

Pangea World Theater
presents

*The Mind
Has a
Hundred
Thousand Gates*

Connecting Kabir's Ancient Wisdom
to Minneapolis' Present Grief

created by Meena Natarajan

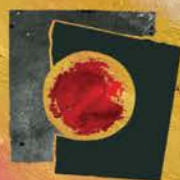
directed by Dipankar Mukherjee

music by Pooja Goswami Pavan, A. Pavan and Steven Hobert

April 10-26, 2026

The Southern Theater

1420 Washington Ave S, Minneapolis 55454



PANGEA
WORLD THEATER

Performance Guide

WELCOME TO

Pangea World Theater

THEATER ETIQUETTE

At Pangea World Theater, **you can pick any seat in the house!** The ushers may guide you through the space as well, so take a second to listen for any specific instructions. No need to wear fancy clothing. We welcome you as you are. Be kind towards fellow audience members, performers, and staff. **If you need to leave the space for any reason, find a moment when it feels most appropriate and step away as quietly and discreetly as possible.**

Unlike a film, in theater the actors on stage can hear and see you. So **give them your full attention** and, of course, react as you feel it in the moment. There might be moments that surprise you, make you laugh, make you cry. Your reactions help the actors know that they're reaching you in their performance. So go ahead and react – Pangea is a community that thrives on engagement, and we welcome it!

Last but not least, **photography is not allowed during the performance**, and we ask that you **please turn off your cell phones.**

Enjoy the show!

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About the Creator & Dramaturg



Meena Natarajan is a playwright and director and the Artistic and Executive Director of Pangea World Theater, an international ensemble space that creates at the intersection of art, equity and social justice. Meena has co-curated and designed many of Pangea World Theater's professional and community-based programs. She has written at least ten full-length works for Pangea, ranging from adaptations of poetry and mythology to original works dealing with war, spirituality, personal and collective memory. Her play, *Etchings in the Sand* co-created with dancer Ananya Chatterjea has been published by Routledge in a volume called *Contemporary Plays by Women of Color: The Second Edition*. Meena leads ensemble-based processes in Pangea that lead to works produced for the stage. She has also directed and dramaturged several original theater and performance art pieces. She is currently on the board of the National Performance Network, Longfellow Rising and the Loft. She recently collaborated with artist Chrissie Orr to create a project called *Seed Syllables* facilitating dialogues with 32 community artists and cultural activists across the U.S. and Canada to offer a composite portrait of life in the quadruple pandemic of virus, racial violence, economic meltdown, and climate crisis. *Seed Syllables* premiered as an incantatory participatory performance in June 2023 in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

About the Director



Dipankar Mukherjee is a professional director from Calcutta, India, with 25 years of directing experience. He serves as the Co-Artistic Director of Pangea World Theater, which he co-founded in Minneapolis as a progressive space for arts and dialogue. In 2023, he received the McKnight Distinguished Artist Award. His artistic approach is shaped by his commitment to social justice, equity, and spirituality, alongside relevant political issues. Dipankar has directed in India, England, Canada, and the U.S. He has been awarded the Humphrey Institute Fellowship to Salzburg and served as a Ford Foundation delegate to India and Lebanon. He also received the Bush Leadership Fellowship to study non-violence and peace methodologies in India and South Africa, and was invited to the White House as part of the Asian American and Pacific Islanders Delegation. In workshops he leads, Dipankar facilitates processes that challenge colonial, racist, and patriarchal norms, seeking collaborative alternatives.

About the Musicians



Dr. Pooja Goswami Pavan is a Hindustani classical vocalist, composer, and educator known for her expressive three-octave range and stylistic versatility.

Trained by her father Pandit Surendra Goswami, Prof. Ajit Singh Paintal, Vidushi Shanti Hiranand, and currently under Prof. Shailendra Goswami, she is proficient in Khayal as well as Thumri, Dadra, Ghazal, Bhajan, Sufiana Kalam, and various folk forms such as Kajri, Chaiti, Hori and Sawani. She holds a Ph.D. in Indian Classical Music from the University of Delhi, India.

