

Critical Essay

Creativity and Its Limits

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Creative puzzles inside hardly ever divulge what these contain before it scrambles for expressions indefinite and still known. Its province is vast, unmeasured and even strange to the creator, who holds it within and outside as well. It becomes recognizable the moment indistinct sketches appear. One attempts to understand its import and origin. One knows it is imaginative and a mere fantasy at first as if a dream, but then, actualities beleaguer. It happens when one writes or attempts to create a work of art at random without purpose, and still, one feels that adequate inspiration works in the background. It may be some incident or conflict of no importance but if one goes back, one is spectator of several unique scenarios formed in the air or indistinct appearances of faces or images, at times, clear and thereafter, everything disappears. You live through the experiences of elderly at home - mostly it is either father or mother. Mother is close to heart but not that one does not love father.

To resurrect nostalgic happenings inside gratifies, and obviously, struggle for expression begins and so a search for suitable language is essential. What one visualizes is unrivaled in perception but when the creator employs language, it limits and restricts. Language is the choice of right word or idiom or lexis of particular artwork suitable to the subject. However, the creator ought to be conscious of the limitations of language of the art he is trying to give expression, for it can be near the experience and thought of creator but cannot wholly

catch hold of experience. To this extent, creative venture restricts words or phrases of art, and consequently, fail to communicate the actual experience and thought.

Those were days of lantern and earthen lamp in the village –somewhere between nineteen fifty and sixty and I was a lean and thin school-going boy. My father, after dinner often read some religious books and I often watched him. Before I passed out High School, I often read little books in Hindi, which were quite in vogue and began to scribble lines at random on the notebook. I thought I could become an author or a creator of some work of art. However, writing remained a spasmodic habit but reading short stories and novels casually was regular and it made me determined to indulge in distraction of creative writing – a little of imagination, concoction, a few lies and more with purpose to fill up the fissures – and I thought it was natural in an ingenious venture.

At that time, assorted running about, reading books was a wonderful experience, and it helped to reflect on events and persons I encountered. It inspired many-sided perusal of the discernible and the indistinct. To know lives of farmers, roadside workers and others mostly from the middle, lower middle and the poor was an experience. Teachers I met were not very rich but mostly lived good and clean life with endurable ethical quality in conduct even while a missionary school appropriately emphasized moral education, and so introduction to Bible from school days helped me understand secular outlook, quiet but definite feelings of love and compassion for living beings of various kinds and nature. However, to stay with such thoughts of empathy and adulation was difficult.

Creativity is internal and it derives material from not only from the inner worlds but also from outside too, which work as a storehouse from where a creative artist can haul out predetermined import even in non-meaning if he wishes, a mystical suggestion it is. Creator knows that the material drawn from the inner world strengthens what he draws out from the

world outside. It carries social, economic and historical background while culture and heritage continue to exercise imperceptible pressure on every wing of life and existence.

A man cannot cut off from the realities of world. He exists at many levels –internal, external and variations in sources, which are vivid and comprehensible. The internal world is hazy and complex but looks quite near as experience with abrupt varying contours, a few explicable and logical whereas others remain enigmatic. However, the major challenge is expression. Experiences defy grip of words. Actual struggle in an artist continues inside and that causes protest, anger and edginess. A creator is quite convenient with the external world. It is easy for him to find obvious substance and feasible construal based on situations and men responsible for creating. Substances and experiences in the external world are limited and easily fathomable and come within the ambit of creator's vocabulary.

a. Experience and its strength –religion of a creator

To gauge experience is not only difficult but also impracticable largely. Experience changes as margins restrict every moment or expand giving fresh connotations to the already experienced pleasure shades of its meaning and resilience. Experience is essence that motivates creation and it carries the burden of heritage and civilization. One is able to complete the voyage of experience within of the entire universe in a few moments of intensity. It requires no logic or definiteness whereas what the outside world provides puts restrictions, limits expression, for truth as socially acceptable or as one understands defies language also. Experience does not recognize class, category, creed or caste. It is sovereign and secular. Its interpretation touches universal consciousness and covers people uniformly with trivial distinction in degree and merit.

