



Understanding Creativity Through Krishnamurti's Ideas on Education

Tenzin Donsel*

Abstract

Creativity is a construct that evolves with time and cannot be restricted to any single definition. It is valued by all the cultures in the world who want their societies to experience it. There are plethora of research on creativity that give western perspective. Although creativity is not discussed exclusively or as a separate entity, the Indian perspective on creativity reveals that creativity is embedded in concepts such as knowledge, education and self, influenced by Indian philosophical thoughts. This paper analyses and highlights the embeddedness of creativity in Krishnamurti's ideas on education. Krishnamurti's ideas on education reveals a holistic view of creativity where self-knowledge, self-transformation, inward revolution, novelty and meaningfulness of experience, unconventionality or nonconformity, the integration of human being, intelligence, and freedom are key to experience the state of creativeness. The investigator stresses the significance of right education in the journey of a person to become a creative self that can nurture the creative potential of the individual. For him, education should take one through an inward journey where happiness is the essence of life and the ultimate goal of a creative being.

Keywords: Education, Creativity, Happiness, Goal

*Research Scholar, Education Department of Education, University of Delhi

INTRODUCTION

Creativity is an area of enquiry that has been extensively investigated and explored in the Western world by researchers from various fields reflecting various perspectives and defining aspects of creativity, namely psychoanalysis, cognitive, behaviourist, and humanistic. These perspectives conceptualised creativity with characteristics such as divergent thinking, novelty or originality and utility of an idea or product. In other words, creativity was conceptualised as a production of functionally valued, novel ideas or product (Mihaly & Wolfe, 2000). The two dominant perspectives on creativity are 'small c' and 'big C' creativity. Small c or personal creativity is the everyday experience of life that gives self-fulfilment and satisfaction. It takes into account the meaning and context of creativity which is embedded within the experiential context of life, where the extent to which the experience is enriching or meaningful is important, whether novel or not novel. This approach to creativity is process oriented where creativity is seen as consciousness expansion. It assumes the presence of potentialities in everybody that can be further nurtured (Craft, 2002; Sen & Sharma, 2009). On the other hand big C, which is eminent or historical creativity is the production of new ideas which are revolutionary to the domain and field. This eminent perspective of creativity believes in the genius few where creative individuals are those who live exemplary lives, and are the pioneers of culture and models of humans (Mihaly & Wolfe, 2000; Craft, 2002). For instance, people like Gandhi whose ideas of nonviolence and peace have revolutionized the field of political science, and Einstein whose theory of relativity had revolutionised the field of physics. These eminent personalities are respected globally as their ideas were universal. This approach to creativity is product oriented and is criticized for being elitist which recognises only genius few as creative beings. In the context of education, it is the little c perspective of creativity that is applicable.

It believes in the potentialities and all that can be nurtured if given space and time. Small 'c' creativity focuses on 'the resourcefulness and agency of ordinary people' (Craft, 2002; p.56). Manifestation of creativity is observed in ordinary people dealing with everyday challenges where the focus is given to the process of experiencing something new, unconventional, and meaningful (Craft, 2002).

The cutting edge researchers on creativity in the Indian context highlighted the fact that what we have conceptualised creativity is somehow more inclined towards the western perspective (Misra & Srivastava, 2006; Sen & Sharma, 2009). However, it was asserted that creativity is not something new to Indian context, it is rather talked about widely by many great Indian thinkers. Even though it is not discussed exclusively, creativity in the Indian context is interwoven with concepts such as knowledge, education and self, influenced by Indian philosophical thoughts. It doesn't enquire into who is creative and where creativity lies; instead it recognizes the creative potential in every individual which can be nurtured. The conceptualization and understanding of creativity is ever evolving and thus it is rather a construct that allows for reinterpretation in Indian context. Creativity is a 'universal human experience and universally valued' (Sen & Sharma, 2009; p.159). Creativity is considered as an essential experience that all cultures in the world want their society to experience. However, what is considered to be creative experience differs from culture to culture. Consequently, it is crucial to consider the cultural aspect in gauging what is 'creative.' Despite the multiplicity of perspectives on creativity, novelty and originality are the two aspects that cut across all.