Pooja has performed at major venues and festivals in the U.S. and internationally, including the Ordway Center, Guthrie Theater, Learnquest Music Conference, and music festivals in Vietnam and The Bahamas. Based in Minnesota, she actively collaborates across genres and composes for leading arts organizations such as Pangea World Theater, Katha Dance Theater and Ananya Dance Theater. An accomplished recording artist and educator, she has taught at the University of Minnesota and Macalester College. Her work has been supported by prominent arts organizations, and she is a two-time recipient of the prestigious McKnight Fellowship (2016, 2025) for artistic excellence and community impact.

About the Musicians



Dr. A. Pavan is a Twin Cities–based tabla artist, composer, and educator with decades of performance and teaching experience. He trained under Sri G. Laxmiah in India and currently studies with Ustad Shabbir Nisar, continuing a rich lineage of tabla tradition. He has performed widely with organizations such as Katha Dance Theater, Pangea World Theater, and the Indian Music Society of Minnesota, and has collaborated with ensembles including the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Minnesota Chorale and Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies. A prolific educator, Pavan has taught over 500 students since 1999, and his YouTube series “50 Lessons for Tabla” has reached a global audience. He has also composed music for major theater productions and contributed to numerous world and fusion recordings. Beyond music, Dr. Pavan is a senior technology executive and holds a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. A longtime leader with the Indian Music Society of Minnesota, he has directed major productions and secured over 100 grants. In 2026, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the India Association of Minnesota for his artistic excellence, leadership, and community impact.



Steven Hobert is a pianist, composer, and “explorer - reveling in life’s mysteries through improvisation.” Steven draws inspiration from a number of cultures including here in the Americas, West Africa, and Flamenco tradition as well. Steven’s projects include Oudiano with renowned Syrian oud player Issam Rafea, the world beat-driven ensemble FireFlyForest Music Family, the contemporary jazz group Wall_Smashers and FireFlyForest Solo Piano Explorations.

Note from the Creator

For at least a couple of years, Pavan and Pooja (the musicians) and Dipankar and myself would talk about exploring Kabir's poetry when we got together through music and theatre. Kabir's poetry appealed to us, especially at this time. The simplicity, the fire in his language, his excoriation of posturing, hypocritical religious leaders, his message of accessing our direct experience, liberation from our egos and freeing ourselves from our concepts of ourselves flow across the centuries to speak to us today. It is as relevant today in our age of religious polarization and fragmentation, wherever we happen to live. These last couple of years have left us utterly gobsmacked and we turned more and more to Kabir's poetry. His words feel relevant, especially in a community that is still reeling from events around the murder of George Floyd, the uprising and the swift dismantling of our democracy. Little did we know that it would become even more relevant this winter.

*Burning Sand
In the body
Everyone lives
In sorrow's shadow*

These lines, translated by scholar Linda Hess, from the Bijak of Kabir, feels apt as a description of this current moment. Those of us who witnessed the deaths of innocent people these last few years whether here or across the world live in sorrow's shadow.

Grounding this performance text in the current moment in Minneapolis feels crucial. Embodying the words feels important.

Note from the Creator

Additionally, working with Pooja and Pavan to choose the songs also informed the choice of spoken poetry. The piece moves from the outer world to the inner. While it's vitally important to protest, and our work is irrevocably imbricated with social justice, I have always been fascinated with the mind and the hundred thousand ways our mind plays tricks on us, its wants and desires, its multiple facets playing itself. The mind plays the mind. Kabir knew this and spoke to it.

*My mind became a bird
Flying into the sky
Suddenly, it fell, landing
Straight into delusion's arms*

To travel with Kabir is not for the faint of heart. It is profoundly uncomfortable to transform Kabir's words into lived experience.

For how can we transform our outer world into a space of honesty and harmony if we do not transform our inner world? In rural contexts, where Kabir's songs are a living tradition, his poems are called Sakhis which is derived from the Sanskrit and Hindi word Sakshi which means to witness... We hope you will bear witness to these wonderful provocations and hope they will make you reflect about your space beyond the mind, your own inner self.

Thanks to Shabnam Virmani and her wonderful inspiring documentaries of the Kabir Project, and a special thanks to Linda Hess whose translations have been infused throughout this performance text.

