

BODY AS A POT



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Theme of the 2023 edition of
Pune Kabir Festival

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***Ego is bondage.
Ego is suffering.***

Comparison burns you alive...

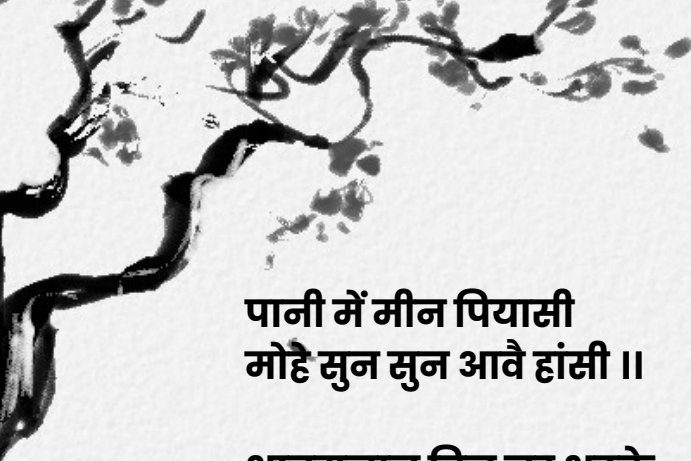
***Love everyone.
Treat everyone equally.***



We have heard these pearls of wisdom at least a few hundred times. And yet, we are not able to love unconditionally. We end up discriminating. We remain shackled by our own egos and suffering becomes an inevitable companion. The grandest and most precious of our joys evaporate in a moment when we see someone getting more of them.

- Why are we 'untransformed' even though we have read it all and heard it all?
- Why have we turned into the fish that Kabir talks about - in water and yet thirsty?

Going from Mathura to Kashi in search of wisdom and yet, unable to get rid of our ignorance.



**पानी में मीन पियासी
मोहे सुन सुन आवै हांसी ॥**

**आतमज्ञान बिन नर भटके
कोई मथुरा कोई काशी।**

**मिरगा नाभि बसै कस्तूरी
बन-बन फिरत उदासी॥**

*I laugh when I hear that the fish
in the water is thirsty. When I
see people traveling from one
holy place to the other in search
of wisdom, I am reminded of the
musk deer. What the deer seeks
so desperately, is hidden within!*



Kabir says, the deer is the source, the beholder of the divine fragrance and yet it wanders in search.

Similarly, the thirsty fish is in the water. But in reality, being in the water does not quench the thirst of the fish just as listening to the words of wisdom does not bring awareness.

Why listening to truth or wisdom or even 'knowing' it does not lead to any transformation?

In many of his dohas and bhajans, Kabir describes this pain and suffering that we go through.

**हम परदेसी पंछी बाबा
अणि देसरा नाही हो।
अणि देसरा लोग अचेता
पल-पल पर-पछताई भाई संतो॥**

We are birds from a different world. Look, how people ignorant of this fact suffer every single moment.



In the same bhajan, Kabir advises his listeners to stop searching outside for truth and wisdom. Instead, he points them within.

**कहे कबीरा सुनो भई साधो
साहेब है घटमाहि भाई संतो॥**

Gentlemen, listen to what Kabir is saying. What you are seeking, is in the pot (your body).



To be honest, this answer from Kabir doesn't help much. This is just another way of saying that the musk is within the musk-deer and the fish is surrounded by water.

Kabir does not explicitly talk about how the musk-deer can avail the fragrance of the musk within and break free from its suffering. Nor does he talk about what is causing the fish to be thirsty even when surrounded by water and how it can get rid of that thirst. The only advice he gives is surrendering to a Guru.

But is it not contradictory to finding the wisdom inside the pot? Finding a Guru is still an outwardly search. I was myself confused with many such questions and often wondered what's the point that Kabir wants to make?

I got a better understanding and clarity of the matter after reading not just Kabir and other saints like Gorakh, Dnyaneshwar, Tukaram and Tulsidas but also after reading writings of Ken Wilber. A theorist and writer on transpersonal psychology, Ken Wilber, through his Integral Theory has tried putting together many blocks of the puzzle to give a unified view of development, evolution and transcendence.

Looking at the words of Kabir from the 'integral' viewpoint brings much more clarity and answers the question on the table - why is the fish thirsty?