Here, one reflects on the concept of universal consciousness where humankind shares similar experiences whether inside or outside depending upon the secular thoughts one cherishes, which is a gift of human nature that appears the same around with minor

imperfections. When a man says, he loves humanity...it is the spirit of universal consciousness that inspires him, and at that moment, he evinces and displays faith in oneness of man and society minus any variation. Such areas of experience drive a man to not only the realities of life but also give him the pleasure of 'Unity' and 'Oneness' of humanity, and at this moment, he is at peace and harmony with the world, a real religion of a creator.

Any activity in art uplifts human dignity and serves objective where meaning of man's self-respect attains different expression from individual to individual. Art in reality carries enormous possibilities of varied shapes, some are clear, a few require focus to understand and still some engage sharp intellectual faculty to know the elementary nature of a piece of art. Of all the arts, literary activity is psychosomatic, philosophical and human, for it takes up study of humankind in totality even if it concentrates on a distinct province of operation. It is for the lover of art to know and find the true meaning and search its relevance to life and existence, and from here, begins the journey to know the source and spirit of creation.

b. Literature defies duality

Naturally, one infers that creation is the basis of critical hypothesis. Creative work is the outcome of long cautious deliberations, near accurate understanding of language, thoughts and feelings until steadiness enters. It is not possible to make distinction here because all the above components usher into absolute and self-contained significant expression, which is the true goal of literature that talks of life and existence in totality sans element of duality. Literature does not recognize any partition, distinction between man and man, one literature or another literature of a different country, race, culture or language.

Literature accepts unity of intellects and hearts for its approach is universal. If one extends the analogy to arts, these also emphasize unity of man and thus, its religion is love, peace and harmony. Any other thought is against the essence of genuine piece of art in any genre, and thus, it is against humankind. Only a man of wisdom and vision identifies spirit of

unity in all wings of knowledge –science, medicine, technology, history, social sciences, philosophy etc. Literature and art not only express man in totality but these also unite humankind of various hues. It is religious conviction of a real creative artist without caring for the onslaught of artificial intelligence, which at times, makes a creator uncomfortable. One truth a man must accept –know that all critics depend upon the creative work. What others recognize through the medium of technical gadgets or implements is not a reality but appears near actuality. It turns out a second hand knowledge and information.

If one goes back to earlier period, when the white man began to settle down gradually in India relinquishing epithet of trader, he astutely overwhelmed Hindus and Muslims, the two major religious communities who were governing different provinces in India. Other minor religions did not have the capacity to assert or possibly did not wish to create atmosphere of confrontation. A probability one cannot discard. It started with tiny protectorate called colony, and thereafter, it extended its control, and as the ‘thought of colony or colonization’ took deep roots, white man started governing. In a subtle approach of vanquishing small Indian states, they took control, turned into rulers, and therefore, reconciled Indians to the new situation, evinced interest in alien language, life-styles and culture.

Inconvenient in the beginning but slowly people become used to the then new living under white man’s domination. Missionary role is noteworthy. At that time, nationalistic thoughts gain strength within but creative writers and artists restrain. However, anxieties about the foreign rule continue to disturb patriotic minds, who ponder over possible freedom and the later social, economic and political developments demonstrate will of the people as they struggle hard. The foreign rulers observe and suffer violent clashes of struggling people in 1857, and thereafter, the movement for independence continues and it witnesses a happy end in 1947.

Notwithstanding, alternating conflicts, violent confrontation, heated arguments together with long protracted dialogues between the contending parties and rulers, Indian society as a whole slowly became inseparable part of the wearing and virulent struggle. Such situations in life form part of the creative activity and immense literature emerged from creative artists of words along with connoisseurs of other artwork whether it was painting, dancing, abstract expressions in various genres of art or music –classical Indian or melodies with inputs of western songs, dances and other artwork.

