Culture, Value and Personality: Three Flowering Agents of Creativity Development Process

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Abstract 'Creativity' is a unique gift of God to Mankind. The prosperity of an individual in one hand and the prosperity of a family, community, nation and the world at large in other hand mostly rest on this creativity. Basically, creativity is a psychological construct and this psychological construct is mainly characterized by non-conformity or uniqueness. Creativity never develops in vacuum. The creativity development process is influenced by a number of psycho-social factors or agents. Among the agents which flower or help the creativity development process, the role of three agents i.e. culture, value and personality is quite significant. Referring to these contexts, in the present paper mainly discussions have been made on defining aspect of creativity and the role of culture, value and personality on creativity development process.

Keywords: creativity, culture, value, personality

1. Introduction

'Creativity' is a unique gift of God to Mankind. The prosperity of an individual in one hand and the prosperity of a family, community, nation and the world at large in other hand mostly rest on this creativity. The great scientist Blaise Pascal once told- Imagination disposes of everything; it creates beauty, justice and happiness, which are everything in this world. Albert Einstein the unparallel scientist of the world, once vehemently told- Imagination is more important than knowledge. The power of imagination of man is beyond human estimation. This imagination is nothing but the product of the creativity or creative ability of man. The progress of humankind from the necked age to the age of space is the history of contribution of creative abilities of the men. Creativity is a fundamental disposition or trait which is universally present in mankind. But, some men are highly creative where as some men are less. Further, some men are more creative in one area (for example, some are more creative in 'art' area) where as their counterparts are more creative in other area (for example, some are more creative in 'science' area). The unfolding of creative ability of a person affects his/her all areas/dimensions of development: physical, social, moral, emotional, spiritual, intellectual etc. Creativity is a powerful force found in each individual, which helps him/her to taste the realities of life.

The search for human creative talents remains at a high point than the search for natural resources, because the development of the later mainly depends upon the development of the former. Torrance [63] remarked, "It takes little imagination to recognize that the future of our civilization- our very survival- depends upon the quality of the creative imagination of our next generation (p-6)". He further stated, "Democracies collapse only when they fail to use intelligent, imaginative methods for solving their problems. Greece failed to heed such a warning by Socrates and gradually collapsed (p-6)". However, it has been argued that, creating the climate and skills for fostering creativity is essential in educating a generation of young people who can visualize new solution to problems of today and tomorrow's work force, social fabric and wider environment [35]. For the survival of man in this world, the use of creative ability has the vital role. Man could become king of this earth by defeating many other animals because of the use of his creative ability. In the process of fighting between man and nature, the man is successful to many extents, because of the use of his creativity. There is a growing recognition of the decisive role of creativity in the present day scenario, which involves an increasing pace of change, complexity, uncertainty and instability [1]. Whether we, as a nation or as a world, move forward to higher levels of civilization, stagnate, or eventually destroy ourselves depends upon the quality of our original thinking. Creativity is important not only in scientific endeavors, but, perhaps even more in social living and international relations- in fact, all aspects of human activity [48]. Fryer ([24]: 5) suggests, "To cope with the demands of the future, people will have to be quick thinking, flexible and imaginative".

2. Defining Creativity

Basically, creativity is a psychological construct. This psychological construct is mainly characterized by non-conformity or uniqueness. Creativity has been studied from time to time under different heads like imagination,

intuition, inventiveness, discovery, foresightedness, giftedness and originality [30]. Different psychologists call 'creativity' in different names. de Bono [20] calls it 'parallel thinking'; Craft [15] calls it 'possibility thinking'; Bartlett [8] calls it 'adventurous thinking'; West Cott [69] calls it 'intuitive thinking'; Barron [6] calls it 'ego diffusion'; and Hilgard [32], Maslow [44] and Rosen [60] view it as 'the regression of ego to positive modes of thinking'. Creativity is a process of arranging the existing facts or ideas in such a way that, it would yield a new type of result(s). In other words, creativity is the ability to generate new ideas or conceive new perspectives in existing ideas. Creativity is an action of the mind that produces a new idea or insight [70]. Since creativity is a psychological construct and it has no any clear cut reference, so, many psychologists have tried to define creativity operationally. Torrance [63] operationally defines creativity as including fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration. Guilford and Hoefner [28] told that divergent thinking abilities are related to creativity. Fluency, flexibility and originality are considered as important divergent production abilities which contribute to the more complex construction of creativity [27]. There are numerous traits associated with creativity- fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration, curiosity, imagination, inquisitiveness, independence, risk taking and many other traits. Among all these traits, fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration are very important in determining creative behaviour.