The holarchy of pots

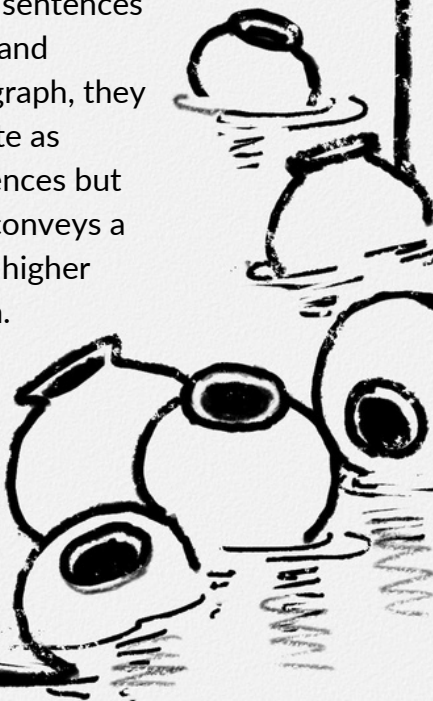
Arthur Koestler, an author and journalist coined the term 'holon' to describe how parts fit into the larger systems. A holon is something that is complete in itself and also a part of something bigger.

For example, a cell is complete in itself but is also a part of something bigger - a tissue or an organ. In his Integral Theory, Ken Wilber also talks about an infinite hierarchy of holons all the way up and all the way down.

At any given level, the holon is complete in itself and when holons at one holarchy (order) come together, we get a holon of higher order.

The same principle applies to languages - a word is complete in itself but when words come together and form a sentence, they become a part of something bigger and start conveying something beyond them.

Similarly, when sentences come together and become a paragraph, they are still complete as individual sentences but the paragraph conveys a meaning of the higher order and so on.



The same thought reflects in the mantra:

**ॐ पूर्णमिदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पुर्णमुदच्यते
पूर्णश्च पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥**

Aum! That is infinite and this (universe) is infinite. The infinite proceeds from the infinite. (Then) taking the infinitude of the infinite (universe), It remains as the infinite alone.

When a person dies and her body disintegrates, lower orders of holons like atoms, molecules and cells still remain 'complete'.

At any level, a holon is just a container for the consciousness or in Kabir's language, a pot.

Kabir says,

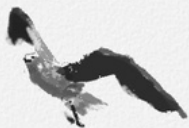
**जल में घट हैं, घट में जल हैं
बाहर भीतर पानी।
फूटा घट, जल ही जल समाना
यह तत कह गयो ज्ञानी॥**

Each pot is surrounded by water and each pot is filled with the same water. The water that is outside is the same water that is inside. The moment pot breaks, water remains.

In this doha, on a very superficial level, Kabir equates our body to a barrier which creates an illusion of separation. All pots carry the same water and yet, it is this mud wall which gives them a separate identity.

The moment pot breaks, it is impossible to tell any difference between the water inside and the water outside.

If we scratch the surface, we realise it is not the body that creates the barrier. The real culprit is the ego-mind which perceives the body and the individual mind as a separate entity.



As all of this is being said, we are still stuck at the same point with the same question - how to arrive at this realisation that it is all one? As Kabir rightly says, the answer is in the pot!

**इस घट अंतर बाग बगीचे
इसीमे सिरजनहारा ।
इस घट अंतर सात समंदर
इसी में नवलख तारा ॥**

The most mesmerising gardens in the world sit inside this pot. This pot is home to seven seas, a million stars and the one who has created them all!



Commonly it is experienced that spiritual humans look down upon the body. The body has desires which can never be quenched. Kabir himself, in one of his dohas calls this body 'a vine of poison'. A seeker, after reading spiritual books and listening to discourses is convinced that it is her body that is stopping her from becoming one with the divine.

It is inevitable that Kabir ends up raising an eyebrow or two when he says that the divine is in the body.

Let us try to understand why Kabir persuades us to look within the body.

First and foremost, every software needs some hardware. They are two separate entities but they are also interwoven. They cannot exist in any meaningful way without each other. Our brain and mind are also interwoven in a similar way. In our case, our body or the contents of the 'pot' are the hardware and the mind becomes the software. Incremental updates in the software help only to a certain extent; after that, a hardware update is required.

For instance, the reptilian brain cannot come up with a cognitive response; That's just impossible. A reptilian mind is incapable of even recognising a cognitive response. Expecting cognitive response from a reptilian brain is foolish; it is like expecting your normal car to self-drive. It lacks both hardware and software required for the same.

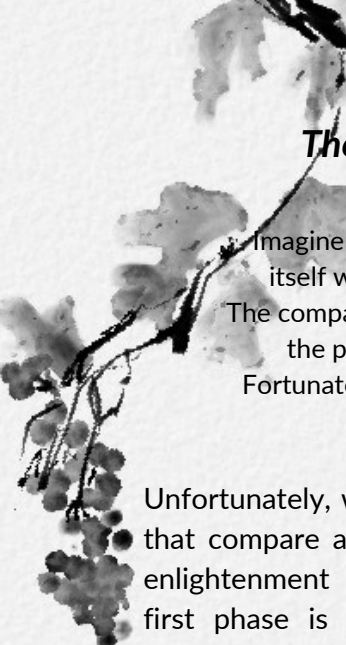
That being said, our brain is not as 'hard' as we assume. As neurologists say, our brain has plasticity. Activities we do or even the thoughts we hold, can physically change it. Learning a new language or any new skill alters our brain structure. Long-time meditators also show changes in their brain structure.