This paper analyses how creativity is conceptualised through the greatest Indian thinker, Jiddu Krishnamurti. He has been celebrated globally because of his revolutionary and timeless ideas which are still relevant in today's rapidly changing world.

KRISHNAMURTI ON EDUCATION AND CREATIVITY

Education, for Krishnamurti, is the awakening of intelligence and the fostering of an integrated life. The function of education is to create new values rather than filling already existing values in the mind of a child without awakening his/her intelligence. Krishnamurti vehemently criticized conventional education for inhibiting independent thinking. He argued that, 'conventional education encourages conformity and mere accumulation of knowledge, rather than awakening the intelligence of the individual as conformity leads to mediocrity'(Krishnamurti, 1968; p.9). Self-knowledge, in his term, is the total awareness of one's own thought and feeling that permeates his ideas on education. With self-knowledge, education could bring an inner revolution within the individual. He reiterated that, 'a mind that has been trained can never discover the new'(Krishnamurti, 1968; p.11). The freshness of mind in order to see things freshly is the novelty for Krishnamurti. However, the conventional education merely focuses on training the mind and accumulation of knowledge. This mechanical approach to education dulls the mind of the child which is conditioned and who then fails to look at things afresh. So, Krishnamurti believed that until we are able to completely do away with our conditioned mind, the vigour of the new will not come out. A free mind becomes prerequisite for discovering or experiencing something new.'This imitation of what we should be, breeds fear; and fear kills creative thinking' (Krishnamurti, 1968; p.58). The tendency to conform to the norms breeds fear that dulls the minds and prevents one from looking at things creatively.

In the context of education, conventional curriculum divorce the child from the curriculum by not taking into account the true nature of learner, and it rather tries to fit child into the curriculum based on some ideals. Conventional education functions with imposition of ideals on students and reinforcement of conformity. The ideals

become more important than the child where the primacy is given to what the child should be and not on what the child actually is. This undermines the agency of child in the whole education system where it tends to suppress the real nature of child. When one is more concerned with what ought to be than what actually is, it will only result in fragmentation rather than integration. In a nutshell, conformity blocks creative thinking. It encourages mere imitation of the predefined ideals at the expense of creative thinking. This breeds fear in a child as s/he struggles to keep up with the predefined ideals. And the repercussion we face is that it dulls our mind and heart that we become oblivion to our own feelings and that of others.

'Sensitivity can never be awakened through compulsion. Compulsion breeds antagonism and fear. Reward and punishment in any form only makes the mind subservient and dull' (Krishnamurti,1968; p.32). Krishnamurti criticizes the whole evaluative system in education where the child's success is measured in terms of her/his performance on tests, and by comparison with the projected ideals and with others. This comparison approach creates a conflict in the child where s/he has to adjust to the school's notion of success which inhibits her/his comprehension of her/himself. It gives importance to the conditioning of the child rather than nurturing the creative potentialities in the child. Moreover, it encourages rote memorisation and makes learning dull. This product oriented education approach curbs natural creative inclination in the child. The freedom is denied in the conflict between what the child is and what is imposed on him, which inhibits the integration of intelligence. Extrinsic motivation provided through reward and punishment mechanism restricts the flowering of individual's creativity. Thus, this approach is rendered detrimental to the nurturance of the child's intelligent capabilities. According to Krishnamurti (1968), 'intelligence is the capacity to perceive the essential, the what is; and to awaken the capacity, in oneself and in

others, is education. The function of education is to create human beings who are integrated and therefore intelligent' (p.14).

