained by mere performing of the rituals. It is possible by following the path of truth and spirituality. He

has criticised the Idol worship. The leaders of both religions complained to Secunder Lodhi about his open criticism of the religions and he was subjected to torture and was ordered to be killed. He was tied and put in a burning fire, he was bundled and thrown in Ganga and also put before a mad elephant but he survived every time. At last Secunder Lodhi recognised his spiritual power and bowed before him. Regarding the search of God he says "mo ko kahan dhunro re bande"

He says where the people are searching for Me? I am beside you. I am neither in temples nor in mosque. I am neither in rites nor in ceremonies. He believed that all the wealth of three worlds resides in the goodness of the heart. Mercy and forgiveness are the jewels of a spiritual soul. A human being who considers all the creatures of the world as his own and practises righteousness remaining passive in the affairs of the world can attain the immortality. He said that the true worship of God is from inside of the heart and not by chanting from mouth. He has criticised the caste system prevailing in Hindu society. He said that if I am having blood in my veins it is not that an upper caste Brahmin is having milk in his veins. He said that nobody is small or great on account of his birth. He said that a saint has no caste which is evident from his following hymn

"Santan jaat na puchho nirguniyan"

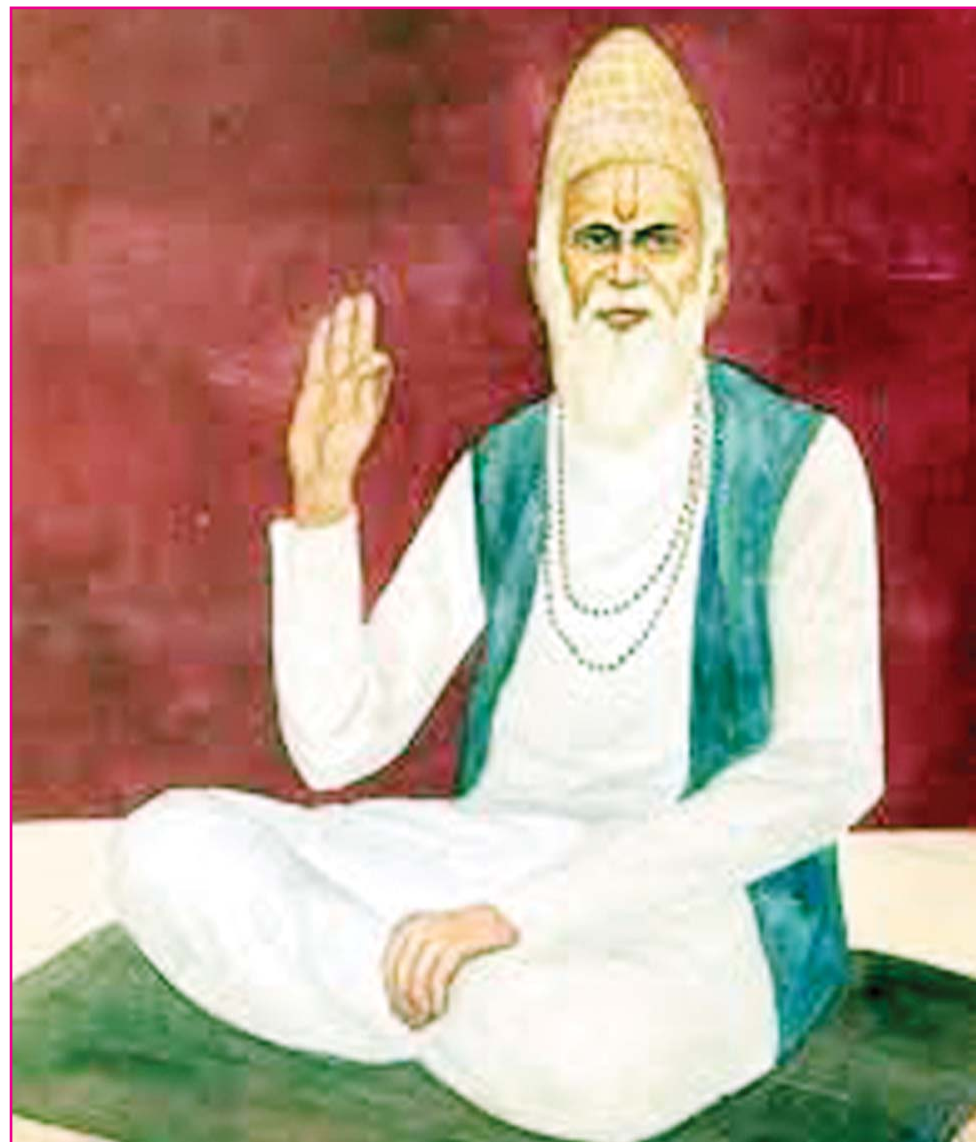
He says that a priest, a warrior, tradesman and people of all castes are seeking God alike. Hindu and Muslims alike have achieved that end. Where the caste matters? He preaches that God is not confined to any territory and expresses as under

"Jo Khuda masjid vasat hai"

He says if God is in the any mosque or temple, then who is looking after this world outside. He says look within your heart and you will find both Karim and Ram. All the men and women of the world are His living form. He says Kabir is the child of Ram and Allah. Kabir preached the principle of Ahimsa. He says that sacrificing animals in the name of God is not religious but a non pardonable sin. He also criticised the Pandits who preached that one can get rid of all the sins by having a bath in Ganga water. He once offered a pot containing water of Ganga to a Brahmin but the Brahmin refused to accept as the pot and water had become impure due to the touch of a low caste man (Kabir). On this he tells them that if the water of Ganga could not protect the pot from becoming impure how can it purify our souls from all evils. He also disapproved the belief that if a person dies at Kashi he will get a seat in paradise and if one dies in Maghar (Gorakhpur) he will go to hell after death. Hence he himself moved to Maghar during his last days of life to prove the futility of this belief.

Though Kabir was an unlettered person, yet his literary work and his life is a subject matter of research of several scholars. His compositions figure in the most holy book of Sikhism "Guru Granth Sahib." This scripture contains the hymns of many saints of Bhakti and Sufi movement but Kabir's contribution is the largest. Kabir Bijak, Kabir Granthawali and Anurag Sagar are some of his most revered works. In his writings the illustrations of moral and spiritual truth are found in incidents of everyday life.

Once Guru Gorakhnath asked Kabir "When



did you become ascetic?" Kabir replied "When He who has many forms had not yet begun his play and the world was not spread out, when there was no Guru and no disciple and the supreme One was alone.

"The legacy of Kabir is being forwarded by Kabir panthies whose spiritual seat is at

Varanasi and whose number is estimated at one crore. His teachings are also being preached by spiritual sects like Sant Mat, Radha Soami and Sahib Bandagi and many others as his teachings are much more relevant today when the man is in trouble due to his materialistic approach.