– Meena Natarajan

Note from the Musicians

Kabir is both an enigma and a revelation; his verses, cryptic yet clarifying, and his logic, sometimes confounding, yet liberating. **To set music to Kabir's poetry is therefore both an artistic and a spiritual journey.** His verses, both as dohas (couplets) and bhajans (devotional poems), carry deep philosophical insights expressed through simple, direct language. When composing or performing music for Kabir's poetry, the primary goal is **not to adorn the words but to reveal their inner meaning.** The music should serve the poetry, allowing the listener to **experience the gestalt of Kabir's reflections on devotion, truth, and the illusion of worldly divisions.**

Musically, Kabir's poetry lends itself beautifully to Indian folk, classical, and devotional styles. Indian traditions such as **bhajan, nirgun singing, sufiana kalam singing** and **regional folk forms** have long carried his verses through generations. The melodies are often simple and meditative, **emphasizing repetition and emotional clarity rather than tonal or rhythmic complexity.** Besides the voice, **instruments like the tanpura, harmonium, dholak, kartal, bansuri, or kamaycha** can help create a soundscape that supports the varied nature of the poems, ranging from the contemplative and serene, to the robust and euphoric.

Note from the Musicians

Another important aspect is the authenticity of feeling. Kabir spoke against ritualism and superficial religiosity, so **the performance of his poetry should reflect sincerity rather than musical showmanship. A singer interpreting Kabir must internalize the message** - about unity, humility, and direct connection with the divine and **let that understanding shape the musical expression that follows.**

At the same time, contemporary musicians have found new ways to reinterpret Kabir's work. By blending traditional melodies with modern arrangements, artists can introduce Kabir's timeless ideas to new audiences while preserving the core spirit of the poetry (e.g., Pooja's newly released album of songs of Kabir, "The Mind, Ecstatic" (Neuma Records 2026), comes with such a sound design).

Ultimately, doing music for Kabir's poetry is not just composition or performance; **it is an act of dialogue with a centuries-old voice of wisdom** that continues to challenge, comfort, and inspire listeners today. This is what we have attempted to do in this intriguing theatrical piece by Pangea.

The background score for the scenes is largely improvised, with mood-appropriate tonal contours and rhythmic cadences drawn from the rich arsenal of Indian folk and classical music.

– A. Pavan, Pooja Goswami Pavan & Steven Hobert

Synopsis

The Mind Has a Hundred Thousand Gates is an exploration of Kabir, a 15th century poet from India for the stage through poetry, spoken word, music, and movement. This is a concert performance with narrative and poetry intertwined to bring the powerful words of Kabir to life. Fiercely independent, Kabir has become an icon of speaking truth to power. He implored his listeners to shed their delusions, pretensions, and orthodoxies in favor of an intense, direct confrontation with the truth. He was an incisive satirist, exposing violence, hypocrisy, and greed. Belonging to a social group that was marginalized, he cut through the absurdities of caste ideology and declared the equality of all human beings. He was ahead of his time and as relevant today as he was centuries ago.

Kabir has had a resurgence in India in the last 20-25 years and this production hopes to bring his words and music in multiple Indian languages here to the Twin Cities. Examining the nature of mind and body, Kabir urges us to wake up and cultivate consciousness. Pangea World Theater explores Kabir's message of love and compassion and how his words resonate today.



*Many have spent their lives reading books, but none became wise.
Only by learning the four syllables in the word love can one become wise.*

-Kabir

Historical Context

WHO IS KABIR?



Saint Kabir with Saint Ravidas, Mughal,
c. 1625 CE, Watercolour on paper,
18.4 x 25 cm, National Museum Collection

Kabir was a mystic 15th century poet from Varanasi (located in Uttar Pradesh), North India. He is a revered figure in religious history, regarded as one of the greatest poets in Hindi literature.

Many stories about his life have been passed down as legends, with many of them unable to be verified as fact. Early estimates place Kabir's birth in 1398 (making him 120 years old at the time of his death). Supposedly, Kabir was born from a Hindu Brahman (upper caste priestess), but grew up in a family of Muslim weavers as his mother abandoned him not too long after his birth due to having him out of wedlock.

