KCPC Talk Series: VI

The Beauty and Psychic Life of Transience

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On the **12th of October, 2026**
From **02:30 - 04:00 PM IST**
Online on Zoom

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Kakar Centre for Psychoanalysis and Culture
in collaboration with
Hans Kilian and Lotte Köhler Center for Cultural Psychology and Historical Anthropology

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Note from Dr. Osamu Kitayama

Saigyo, a Japanese 12th-century poet, who became a Buddhist monk, wrote about *mono no aware* (the bittersweet transience of all things). One of his topics was the heartache he had when cherry blossoms bloomed and his wish to die under them. This reminds us of going to die into the dark soil under the tree while imagining our soul drifting in a bright shower of petals. Here I am trying to make a balance in between, while Freud's argument on transience "On the contrary, an increase!" sounds rather dichotomous to me. But our narcissistic patients find this "in-betweenness" hard to taste as Narcissus in the myth, who rejected Echo that can represent the ephemerality of life. So, I would like to take up the Japanese word "arigatou," a term that carries both a realistic understanding of 'the ephemerality or transience of actual existence,' and the psychological meaning of 'thankfulness.'

Note from Dr. Jhuma Basak

Fluidity of Transience begins with Freud's reference to ephemerality and its capacity to enrich psychic life if embraced duly. Japanese psychoanalytic thinkers (Doi, Okonogi, Kitayama) extend this reflection by integrating impermanence as a cultural-psychic foundation. While, approaching transience through its principle of fluidity evokes a sense of ever-present 'reality' that deepens relationality, softens narcissistic fixity, affirms fragility as ground for creative fluidity and transformation. Central to this process is mentalization, enabling reflective capacity to symbolize loss, impermanence, and recognize ambiguous interiority of self and the other. Bridging eastern and western perspectives, this reflection invites us to consider the Indian principle of continuity in embracing transience that rekindles our renewed capacity for love.

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