Kabir continues to inspire all

The festival on the poet showcases his work of the 15th century

Rajesh Rao

It was indeed a delight for Kabir followers, when they met to attend the Kabir Festival, a cultural event dedicated to the Indian mystical poet of the 15th century. The event also explored the works of art and literature on Kabir, presented through films, music and conversations. The event was organised jointly by The Foundation for Liberal And Management Education (FLAME) and The Kabir Project at the Institute's campus at Lavale in Pune on Sunday. It was a rare cultural treat for the students and included the screening of the movie Had Anhad and an interactive session with director Shelton Virmani.

The evening ended with a music concert, which presented Kabir's verses in diverse styles by the finest folk-classical Sufi voices of Mahesha Ramji and Mukhtar Ali from Rajasthan. The critically acclaimed film, Had Anhad, depicted the relevance of poet Kabir in present-day India and the increasing divide among its people along religion, caste, and class lines.

The film probes the forces of history, which have created divisive Hindu-Muslim politics of religion and nationalism. "It traces the journey of the film-maker, as she travels across the country and its borders in search of the concept of Ram through this truly secular and genius artist of all time — Kabir," said founder-chairman of FLAME, Farag Shah. "Qawwals singers from Karachi singing Kabir's dohas about Ram in the film showcases the special bond of brotherhood that is shared by artists and musicians, irrespective of borders," said Shah. The renditions of Kabir's dohas by the two groups of musicians conveyed the truth through the mystical lyrics, describing a story behind each song.

The students, who attended the festival, learnt a lot more than what they had read in their textbooks about the poet. The festival was an opportunity to get an insight into the myriad ways the poet still lives on in India.

The Mahesha Ramji troupe performing at the festival.