Although he grew up as Muslim, he came to appreciate teachings from both Islam and Hinduism respectively, and learned to establish his own critiques of both as well. His poems traveled across states and countries through oral repetition and song, and were only preserved in books after his death. Since Kabir did not write, and because oral traditions of Kabir are so open and fluid (no documentation of origin), it is impossible to totally know if all of the poems remembered today were originally from Kabir.

Historical Context

IDENTITY OF KABIR

When we ask *Who is Kabir?*, a better question may be *What is Kabir?* The legacy left by Kabir is something akin to that of a downstream river. It begins from one central point, but as it flows, it gathers into other nearby streams and becomes something bigger than how it started. Finally, after miles of transgression, the river may meet the ocean, at which point the river becomes something entirely new. That collection and creation is the culture and spirit of Kabir.



The weaver Saint Kabir at his loom, with his wife and a musician. Drawing, Ink and paint on paper, Punjab plain, late 19th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

As mentioned, there are a number of pieces attributed to Kabir that may not have been created by him. However, the denotation of “Kabir” grows beyond authorship. The truth is, really, anything can be Kabir. Kabir himself was a poor, lower caste, illiterate weaver who sang his pieces rather than write them down. He was close to the people of his land, especially the lower class and the disenfranchised, and denounced the practices of exclusion by scholars and those of higher-class groups. Kabir and its traditions, practices, and beliefs have always been, and always will be, for the people.

Historical Context

TIMELINE OF LIFE EVENTS

- **Birth & Early Life (c. 1398–1518):** Born in Banaras (or Varanasi) and raised by Muslim weavers (Niru and Nima), Kabir was exposed to both Hindu and Islamic practices.
- **Poetic Career & Social Critique (1450s–1500s):** Developed a unique style using weaving metaphors to critique the rigid religious orthodoxy of both Hindus and Muslims.
- **Interaction with Contemporaries (15th Century):** Associated with wandering monks, yogis, and mystics in Varanasi. Legends claim meetings with contemporaries like Guru Nanak.
- **Legacy and Inclusion (Post-1518):** His verses were later curated by Guru Arjan Dev into the Adi Granth (sacred scripture of Sikhs), ensuring his influence across generations.

INFLUENCES OF KABIR

Kabir was heavily influenced by the Bhakti movement, Sufi monism, and Nath yogi traditions. His philosophy blended Hindu non-dualism with Islamic devotion, rejecting orthodoxy to focus on personal, inner spiritual experience, heavily influencing the Sikh faith.

Hindu Bhakti

According to legend, Kabir became Ramananda's disciple -- a saint of the Bhakti movement. The movement prioritized intense, personal love for a personal god over rituals, caste, and scholarly knowledge.

Sufi and Sant

Sufism emphasizes internal devotion, divine love, and rejection of orthodox rituals.

Buddhism

Buddhism emphasizes internal spirituality, the rejection of ritualism, and the pursuit of truth within the self.

Themes

There are hundreds of Kabir poems that have been gathered over the centuries. In those poems, Kabir speaks about a multitude of topics including the mind/delusion, joy/ contentment, subtle sound, non-duality/truth, death, suffering/compassion, to name a few.

Below are some of the themes from poems you will get to experience in this performance.

RADICAL LOVE

Coming from a lower caste family, the message of radical love forms the cornerstone of Kabir's poems. However, Kabir's definition of love, goes deeper and wider than how we may describe it ourselves. In *Drunken Love* by Vipul Rikhi (2023), he states how Kabir uses social satire to "indicate the lack of love in our social hierarchies and institutions" (97). Love is the highest power, higher than intellectual knowledge. Love is something that is to be experienced to be understood – a letting go of personal ego.



*Reading endlessly, you've become stone
Writing endlessly, you've become a brick
Kabir says, not one drop of love
Has touched your skin.*



Ganges River in Varanasi. www.kaarwan.com

Themes

THE UNIVERSE WITHIN



*Kabir asks, what have you lost, friend
And what are you looking for?
The blind man does not realize
The light is within his own body.*

To Kabir, the body is a vessel that holds crucial knowledge that is discovered through experience. We only need look within ourselves to find the light – the answer to personal fulfillment. This challenges the idea that we have to look toward scholars, religious leaders, and the like, for direction on how to be.