3. Culture, Value and Personality- Three Significant Flowering Agents of Creativity Development Process

Creativity never develops in vacuum. The creativity development process is influenced by a number of psycho-social factors. The most commonly found factors, which affect creativity development process, are: psychological factor, emotional factor, intellectual factor, environmental factor, cultural/social factor, motivational factor etc. These factors of creativity development process are also called the agents of creativity development process. Whether the creativity development process will be inhibited or encouraged is determined by the factors or agents affecting it. Among the agents which flower or help the creativity development process, the role of two agents are more vital i.e. culture and personality. Another agent i.e. value is gaining its important day by day in the way of flowering the creativity development process. The strong felt for value erosion and degradation at nation-state level and the global level as well highly demanded for infusing value in production of creative matters/materials/tasks/ideas. The following model explains the relation of culture, value and personality with creativity development process.
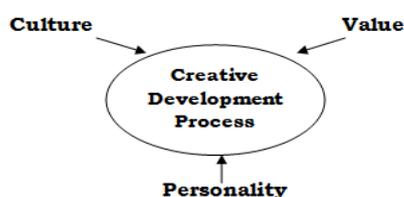
Model: Relation of Culture, Value and Personality with Creativity Development Process.

4. Culture and Creativity Development Process

The influence of culture and/or society on creativity is discussed by many scholars. Lubart [36] describes the effect of different cultures on the conception of creativity, the creative process, the direction of creativity towards certain domains of activities or certain social groups, and the extent to which creativity is nurtured. Further, Lubart observes that opportunities for creative expression vary for men and for women in different cultures. Researchers like Gurova [31], Ponomariov [54] and Martinez [43] attribute to social experiences as important role in the constitution of creativity. The influence of social factors such as norms and the conformity on the creativity has been discussed by Croplay [17]. Vygotsky [66] understood adult creativity as a result of the development of the combination of imagination and conceptual thinking, both of which are considered as socially developed higher psychological functions. Arieti [4] focused on the social determinants of creativity. Hunsaker and Frasier [34] discussed the impact of culture on the development of creativity. Raina [55] suggested the implementation of studies that could investigate the ways in which the youth in different cultural groups are taught to be creative. Although recent studies of creativity have in fact tend to utilize system approaches which explore creativity in social setting, there is nevertheless evidence [62] that researchers tend to focus more on the person and the process, than on social context in which the creativity occurs, or on the outcome. Cultural setting provides a lot of impetus for development of creative ability. Culture plays both defining role for creativity and nourishing role for creativity.

How culture plays the defining role for creativity development is discussed here. Creativity is a culture based concept. Each culture has its own way of defining creativity. For example, different culture based names of creativity are, 'Satori', 'Aha' etc. 'Satori' is a Japanese word synonymously used to creativity, where in 'Aha' is an American word synonymous to creativity. But the meaning of 'Satori' is not exactly same with 'Aha'. Japanese say that intensive training and practice in any field leads to achieve 'expertness' in that field. In expertness, the highest point attainable is 'Satori'. The literary meaning of Satori is enlightenment or sudden flash. Parnes [53] has suggested that the essence of the concept creativity is the notion of "aha ! – meaning the fresh and relevant association of thoughts, facts, ideas etc. into a new configuration, which pleases –which has meaning beyond the sum of parts- which provides a synergistic effect (p-5)". In earlier days it was believed that the occurrence of 'ahas' had to be left to chance, but in present days it has been clear that the systematic, regulated and well planned procedures can increase the chances for occurrence of 'ahas'. The Indian Sanskrit/Hindi word 'Prativa' in most cases is used interchangeably with creativity. The literary meaning of 'Prativa' is the unique talent that remains in an individual. This unique talent may be referring to any field of life – aesthetic, spiritual, literary, scientific, art, political and the like.