What is crucial to note here is that Krishnamurti did not advocate formal education as the only means to awaken the intelligence of the individual. He was rather cynical and critical of the whole education system. For him, just because someone has received formal education and are learned, it does not make him/her intelligent or those who haven't received formal education are less intelligent. He pointed out that people can be mechanically efficient without being intelligent. He contested this idea of conventional education which fails to awaken intelligence of the individual and was rather dependent on bookish knowledge. According to him, intelligence is not mere information derived from books nor can it be trained by the teacher or learned by the students. It is rather the capacity to understand the life as it is that is innate in everyone and needs to be awakened. Only with the right kind of education, there will be the awakening of intelligence and the fostering of an integrated life. It demands a new radical approach to education, which is possible only by making a fresh start, focusing on inward revolution in all. Only when there is inner revolution within us, we can bring change in the existing educational system which focuses only on the cultivation of outer fragmented part. For him, the very purpose of education is to bring about integrated human beings who are free of fear, not some mechanical scholars.

Krishnamurti also criticizes the measurement of child's educational success in terms of his performance, compared with others and the projected ideal. This creates a conflict in the child where s/he has to adjust to the school's notion of success which inhibits her/his comprehension of her/himself. It gives importance to the conditioning of the child rather than nurturing the creative potentialities in the child. This product oriented educational approach curbs natural creative inclination in the child. The

freedom is denied in the conflict between what the child is and what is imposed on him, which inhibits the integration of intelligence. The very purpose of education is to transform the child into a wholesome and harmonious human being free from fear, conflict, confusion, and insecurity. This is possible only when there is freedom. Freedom, in his words, is the complete freedom from any 'psychological barrier of self' which is always seeking security and conformity. In other words, only through self-knowledge, which is the awareness of one's total psychological process and the complete understanding of oneself, this all pervasive fear will come to cease. Therefore, educating the child to be integrated and free from one's own self-centered activity which causes fear and conflict should be the key function of education. He further said, 'education in the true sense is helping the individual to be mature and free, to flower greatly in love and goodness' (Krishnamurti, 1968; p.23). Mere cultivation of intellect without inner transformation in the child will lead to dehumanization and insensitivity in children. It is only through love that could bring about the understanding of another where there will be a communion with each other instantly.

'The integrated human being will come to technique through experiencing, for the creative impulse makes its own technique - and that is the greatest art.'(p.47) Krishnamurti emphasized the significance of experiencing new things because life is dynamic and never static. It is through the creative potential that is innate in every child, s/he experiences new things. Creativity is not something that can be taught as a technique by the teachers or something that can be learned by the students. It is a potential that can be nurtured only in a conducive environment of freedom and affection which encourages the individual to approach life holistically. The process or the experience is more important than the product or mastery of a technique. To elucidate his ideas, he distinguishes between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge, for him, is just an accumulation of information whereas wisdom comes with the

observation and understanding of everyday incidents in human relationship. Thus, he considered wisdom superior to knowledge. He reiterated that, 'technique can never bring about creative understanding'(Krishnamurti,1968; p.18).So, when we are learning techniques, we are only perpetuating the past and the existing knowledge. This undermines our curiosity to experience and understand things afresh. Therefore, both creative teachers and students are not bothered about teaching and learning of techniques because they believe that creative potential will lead to creating their own techniques.

The cultivation of right relationship between teachers and students, and the teachers' role in nurturing creative potentials of the children reverberated in Krishnamurti's ideas on education. In order to nurture the creative potential and awaken the intelligence in the student, the educator needs to create the right environment with full care and affection. For that, the educator must first understand her/himself without conforming to any ideologies, systems and beliefs and then observe the child to understand what s/he is, without imposing upon her/him what adults think s/he should be. This understanding will help cultivate the right relationship where there is no compulsion, only mutual affection and respect between teachers and students. It is the intelligence that enables one to understand oneself and to go beyond oneself. Only in the right kind of relationship with mutual understanding, intelligence can be awakened and there will be self-transformation. 'The state of creativeness cannot exist where there is conflict' (Krishnamurti, 1968, p.123). It is a state of being free where one is not bounded by any rules and restrictions or expectations, that can only come into being when one is completely free. To enter this state of creativeness, one should eliminate the root cause of all conflicts which is possible only with the right education. It is the intelligence, which is much greater than intellect, that enables self-knowledge; the deep understanding of one's own consciousness through which conflicts