By engaging in practices like introspection and mindfulness, Kabir believes that we will be able to bring together the internal and external universe - revealing the true nature of the self.

MIND-BODY CONNECTION

Kabir was a strong supporter of the idea that a strong mind-body connection is essential for true wisdom. He believed in caring for the body and treating it delicately, recognizing it as something valuable. For Kabir, true wisdom isn't just what we discover externally, but also how deep we are willing to look within ourselves, and be honest about our own nature and ego. He highlighted the power of turning inward and valued reflection and introspection. He understood that the body contains a wealth of knowledge on its own, and it's up to us to access that knowledge so we can become enlightened and truly wise. Knowledge is meaningless without understanding what it truly means to you.

Hindustani Music

Originating in North India thousands of years ago, Hindustani music is an improvisational Indian genre distinct from Western music, with its foundation built on two pillars: Raga (melodic framework) and Tala (rhythmic cycle). These two pillars work together to create the complex and emotionally expressive Hindustani music genre.

India has the oldest and most evolved music system in the world, with evidence from cave paintings dating back 10,000 years showing musical activity, the usage of instruments, and dance.

The Nāṭya-śāstra categorizes musical instruments (vadya) into four main categories:

1. Tantu Vadya (Chordophones/stringed instruments)
2. Sushira Vadya (Aerophones/wind instruments)
3. Avanaddha Vadya (Membranophones/percussion instruments)
4. Ghana Vadya (Idiophones/solid instruments that produce sounds through vibrations)



1. **Tanpura (Tambura)**



2. **Shehnai**



3. **Tabla**



3. **Morchang (Morsing)**

Indian Arts & Culture

MANDALA



A mandala is a geometric design with intricate, repeating patterns that represent the oneness and beauty of the universe. Mandalas are used in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shinto to assist in meditation, helping create spiritual focus, center, and unity. Many traditional mandalas are shaped like a lotus flower, which represents purity, eternity, and divinity in Hinduism. Despite its benefits for meditation, the mandala is not restricted by specific rules and can be used for casual and decorative purposes outside of meditation.



Activity: Making your Own Mandala by the [Asian Art Museum](#) (San Francisco, CA).

[Download activity sheet here.](#)



Tibetan monk constructing a sand mandala (2018).
www.invaluable.com

Indian Arts & Culture

CANDLES & LIGHT

In Indian culture, candles and lights (particularly diyas or clay lamps) symbolize the triumph of knowledge over ignorance, good over evil, and light over darkness. They are essential to festivals like Diwali, representing the welcoming of prosperity, driving away negative energy, and honoring spiritual milestones.



An Indian girl lights an earthen lamp ahead of Diwali, the Hindu festival of light, in Ahmadabad, India. Diwali, or Deepavali, the annual Hindu Festival of Light. (AP Photo/Ajit Solanki)



What are some symbols or practices in your life that help remind you of or reinforce positive energy?

A beautiful and elaborate rangoli of diyas and marigold petals, lighting up the floor during the Diwali festival. www.kidsgen.com



Poetry

Kabir shared his wisdom through poetry and song. In this performance, you will get to witness his poems in both Hindi and English. While the English versions in the performance are translations, they still utilize many elements of poetry that you are likely familiar with.

METAPHORS

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word, phrase, or idea is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.

Kabir's metaphors were influenced by his life experiences – the observations of daily activities and common objects. He often uses metaphors to explain philosophical and spiritual ideas/thoughts.



*This Cloth was woven Fine
What is its warp? What is its weft
With what thread was this cloth woven?*

*Spun on the loom of eight lotuses (chakras)
Five elements, three gunas (sattva, rajas and tamas), in this cloth*

*The creator took ten months to weave it
The pounding of the loom fashioned this cloth*

*This cloth worn by gods, men, ascetics
All of them made it dirty, this cloth
Humble Kabir wore it with attention
He returned it as he received it, this cloth*

In this poem, Kabir uses the metaphor of a woven cloth to describe the human body, soul, and spirit.

What do you think he is saying about the human body and spirit?