Ambabile's [3] model suggests that individual creativity may be affected by even very minor aspects of the immediate social environment. Cultural norms act as the high-level regulator for unfoldment of creative ability. If a culture imposes severe negative sanctions against certain behaviours, most parents will try to suppress them in their children, while they will try to foster those behaviours of which the culture approves ([17]: 62). Some of the cultural blocks, which affect the creativity development process, are discussed by Torrance. Torrance ([64]: 230) has shown that in no less than five cultures which he investigated, including USA, Germany, India, Greece and the Philippines, the cultures tended almost unanimously to disapprove strongly of properties like question asking, guessing, getting preoccupied with tasks, having the courage of one's convictions, disturbing classroom procedures, being emotionally sensitive, being independent in judgment and thinking, being intuitive in making associations, being willing to take risks, and finally being unwilling to accept authority's say-so. On the other hand, all five cultures were almost unanimous in encouraging being willing to accept the judgment of authorities, being obedient, being industrious, getting work done in time and being considerate of others. It is not the intention of Torrance to suggest that there is anything wrong with being obedient, considerate and so on, but rather that there are dangers inherent in stressing possession of these highly desirable virtues as the *summum bonum* of child behaviour, and vigorously crushing any behaviours which seem to threaten the well-behaved, obedient, considerate passage of children through their childhood. Whatever the talents or abilities a child has, the direction in which those are to be developed, depend to many extents upon his/her surroundings i.e. home, school, community and society at large.

Many of us have strong belief that, whatever odd the circumstance may be, but, the 'creative talent' will automatically be out. But, this is not a universally applicable principle. The enormous waste of creative talent due to the lack of opportunities has been discussed by many authors [2,50]. Cultural obstacles to creativity are a common phenomenon. In a more conformist or repressive culture, little c creativity might be perceived as an inappropriate process, not to be encouraged [16]. By 'little c creativity', Craft means creativity of every life. In psychological literature, distinction is made between creativity of every life or ordinary creativity (little c creativity) and creativity of extraordinary genius (big c creativity). Big c creativity is the extraordinary creativity of genius, in any aspect of human endeavor, which in some way offers transformation of that field and is recognized as such within the field ([16]: 52). Little c creativity is the sort of creativity, or 'agency', which guides route finding and choices in every life. It involves being imaginative, being original/innovative, stepping at times outside of convention, going beyond the obvious, being self-aware of all of this in taking active, conscious, and intentional action of the world. It is not necessarily, linked to a product outcome (p-56). Not the little c creativity alone but both little c and big c creativity are influenced by cultural setting.

Talent development has several dimensions; and creative talent is a significant aspect of whole talent development process. How the development of talent is influenced by several factors including cultural and social factors has been discussed a lot by Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde and Whalen [19]. They remarked, "Whether a young person gifted with outstanding skills will grow into a talented performer in a domain depends on many unrelated factors. Some of them have to do with the culture: for instance, the availability and diffusion of knowledge and expertise. Other factors have to do with such societal variables as available resources and the amount of attention and encouragement the field can bestow. Much also depends on social milieu into which the person happens to be born: the racial, ethnic and economic class of origin. Luck also plays a large role: the kind of contacts one makes, the mentor one meets, and the unexpected opportunities that happen to come one's way (p-38). They further indicated, "We cannot increase the inborn gifts of our children, and as individuals we can do little to alter the cultural and societal parameters that affect the unfolding of talent. But, if we understand better those elements of the equation over which we have some measure of control, we might be able to protect and nurture the unique human potentials that young people in our families, schools and communities possess (p-38).