It is part of history. ‘Literature and Art’ is the expression of life of man in totality where anxieties, worries, thoughts and mindscape find almost accurate delineation and possible analyses. Little by little, creative minds ventilate internal and external anxieties affecting social life. A few reformatory movements gather momentum and make concerted efforts to awaken people and it proves effective. Many try to chronicle the sequence of events that become part of history, a few write on the basis of memory and create a world through the power of what they witnessed and experienced and how they carried the influence of past to present, and document it for future.

In history, one cannot be free, for one has to adhere to what really happened and what was the fall out sans personal observations. If one tries to distort or rewrite certain pages of what did not happen or thought to have happened, is a serious travesty rather indefensible crime against history and culture. However, if personal impressions, memories and occurrences become integral part of collective thought, then it attains authenticity. Nevertheless, it would be better to avoid extraneous interventions, for these can cause dilution in authentic portrayal of events.

‘Literature and Art’ is that part of history of man, which enshrines social, economic and political anxieties and emotions of man together with psychological, philosophical and religious disquiet or ease. All the same, it is not separate from the mainstream of historical

background. This literature and its artistic depiction other than true and factual sequential text carries man's aspirations and efforts to carve out independent identity even slightly different from a united resolve. It is about the inner world that normally exists when it connects itself with the outside world. Bona fide carrying of memoirs provides formless backdrop of past but it looks real. If unconnected elements enter, it is natural. When the hookup with the peripheral world satisfies, it attains semblance of truth and introduces new links with life, which appear realistic. Conversely, when one shapes it into a piece of writing or an artist creates an artwork, to him it seems a right adaptation of what happened in the recent times or distant past.

c. Creativity –how it works –man as a subject of creation

A creative artist or a critic confronts not only issues of creating good piece of art but also keeps in mind its authenticity and down-to-earth substance. Here, I talk of an artist of words, who when sits to analyze, he ought to be unprejudiced, neutral and objective, which is rather a thorny proposition. I say as a critic I try hard to be objective but to stay dispassionate and unprejudiced is difficult for subjectivity intervenes despite the fact that one endeavors more than adequately to appear nonaligned at least. I enjoy immense freedom when engaged in creativity. If you write a short story, at times, the characters in hand, turn wayward. In novel, the enormity is beyond depiction if the characters taken out of life or imagined, when began to assert, which they do after sometime and break barricades a writer puts up it is real challenge to the creator. A creative artist if wants to be truthful, should listen to the character and notice the scenario intimately he constructs in colours or rhythms or melodies or movements of body...and with minor adjustments continue the journey. In longer creative work, it often happens.

Is a critic aware of the irritations a creative man experiences with regard to crystallizing of emotions, thoughts and the messages inherent in language or in the lexis of his chosen work of art –dancing, music, painting etc? If he is cautious and takes care to understand creator's

intellectual region and anxieties, he justifies the functions of a critic. An artist's obsession with the words and terminology of text of a specific art he selects if converts a work of art into some form, it heightens his joy and sensibilities, and as usual, he considers his creation the best.

However, it is the critic, who looks into everything anticipated or inadvertent. Creation is about man and it embodies varied living and dead cells, untreated or inorganic. He cultivates emotions and thoughts with erratic ingredients of variables and when he gives expression, he gives singular meanings with change in man, location and time, and this composite body being is a source of creation. However, the man still requires rationalization. Prolonged discourse apart any minor or major creator or artist –known or unknown begins from man - what he does or creates to make life of man superior and nothing less and nothing more.

He is the basis of creation. What he does and says is fundamental to the entire formation, its substance and consequence. Not for a moment, one should forget that man in the course of time creates a huge body of traditions, culture and heritage, which the artist carries either through oral communiqué or through some content of lexis. Man has travelled a long distance in time and space, and now, besieged with infinite questions about 'the self' and around', he expands and the growth is continuing whether inside or outside of man. Whether he lives a harmonious life or not is the legendary question. Insatiable he is and embarks on a drive indefinite –a voyage of growth, expansion, self-indulgence and eventual decadence. An element of dissolution exists and he does not know but tries to reach the sky and the beyond. Many a time, what he thinks is beyond comprehension as fancy runs wild.

