



CREATIVITY- IS SKY REALLY THE LIMIT? :Interrogating the shifting paradigms of creativity in the globalised world of today.

SUKHPREET BHATIA,
Assistant professor,
Department of English,
MCM DAV College for Women,
Chandigarh.India.

Creation, we believe, has always taken place as an outcome of chaos and turmoil .It has also always led to peace, gratification and a fulfilling sense of achievement, be it the poetic, artistic, architectural creation or the creation of human life or even the creation of the world .The results of true and soulful creativity have been evidently admirable and have brought about a metamorphosis of the planet earth. But unfortunately, the endless and at times mindless quest for innovation, originality and supremacy has given man to believe he can play God .Not cognizant of the fact that human capacity is limited, but rather intoxicated with the taste of stupendous success accomplished, Man in the mad race of advancement to rule the world has been interfering with the basic principles of Nature and has crossed all bounds .The consequences of such disastrous development have been catastrophic. Creative minds, egged on, purely by materialistic and utilitarian motives, literally bulldozed all humanitarian and spiritual values which have essentially been the hallmark of the Eastern part of the world and effectuated many debacles .They are neither willing to learn from their fallacious judgements and decisions in the past nor ready to pay heed to the sagacious advice rendered, since eons, by philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato and Khalil Gibran who talked of the 'Golden mean' or the religious visionaries and sages such as Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Buddha and Vivekananda who advocated restraint and contentment or even the Western poets like Pope, Blake and T.S. Eliot who accentuated the human limitation as well as the limitedness of individual imagination in their poetry. The fruits of such labours are creative aridity at the artistic level, breaking up of social systems at the societal level and Nature's backlash in the form of frequent calamities at the physical and global level . What we witnessed in Japan and Indonesia recently, only corroborates this very fact. The epicenter of all creativity and creation thus, should be unscathed and peaceful existence of man in harmony with Nature and not a valueless lucrative pursuit of money and power in a spiritual vacuum.



Epictetus, the Greek philosopher of 55 AD rightly said that” No great thing is created suddenly.”Creation of anything and everything is indeed an intricate and cumbersome process involving a lot of foresight, forethought, preparation and anticipation till the eventual fruition of the efforts takes place. It would not be wrong to say that all creation springs from a sort of disorder, a turmoil which the famous English poet S.T. Coleridge in his poem Kubla Khan refers to as the creative frenzy. It’s a terrific storm that precedes the calm, the equanimity, the gratification and the sense of achievement, which are the concomitants of creation. If it is poetic creation, the mind of the poet, inspired by the Muse, is flooded with various ideas, images and symbols which, through the use of his imagination, he channelizes into great poetry. An artist and a musician on the other hand have a palette full of colours and a plethora of notes scattered respectively in front of them out of which they create an order, a harmony or an appealing pattern. Various designs and structures are erected and demolished in an architect’s or an engineer’s head before he gives them a physical manifestation to his satisfaction. Even the supreme creation in the world, that is the creation of human life, ensues from untellable pain and torment. And to top it all, as confirmed by science as well as religious beliefs, our world itself was created out of nothing but tumult and chaos. So this very well corroborates the fact that creation of order out of disorder, of harmony out of disharmony, of form out of formlessness or of something out of nothing is always a labourious and traumatic process.

At the same time however, the ecstatic pleasure and creative satisfaction generated by this process are simply inexpressible. Ask any poet or artist the thrill of having their art appreciated or the enthusiasm of an architect or engineer when their designs get selected. A mother’s feeling on giving birth to a hale and hearty baby cannot be surpassed by any other emotion. The agony involved and the obstacles overcome in the course of creation are mitigated or forgotten in the euphoria of accomplishment. Aristotle in his *Poetics* talks of this pleasure being instinctively ingrained in human nature. What to talk of great masterpieces, even a child building a sandcastle or a structure with blocks gets to feel a singular excitement. Most philosophers agree to the fact that Man, being an incarnation or reflection of the Supreme Creator loves to imitate and create. As Plato puts it in his ‘Theory of Ideas’, the ideal form of everything exists either beyond this world or in our minds’. Every creative endeavour by the humans strives to reach that ideal and raises the esteem of the human creator in the eyes of his fellows and earns for him their appreciation. It is this admiration which becomes the impetus or the motive force for better and better creation. It is this very urge in humans that has carried the seeds of advancement, progress and change in the world since the prehistoric times. Man explored, perceived, imagined and then created, thus bringing about a sea-change in his life as well as his home planet and it is nothing short of a miracle. The amazing journey from the invention of the wheel to the spaceship or nano-technology and from the first raft to the submarine has been monumental. Human beings have extensively exercised their curiosity and creativity, bringing about a metamorphosis of the world, changing its face according to their needs of comfort and convenience.