The body and brain are actually our gateway towards higher levels of understanding and being.

The only catch is, these changes are slow in nature and demand consistent practice. Probably that's why, Kabir says:

**धीरे-धीरे रे मना, धीरे सब कुछ होय ।
माली सींचे सौ घड़ा, ऋतु आए फल होय ॥**

Even if the gardener pours a hundred pots of water, the plant will flower only in the right season.




The ripening and the fall

When a fruit ripens, it falls. Imagine an unripened fruit comparing itself with the one that fell before it. The comparison will completely destroy the peace of the mind of that fruit. Fortunately, fruits have only sentience and no minds of their own!

Unfortunately, we humans do have minds that compare and desire. The process of enlightenment is also two-phased. The first phase is ripening and the second phase is the fall.

When all the right conditions and ingredients are present at the right time and in the right quantity, ripening will happen. The conditions and ingredients include but are not limited to; one's attitude towards life, meditation, right state of mind and being, introspection etc.



If an individual stays with all these ingredients, in the due time ripening will happen. The ripening happens inside the pot in the form of actual physical changes in the brain. The fall happens purely out of Grace.

An individual can work only towards the ripening and that's why, most of the dohas and bhajans of Kabir talk about being kind, compassionate, loving, caring, non-comparing, and satisfied.

Kabir tried very hard to cut out negative sentiments from our consciousness. Though the science of neurology was unknown at the time, Kabir clearly knew that negative sentiments alter us fundamentally and structurally. Some of his bhajans also talk about meditations and practices (sadhana) which can fundamentally change our being.

Kabir's time and context

It is important to look at the words of saints within the context of their time. Understanding the words at their face value without trying to understand the social structure of their time can be misleading. The society that Kabir talks about sounds quite fragmented.

On one hand, Kabir talks about Jogis who trouble and torment their bodies in order to achieve mukti and on the other hand, he talks about scholars sitting on high pedestals. He also talks about Maulavis aggressively pushing forward their message.

In the midst of all this, is the common householder; confused and absolutely clueless. Kabir cares about this common householder who wishes to choose the right path.

The common householder in Kabir's time must have been like the fruit that compares. The society was crowded by Jogis, Sadhus and Pandits. The householders desperately wanted to be 'ripened fruits'. This desperation often led them to become Sanyasis or Jogis renouncing their household duties and responsibilities towards their families. This desperation also made them vulnerable to being exploited by the fakes.

Kabir used all his energy and words to help the householder to ripen. Roaming behind Jogis or studying scriptures blindly would have done little to facilitate that. Again and again, his bhajans end with this simple message -

साहेब है घटमाहि

What you seek, is inside the pot!

The mountain in the mustard!

**साहब सो सब होत है, बंदे से कछु नाहिं।
राई सो परबत करै, परबत राई माहिं ॥**

I am incapable of doing anything; it's my master who accomplishes every task. He can transform a mustard seed into a mountain and can fit an entire mountain in a mustard seed.

Though Kabir points us inside, he reminds us again and again that we don't do anything; or rather, we cannot do anything. He attributes every action to the almighty.

Why so?

The most counter-growth emotion humans can possibly have is the sense of being a doer. Kabir tells us that we are complete; like a mountain in the mustard or an ocean in a drop but he wants us to be free of ego and the thought that 'I am a doer'. Even a tiny seed of ego can grow into a large tree of suffering.

The sense of doership is the root of this tree and ignorance the stem from which branches of comparison, envy, greed and anger shoot out. The fruits of this tree are bitter and poisonous.

Get rid of the seed!



*The eternal truth
needs no validation.
Kabir's couplets hold
this unchanging truth.*



PUNE KABIR FESTIVAL

This is a peoples' festival that celebrates the work of Indian saints. Enabled by volunteers and hosted in the city of Pune, PKF invites us all to experience the magic of saint poetry.

Every year it is an attempt at asking deeper and eternal questions and allowing them to take centre stage.

Concept and Design:

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BAITHAK



The idea of a theme booklet grew from the discussions with volunteers and supporters of the Pune Kabir Festival who felt the need to re-visit the same questions even after the festival.

The need for something to encourage enquiry, a collection of works of saints that speaks about our annual themes felt like an essential.

This booklet is an invitation to all to delve deeper into the theme of the festival aided by insights, reflections, illustrations and music.

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