Technology and science stay positioned in a static or slightly active mode inside and what he witnesses outside happens inside. At this point, he makes efforts to connect 'the inside' with 'the outside'. It may appear superficial or constructed to gratify 'the self' or to share it with 'the outside', which may look real to him. However, it is unreal. This part of the knowledge creates additional burden on the wisdom and vision gained through culture and

heritage with the active support of religious text relating to a specific community or religious group. Again, on the other hand, if extraneous factors or perspectives with regard to science, medicine and technology intrude or intervene in the normal journey of life, these may give birth to superfluous issues, unconnected to life apparently, but afterward, with the passage of time might manipulate voyage of life in a big way.

To me, it appears man stays in a state of fear psychosis, fixation for the unattainable and craftily quizzical to 'the self' when the outside world appears a simulation of alleged conspiracy. Abruptly, he recuperates and attends to the present, past and future. Now, this potential of man is the subject of creation.

It intrudes all factions, and elucidation demonstrates knowledge of times past, culture and psychosomatic, socio-economic and political ambiance. A man understands people living in hypothetical insecurity, and wishes to get rid of it as yearning tortures and delights as well. Its relation to modern situation, range and constraint of knowledge and erroneous conception of existing conditions expands inquisitive regions. If a man recognizes internal and external bonds and reflects seriously, it expresses anxieties of humanity. That is precisely the work of creative artist here.

Many more unknown areas of probe continue to distress a creative mind. He only deliberates but is often unable to express and so inner instability continues. If he is quiet, lives in harmony with the outside world and experiences inexplicable calmness and void within, it is sign of dullness, deadness inside and outside. It is total darkness rather emptiness at that moment. Creativity is deceased and at this frame of mind, he lives as a normal human being, who loves to form a draft of routine words, acts and plans of immense consequence I understand. It is wisdom of earth but definitely, it is solid stuff for creation at another level.

From another angle, I believe, it throws adequate light to know what one finds hidden that wants revelation. Creator ponders over, gives it expression but is dissatisfied. It is quite

natural. Here, he is impatient and exasperated at the abysmal letdown. It is time to introspect and restrain unmanageable emotional upsurge and indistinct thoughts. For some time, struggle continues to get at the bottom of what is obscure or absent or embryonic. He feels that he is quite near the gist of thought, and therefore, pens down the strange and the enigmatic or creates a work of art with the phrase of colour, nuances, nimble movements or melodies etc. It occurs frequently and I am not definite that the creator is constrained here, for at this moment, he does not belong to the period in which he lives, and hence, to focus on the thought teases. Inability to figure out the foreseeable known is a fact that chases.

About the Author

P C K Prem (P C Katoch of Garh-Malkher, Palampur, Himachal, a Former Academician, Civil Servant and Member of Himachal Public Service Commission, Shimla) an author of several books is a poet, novelist, short story writer, trans-creator and a critic in English and Hindi from Himachal, India. He has published eleven volumes of poetry along with Collected Poems besides six books on criticism, four books on ancient literature, two on folk tales, six novels and four collections of short fiction. In Hindi, he has authored twenty novels, nine books on short fiction and a collection of poems besides more than a hundred critical articles, reviews and critiques published in various national and international journals and anthologies.

Echoing Time and Civilizations (Editors –Rob Harle, Sunil Sharma and Sangeeta Sharma) 2015 and *The Spirit of Age and Ideas (in the Novels of P C K Prem (Editor –Dr Laxmi Prasad)* in 2016 and *Kathasagar of P C K Prem* (Dr Jogindra) are books on him. His recent publications are *History of Contemporary Indian English Poetry – an Appraisal* (2019) in two volumes, *The Lord of Gods* (2019) in two volumes, based on *Srimadbhagavata Mahapurana* and the latest *As I Know ‘The Lord of the Mountains’ Shiva Purana* (2021).

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