Unfortunately, with the passage of time, Man, intoxicated with his success at crossing new frontiers each day, consequently began to feel and act like God. His spree of creation carried on undeterred and every milestone achieved became the foundation for bigger and newer



challenges. For centuries now, humanity in general has been suffering from what I would call the 'est' syndrome. The fastest car, the tallest building, the quickest connectivity, the brightest kid, the largest estate, or more recently the slimmest mobile, the clearest TV, the smallest computer and very importantly the biggest package are titles or records that men, companies and nations have been vying with each other for. The list is endless and the movement is towards an obsessive compulsion to rule the world, remember tag lines like 'Kar lo duniya muthi mein' or 'Mix your worlds'. The image formed in the mind is not of a human being living in harmony with his companions and his environs but of a hard-core warrior on a march, out to vanquish the world and outsmart others. Robert Weiner, the American thinker, in his book *Creativity and Beyond: Cultures, Values and Change*, puts forth this very idea:

The advocates of the dizzying "advance" of artistic, technological and political movements have been focused on the newness of each step. Since the end of the last century, they've coined phrases for their work such as "art nouveau," "avant-garde," "cutting edge," "new wave," "the postmodern" etc. These terms, so taken for granted in our culture that they are the stuff of daily advertising, reveal a love affair with change and rejection of tradition that goes far beyond the world of art. Science and business for example speak repeatedly of "the next frontier," "innovative solutions" and "high-tech" alternatives to existing modes of operation. Making the new is our culture's agenda. (Weiner 2000, pg.98)

In the mad race for supremacy in the current globalised world the meaning of creativity has undergone a drastic shift. In the world of science, inventiveness has become synonymous with political power and Hiroshima and Vietnam are scathing examples of that from history. Clearly, the better researched your nuclear studies are or the more advanced your weaponry is, the more ascendancy you wield in the world. In the commercial arena too, increase in goods, services and profits is most evidently dependent on new ideas which can be encashed and patented to keep you ahead of others. In the changed scenario, it is good to be creative but it is more important to be lucrative. From the survival of the fittest we have moved to the survival of the newest and that too which lasts for a very short time. Einstein's Theory of Relativity (which itself is beginning to be questioned by some) seems so applicable here as everything is relative and transitory, changing swiftly in the blink of an eye and completely overwhelming the humanity.

Sadly, in this blitzkrieg of innovation and technology which has laid immeasurable power at his disposal, Man seems to have forgotten that he is after all a mere mortal with limited capacity and capability. He might be an incarnation of the Almighty and living by the adage 'Impossible is a word in the fool's dictionary' but he needs to be aware of his limitations as well as his purpose in life. Man is bound by his physical and mental restrictions crossing which is beyond his ability. God did not endow Man with the prowess to fly or swim naturally but he not only learnt how to swim, he built submarines and spaceships to surpass all the boundaries of the universe around him. He cannot see the infrared or the ultraviolet rays of light with his naked eye or hear the



infrasonic and ultrasonic sounds, but again he devised gadgets to make this possible. Not satisfied just with the faculty to procreate which God has blessed him with, Man wants to create the offspring of his choice through sex determination tests or genetic manipulation. Not content even with that, he wants to play God by creating living beings through cloning. It is not possible for Man as yet to be present at more than one place at a time but studies in Quantum Physics are beginning to foresee that as a reality. There is no denying the fact that these studies, researches and inventions have borne many beneficial results for mankind in the form of cures for serious diseases, reduced time of travel, greater longevity and convenience of life but Man seems to be losing the human touch. Inebriated with his worldly creation, he seems to have become oblivious to the all-pervading existence of God. As the 18th century poet Alexander Pope puts it in his poem *Essay on Man*:

So man, who here seems principal alone
Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown,
Touches some wheel, or verges to some goal;
'Tis but a part we see, and not a whole

With his preoccupation to create bigger and better Man appears to be throwing a challenge to God, the consequences of which have been and certainly will be catastrophic.

Man, in his pursuit of more and more material comforts and mercenary gains has rapaciously exploited the resources of the world and does not hesitate to use even the vilest of means to stay in the lead. Here another kind of creation is at play and that is the creation of one's destiny. Man, who is a parent also likes to play the role of the creator. Right from infancy, the child led by the parents' aspirations, is taught or at least is wished only to be a leader. To be the second best or average would never suffice. When such children grow up to join the cut-throat professional world, they are ready to literally bulldoze any impediments be it physical, environmental, societal or even scrupulous that come in the way of their material success because that is the only thing they have learnt to value. They indulge in a reckless and ruthless chase of pelf and power, learning nothing from the past mistakes and paying no heed to the advice of philosophers and visionaries who have always advocated restraint and contentment in life.