5. Value and Creativity Development Process

Marked difference is found among traditional conceptions of creativity and today's conceptions of creativity. Growing erosion and devastation of values at socio-cultural and personal spheres of life and society, demands a lot for realization of values and virtues in the process of understanding and defining the creativity. Modern psychologists claim that the originality is not only the sole parameter for assessing creativity. Rather, they add many more value added parameters for defining and assessing it. Defining creativity from value based direction has many added advantages. Originality is usually identified as one of its key characteristics. Originality may be described as the ability to come up with ideas and products that are novel, if not unique. Most theorists also agree that the creative process involves imaginative activity, the ability to generate a variety of ideas (productivity), problem solving (application of knowledge and imagination to a given situation), and the ability to produce an outcome of value and worth. Some would go further, arguing that the product must be correct, practical, useful, and/or of artistic quality (Mar' I, quoted in [23]). National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education [51] describes creativity as having four characteristics:

1. First, creativity always involves thinking or behaving **imaginatively**.
2. Second, overall this activity is **purposeful**: that is directed to achieve an objective.
3. Third, these processes must generate something **original**.
4. Fourth, the outcome must be of **value** in relation to the objective.

Questioning is very important in the process of creating something. Questions are as important at the end process

of creating as they are at the outset ([15]: 6). Thus, as the outcome of creativity is scrutinized, the creator and others ask to what extent this yield is original and of value (p-6). The definition on creativity given by National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education [51] is a meaningful definition in this regard. The committee cited that, there are two 'modes' in creative thought: one is the 'imaginative generative' which brings about outcomes; the other is the 'critical-evaluative' mode which involves scrutiny for originality and value. Both are important as the committee suggests: 'The quality of creative achievement is related to both' (p-31).

The US Patent Office decides whether a process or product will be patentable on the basis of their originality. This office has developed the concept of 'inventive level' which includes some of the criteria for originality. The major criteria for inventive level are [47]: (i) newness associated with overcoming a special difficulty- "offers something unusual, remarkable and surprising"; (ii) usefulness associated with making a stride forward, going beyond previous solutions; (iii) required considerable consideration before achieving a novel solution; (iv) prior failure to achieve a successful solution; (v) prior skepticism that a successful solution was possible; and (vi) existence of an unfilled desire which the solution or product supplies. Newell, Shaw, and Simon [52] produced a set of criteria for differentiating between ordinary problem solving and creative problem solving. Their criteria also emphasized on the value concern in the process of development creativity. The criteria developed by them are as follows: (i) the product of thinking has novelty and value (either for thinker or for the culture); (ii) the thinking is unconventional, in a sense that it requires modification or rejection of previously accepted ideas; (iii) the thinking requires high motivation and persistence taking place either over a considerable span of time (continuously or intermittently) or at high intensity; and (iv) the problem as initially posed was vague and undefined, so that part of the task was to formulate the problem itself.

Rudowicz, Hui and Ku-Yu [61] reported that Hong Kong Chinese people tended to describe a creative person as someone who had a collective orientation, such as someone who "inspires the people", "is appreciated by others" and "has contribution to the process of society". Creativity is generally goal oriented [13]. In Chinese societies, the goal orientation in conception of creativity seems to be merit based and has strong ethical and instrumental standards [12,67,71,72]. The dutiful service to one's family, clan and society constitutes Chinese achievement goal [9,21,33]. Thus, in order to find a product or thing creative, it must have a value towards the others or to the society. In many societies, not only the originality but the value orientations are the desirable traits of creativity.