disappear. In this state, the individual is not bothered about the outcome of one's endeavour. Therefore, the right education will nurture the intelligence which prioritise the process of experiencing and the meaningfulness of that experience over the result. It helps the individual to enter in the state of creativeness where the individual is self-aware and free of conflicts.

Creativity is embedded in the Krishnamurti's ideas on education where understanding of creativity revolves around unconventionality, novelty, experiential, and meaningfulness. The novelty and originality aspects of creativity advocate nonconformity to conventions and experiencing things in a new way. Nonconformity to any kind of predefined ideals and rules has been reiterated throughout his writing on education. It is the joy of experiencing something in a new way that is being highlighted. Moreover, it is the love of doing things that are intrinsically rewarding rather than the outcome or success of what they do. If the experience is meaningful to the individual, it can be considered creative. Therefore, the meaning context of creativity is determined by whether the process of experience is meaningful or not to the individual. Krishnamurti's approach to creativity is process-oriented rather than product-oriented. This perspective of creativity is known as 'small c' or everyday personal creativity which emanates from everyday experience of life that gives self-fulfilment and satisfaction (Craft, 2002; Sen & Sharma, 2009). In Krishnamurti's word, intelligence is the creative potential that is innate in every child. To nurture this potential in the child is to awaken his/her intelligence. It recognises the potentiality in everyone which can be nurtured given time and space. It is the job of the teachers to nurture this potential which can happen only in a conducive environment.

The role teachers play in the nurturance of creative potentials of the child is pivotal. A creative teacher who is aware of him/herself can help the child to realise his/her potential. Freedom is the

prerequisite condition for creative potential to be nurtured where both the teachers and students feel free. Krishnamurti's views on creativity has an aesthetic aspect where he believes that the love of beauty should be the driving force for any creative endeavour not the gratification of desires. The emphasis is given to the cultivation of our inner self not the outer image which comes with mere learning or mastery of technique. It is not the outcome, rather the experience of joy of doing things that make us creative and which is intrinsically rewarding. Self-knowledge or self-discovery is the process in which we experience creativity which will ultimately lead us to happiness. For Krishnamurti, happiness is the essence of life and the ultimate goal of a creative being. In a nutshell, one can say that like any great Indian thinker, Krishnamurti's approach to creativity is holistic in nature where inner-transformation, meaningfulness of experience and the integration of human being are the key to creative self.

CONCLUSION

The multiplicity of the perspectives on creativity shows that creativity is not a concept, it is rather a construct which is ever evolving. Creativity is valued by everyone in every part of the world but what is considered to be creative could differ from culture to culture and from context to context. Creativity is approached holistically and contextually in the Indian context. From the two major perspectives of creativity; 'small c' creativity and 'big c' creativity, the 'small c' perspective of creativity is recognized and is nurtured in the context of education. Krishnamurti emphasized the importance of right education in the journey of a person to become a creative self. His ideas reveal a holistic view of creativity which revolves around self-knowledge, self-transformation, inward revolution, intelligence, and freedom. The role of education is to awaken the intelligence of the pupils which can only come with self-knowledge. Only the right kind of education will be able to nurture

the creative potential of the children. This includes the provision of safe environment where teachers and students share a cooperate relationship, a partnership sort of, where there is no imposition of any kind of authority and where students are actually free. However, when it comes to the practicality and implementation of such ideas, particularly in the context of Indian education system, it is debatable. It may occur to some that Krishnamurti's ideas on education are too elitist and idealist in nature, the profoundness and relevance they have in today's world is indisputable.

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