Poetry

COUPLETS / DOHAS

While some of Kabir's poems are longer, especially those sung, others are written as dohas. A doha is a traditional, two-line couplet, each divided into two parts (totaling four segments or charans). The form originates from Indian literature, commonly used in Hindi and Urdu poetry since the 6th century.

UPSIDE DOWN POEMS

Kabir has a series of poems categorized as Ulat Bansi (upside-down language) or Upside Down Poems. In our modern terminology, we might call these absurd poems; but to the mystic, these were 'normal' – they made absolute sense and revealed the true nature of the universe.



*Fire says I've got the shivers
Water says I'm thirsty
Grain says it's getting hungry
Butter says I'm dry.*



Much like Absurdist work in the visual and performing arts, Upside Down Poems serve many purposes. It uses paradoxes, bewildering imagery, riddles, etc. to jolt our senses, challenge our conditioned ways of thinking, or entertain. By doing so, Kabir invites us to enter a world beyond logic - one where everything is turned upside down.

Vocabulary

- **Anhad Naad:** Unstruck sound - the vibration of the universe prior to sound
- **Caste:** India's social stratification system (based on birth) that determines someone's social status, occupation, and marriage options
- **Death City:** Represents the afterlife destination for those who fail to find spiritual truth or connection with the divine while alive.
- **Deity:** Gods or goddesses. In Hinduism, deities personify different cosmic powers through various elements found on Earth (fire, wind, sun, darkness, etc.)
- **Despotic:** Having unmatched power that lacks a positive purpose or intention. Dictatorial.
- **Eight lotuses:** Refers to the chakras. According to yogic philosophy, the series of energy centers located along a line from the base of the spine to the top of the head.
- **Five Elements:** Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Space/Ether
- **Ganges:** River in northern India that embodies the goddess Ganga Pilgrims bathe in the river for spiritual and physical purification, as it is believed the river contains sacred healing powers for the body and soul
- **Gunas:** Meaning "strand," "thread," or "quality." Refers to the 3 fundamental forces of Yoga philosophy: sattva (harmony), rajas (passion/activity), and tamas (dullness/inertia)
- **Guru:** mentor, guide, expert, master
- **Hans:** Symbol of death and transition. In the song in this text, the swan represents the individual soul leaving the body at death, emphasizing the loneliness of the spirit's journey after life.
- **Holi:** In the song Mere Raam Gaadiwale, it refers to the burning of a demoness Holika. This is a Hindu ritual on the night before Holi, the festival of colors. It represents a metaphorical "burning" of the body (wooden horse/cart) at the cremation ground (burning ground), signifying the temporary nature of life.

Vocabulary

- **Karma:** The sum of one's actions in their lifetime that determines one's fate of the following existence
- **Markless Invisible:** This is the formless divine, meaning that the divine is everywhere and within
- **Nāṭya śāstra:** a Sanskrit treatise on the performing arts
- **The Nine doors and the tenth gate:** In Sikh and yogic philosophy, the physical body has nine openings/doors (two eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth and the organs of procreation and excretion). Dasam Dwar is the tenth gate situated in the subtle body (within the mind or the crown of the head)
- **Pandit:** a Hindu scholar learned in Sanskrit and Hindu philosophy and religion, typically also a practicing priest
- **Pilgrimage:** A journey one will embark on to fulfill a specific goal, either for spiritual or personal reasons
- **Rahim:** The Islamic name for God
- **Ram:** Kabir's Ram is the nirgun (formless) divine spirit present within everyone and everything, not the anthropomorphic Hindu deity
- **Tambura:** a musical instrument that has strings and pegs that provides a continuous drone
- **The Three Worlds (Tribhuvan):** Heaven, earth, and the underworld i.e. the whole universe
- **Weft and warp (in weaving):** Weft - the crosswise threads on a loom over and under which other threads the warp are passed to make cloth



The woven cloth was a core metaphor explored in rehearsal. In what ways do you notice the idea of the weave being presented on stage?