These leaders or creators of the globalised world, take pride in the wonderful world they have created but have not woken up to the serious repercussions or disasters, their creation has brought in its wake. Genetic manipulations, for example, have led to deformities, abnormalities and retardations in children. Unrestricted and overambitious construction in both developing and developed countries has brought about a depletion of natural resources and all kinds of imbalances in the Biosphere. Another alarming outcome of such progress is an increased frequency of natural calamities. What we all dumbfoundedly witnessed in Japan, America and Indonesia recently, should act as a warning bell for the whole world. At the social level too, these global denizens enjoy better and faster connectivity but the cable of sensitivity in relationships



seems to have snapped. These are some of the consequences, that constitute the heavy price humanity has paid for mindless development in a spiritual vacuum.

The crying need of the moment, is thus to have a fresh perspective on creativity. First and foremost we need to nurture skilled and well-trained professionals who are motivated, have the initiative, can innovate but most significantly are well-steeped in human values. Philosophers and visionaries, all over the world have been counseling and edifying mankind to follow a path of temperance. Aristotle, the 4th century Greek philosopher, for instance gave a wonderful theory of the 'Golden Mean' in his book *Nicomachean Ethics* according to which it is always better to adhere to the middle path between two extremes and that virtue lies at the midpoint of two vices. To illustrate we can see how courage lies between cowardice and rashness, ambition lies between sloth and greed and self-control lies between indecisiveness and impulsiveness. Similarly Khalil Gibran, the Lebanese American artist and writer of the 20th century says: "Wisdom ceases to be wisdom, when it becomes too proud to weep, too grave to laugh and too selfish to seek other than itself." Even the western English mystical poets such as William Blake and T.S. Eliot have accentuated the human limitation as well as the hollowness of iconoclastic imagination when isolated from tradition. So, any creation which benefits only an individual will always lack in essence.

We, in the eastern part of the world are in fact at a double advantage. We have, over the years, inspired awe in the world with our knowledge and technical acumen and established ourselves firmly as a force to reckon with. At the same time, we are blessed with a rich storehouse of ancient and practical wisdom which when amalgamated with the latest know-how will certainly be an exemplary combination. Buddha, a paragon of virtue cautions the human beings with these words: "We smile at the ignorance of the savage who cuts down the tree in order to reach its fruit; but the same blunder is made by every person who is overeager and impatient in the pursuit of pleasure." Swami Vivekanand and Gandhiji, both eastern luminaries, in essence, presented a new design for life, a model of contentment, compassion, balance and harmony. They were thinking ahead of their times because they envisioned an Indian nation that could teach the world, as Will Durant believes "tolerance and gentleness of the mature mind, the quiet content of the unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit and a unifying, pacifying love for all living things." Professional creators of today need not only to imbibe these priceless virtues themselves but also proudly present them as a precept to the rest of the world.

We are required to display a different kind of innovation in our creation. We should aim to create not only a well-endowed, comfortable and connected world but also a happier and healthier world where people have not forgotten the simple joys of life in their insane race of possession. There is no harm in aiming for the sky but the feet should be firmly planted on the earth and the largest good of the largest numbers never lost sight of. We should create leaders who lead not from the front but from behind, taking the weakest companions along. I would



thus conclude with these lines of *Gurbani*, from the great guru Nanak Dev Ji, which preach the same patience, contentment and restraint:

*Kiya padhiye kiya guniye, kiya ved puranan suniye,
Padhe sune kya hoyi, je sehai na miliyo soi.*

(All our education and pursuit of knowledge are useless if they fail to make us tolerant and contented)

Reference List

- Dewan, M. L. ed. The Human Values: A Task for All. Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi. 1998.
- Gleiser, Marcelo. A Tear at the Edge of Creation: A Radical New Vision for Life in an Imperfect Universe. Simon and Schuster, New York. 2010
- Gulla, Ashok. Creating Values in Life: Personal, Moral, Spiritual, Family and Social Values. Authorhouse, UK. 2010.
- Khrapchenko, Mikhail. Artistic Creativity, Reality and Man. Ruduga Publishers, Moscow. 1986
- Weiner, Robert. Creativity and Beyond: Cultures, Values and Change. Suny Press, New York. 2000.