6. Personality and Creativity Development Process

Creativity is not only a cognition based construct alone, but, this construct is highly influenced by personality traits. The works of MacKinnon [39,40,41,42] and Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi [26] showed the relationship between creativity and personality. Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde and Whalen believe that the main psychological process that leads from personal skills to the mastering of talent is not specific to domains, such as music or mathematics; rather it is mind set necessary for the acquisition of talent in general. As such, it consists in a set of meta skills we expect must be present in order to realize one's talent. These meta skills include the development of complex attentional structures or ability to approach tasks with curiosity and concentration; the achievement of emotional autonomy and the ability to enjoy activities relevant to the talent ([19], p-32 & 33). They remarked that there are also personal qualities that contribute to the realization of talent. A person has no control over some of these: genetic contribution to intelligence, to special skills, and to temperament, for example. But, there are also the traits where the individual can make some difference. These include the development of appropriate attentional structures, habits of concentration, and personality and motivational patterns (p-38). For the creativity development in any field of life or any domain of behaviour, the personality traits like motivation, imagination, independence, tolerance of ambiguity, aesthetic interest, curiosity, interest etc. play significant role. Various scholars comment with appropriate evidence that creative behaviour depends as much on personality as on cognitive power and thinking. Cattle's [11] study on 144 physicists, biologists and psychologists leads to the conclusion that the personality profiles of physicists, biologists and psychologists differ significantly from average man since they are more schizothyme, intelligent, dominant, inhibited, emotionally sensitive and radical. Realizing the significance of personality factors in the process of creativity development, Guilford [27] proposes that in the process of creativity development, the needs, interests and attitude that help the individuals to be productive and creative need to be taken into account. Roe [57,58] mentions that personality factors are crucial for achievement of excellence or creative achievement in a field.

Brolin [10] stated that creative person can be described as having these characteristics: strong motivation, endurance, intellectual curiosity, deep commitment, independence in thought and action, strong desire for self-realization, strong sense of self, strong self-confidence, openness to impressions from both within and without, attracted to complexity and obscurity, high sensitivity and high capacity for emotional involvement and investigations. Author like McLelland [49] claims that willing to take risks is a critical attribute of the high creative individual. Torrance ([63], p-66) surveyed a large number of studies and made a list of eighty four characteristics found in one or more studies to differentiate highly creative persons from less creative ones. Gardner [25] finds a number of common features of creative individuals. Some of such features are: once they had committed to domain, there was 'rapid growth' (p-364); a feeling of being under siege during their 'greatest creative tension' (p-367); and a level of self-absorption and self-promotion in the interest of the work itself (p-365). Roger [59] identified these three inner conditions for creativity: openness to experience, an internal locus of control and an ability to toy with elements and concepts (in other words ability to play).

Many studies indicated that personality factors affect more even than intellectual factors in creativity development process. Reviewing a large number of studies in the field of creativity, Dellas and Gaier [22] have reached at a conclusion that creative persons are distinguished more by interests, attitudes, values, motives and drives than intellectual ability. Maslow [45] describes a creative person as a self-actualized person who has got good psychological health.

There has been agreement that personality factors are important in creative achievement. Even in the matter of measuring the creative thinking abilities, there have been persistent and recurrent indications that personality factors are important even in test performances ([63], p-65). Torrance [65] defines creativity in terms of both problem solving capacities and personality factors: creativity as a process of becoming sensitive to problems, deficiencies, gaps in knowledge, missing elements, disharmonies, identifying the difficulty, searching for solutions, making guesses or formulating hypotheses about deficiencies, testing and retesting these hypotheses and possibly modifying and retesting them and finally communicating the results. Guilford et al. [29] find a large number of significant co-relations between the non-aptitude traits and measures of ideational fluency and originality. Ausubel [5] defines creativity as, "it is general constellation of supportive intellectual abilities, personality variables and problem solving traits. The relationship of creativity with certain personality characteristics has been recognized by many scholars [7,14,37,38,46,56,68].

7. Conclusion

Creativity is important for the development of individuals in the society in one hand and the development of the society itself in the other hand. Creativity is a trait which is found in each individual in more or less degree. Proper unfoldment or nourishment of the creative abilities of the individuals is required for achieving the better survival and development in different dimensions of our lives and society. Creativity is influenced by a large number of factors or agents; and among the factors or agents which influence creativity, the factors or agents like culture, value and personality are quite significant. Since creativity is significantly influenced by factors or agents like culture, value and personality, so, in the process of understanding and nourishing creativity, due weightage or importance should be given on these factors or agents i.e. culture, value and personality. In other words, proper efforts should be made to establish a positive and progressive link of culture, value and personality with creativity.

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