Pre-Show Questions

- Take a moment when you enter the theater. Take in the sounds, the colors, textures, the layout of the space. How does it make you feel? What are you curious about? How do you think the actors might use the set you see on stage?
- Poetry and song are some of the many ways we use language to share ideas. What do you think are the benefits of sharing a message through poetry and song rather than prose?
- Many of Kabir's poems were taught in schools. Students were taught to memorize his words of wisdom to guide their actions. What are some phrases or slogans you have memorized for yourself? What purpose do they serve in how you live your life?
- Having read some of the poems in this guide, why do you think Kabir's words have continued to be sung and recited through the generations? Do any of his words or beliefs resonate with you? Which ones and in what ways do they resonate?
- Kabir talks about the notion of an awakening of the spirit, the self, from within. What does the idea of a personal awakening mean to you?
- Many of Kabir's poems encourage adopting practices that lead to better ways of being. Do you have any practices or rituals in your life that do the same? What are they and why did you start the practice?

Post-Show Questions

- How was this set different from other theatrical sets you have seen? How did the arrangement of the elements on stage serve the performance?
- What role did music play in the production? In what ways did you notice the musicians and actors work with each other?
- South Asian culture was deeply rooted in this performance. What emotions or thoughts came up for you as you experienced the music, movement, and language of India? How did it feel to experience a performance that may not have been in a language or culture that you are familiar with? What do you now want to know more about?
- What do you feel are the messages of the Kabir poems performed in this production? Which are resonating with you? What might you want to keep thinking about as you go about your week?
- Kabir talks about unity and compassion. How or when would you engage with someone with differing opinions from you? What do you think Kabir will say about speaking with someone who thinks differently from you? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- What are some images, stories, or current events that came to your mind while witnessing this production? Which moments in the play brought those memories to mind? What do you think the poems were saying about those events/moments?

Additional Resources

Literature

- *The Bijak of Kabir* translated by Linda Hess and Sukhdev Singh
- *Burn Down Your House: Provocations from Kabir* by Shabnam Virmani
- *Drunk on Love: The Life, Vision and Songs of Kabir* by Vipul Rikhi
- Introduction to Kabir: His Life and Legacy. PoliSci.Institute. November 30, 2025.

Documentaries and Videos on Kabir

- 'Had Anhad: Journeys with Ram and Kabir'. ajab shahar - kabir project.
- Koi Sunta Hai: Journeys with Kumar and Kabir by Shabnam Virmani. Kumar Gandharva.
- Chalo Hamara Des: Journeys with Kabir & Friends. ajab shahar - kabir project.
- Kabira Khada Bazaar Mein (In the Marketplace Stands Kabir): Journeys with Sacred & Secular Kabir. ajab shahar - kabir project.
- Bodies of Song: The Legacy of Kabir | Linda Hess in conversation with Sanjoy K. Roy by JFL International

Hindustani Music

- Pooja Goswami Pavan's Professional Website
- An Introduction to: Indian Classical Music (article). Making Music. UK
- Raag Bhairavi | Niladri Kumar & Pandit Subhankar Banerjee | Sitar & Tabla | Music of India. Darbar Festival.

Additional Poems

Couplets or Dohas

A drop falls to the ocean
Everyone agrees
The ocean held in a drop
A rare one sees



Speech is priceless
If you speak with knowledge
Weigh it in the scales of the heart
Before it comes from the mouth

Ulat Bansi or Upside-Down Poem

I looked and looked -astonishing
(Only a rare one hears me sing)
The earth shot backwards to the sky
An elephant fell in an ants' eye
Mountains flew without a breeze,
Souls and creatures climbed the trees,
In a dry lake, the waves lashed
Without water, waterbirds splashed.
Pandits sat and read the law,
Babbled of what they never saw
Who understands Kabir's rhyme
Is a true saint to the end of time.

Additional Poems

Other Poems

No one knows the secret of the weaver
who spread his warp through the universe
He dug two ditches, sky and earth
made two spools, sun and moon,
Filled his shuttle with a thousand threads
and weaves till today: a difficult length!
Kabir says, they're joined by action.
Good threads and bad,
that fellow weaves both.



What makes you a precious Brahmin
And me a low caste cur
Blood runs through my veins
Does milk run through yours?

One bone, skin, piss, shit
One blood, one gore
One drop created us all
Who's high, who's low?