

De-textualising knowledge

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An enquiry in to man's alienation from knowledge.

In the digital age 'organisability' and 'softwareability' is becoming the criterion for what constitute knowledge. With the change in what constitutes knowledge and how knowledge is accessed the third cognitive shift is going to happen. There will be a total change in the paradigm.

Many years ago a similar shift happened which went unnoticed. That was the shift from experiential paradigm to textual paradigm. Textualization of knowledge altered the notion of what constitute knowledge.

Knowledge and process of knowing has undergone three fundamental cognitive shifts depending on the process of creating knowledge. The knowledge in these three paradigms-experiential, textual and digital are very different from each other even though for the people belonging to these respective paradigms their knowledge is very much real. And these form the three most basic worldviews. The knowledge we create and our relatedness to the world are dictated by these paradigms. With each paradigm shift there is a reorganization as to what constitutes knowledge. Also with each shift we move further away from the 'life impulse' or the 'life knowledge' that helps us to sustain life which is accessed by our whole being. We create our respective make believe world and the knowledge in this process.

Senses are our tools that connects us to nature and awaken in us this knowledge. Senses, as long as they are autonomous is nature itself and it connects us to beauty and knowledge.

In experiential knowledge not only there is authenticity but also creativity and direct knowledge. Memory is of no consequence.

This is the awakened state of being. A total here and now situation or being always in the present..

With memory, came in the past.. Creativity gave way to habit. Words replaced experience. A paradigm for new world thus created. Experience or the relatedness to the world transformed.

Textualisation removed memory from the being and became non contextual. Experience and the experiencer got fragmented. Non textualisable experience/ knowledge became redundant. New ways of relating to the world were created. Unknown became untrustworthy and fearful. Another paradigm was created. Intuition was replaced with reason. All feelings and emotions were dropped. Boredom and alienation became the way of being.

With each paradigm shift there is a reorganization as to what constitutes knowledge and hence experience itself is altered and this further leads to further cognitive shifts. Some experiential modes are dropped and new ones are added.

The present crisis in the west regarding feelings and emotion could be a result of textualization of their culture. When knowledge got textualised the feelings and emotions were dropped. The word intuition was out of use for many years and it came back few years ago when textual cultures started addressing its fragmentation, alienation and rootless ness. The over use of reason and logic and the neglect of intuition is due to

textualization of knowledge and by extension to the corresponding experiential mode it created. The textual experience is linear and fragmented which is the only way text can communicate.

Imagination is a word overused by textual cultures as text demands imagination, whereas in experiential cultures the reality is always present.

At several levels one can see the fragmentation in textual cultures.

The internal fragmentation has made us to fragment our perception and compartmentalize and reorder the world to suit our textual notions about life.

Textual experience being personal and independent of others separated the self from community. The individual and the ego must have begun at this point.

The self is fragmented as male and female, as body and mind and as childhood, youth and old age. Spontaneous activities were broken up into planning and doing thus thought and action got fragmented and beauty and ethics have been removed from action. Entertainment and boredom has become the new dichotomies. Boredom is also another of those qualities typical of modern mindset and so is waste.

The internal fragmentation has made us fragment the outer world. Thus knowing which is an integrated act got broken up into play/learn/work etc

Thus beauty and knowledge which is an integral act is divided up into art, science and language, and into artists and scientists. Politics, ethics religion were also separated.

Even the spiritual state of being here and now also became impossible with the textual culture. A total act of being in the present encompasses both past and the future. Our relationship with the text is itself an absence of the present. Textualization removes the present and creates only the past or the future.

Another word that got popularized is abstraction. Textual experience is an abstract experience. As far as Authenticity is concerned experience is authentic and original. It cannot become second hand. Text by very nature is second hand.

Our relationship to the unknown which was of awe and wonder probably changed with textualization as the knowledge is acquired within the comforts of the non threatening text. The same must be the case with "controlling" nature.

Even beauty which is an exclusive domain of the senses and experience got textualised and it became a matter for intellectual activities.

Children because of their natural tenacity remained outside the textual world so also some women. The crises in modern schooling is precisely due to the conflict in these two paradigms. Textual culture is attempting to textualise children as early as possible. This can also be seen as a conflict in intuition and reason. It is no wonder that there are no truly children's books today.

The whole tragedy of modernity is a direct result of textualisation of knowledge-fragmentation, alienation, boredom etc.

Even at the activity level mechanization brought in mechanical and repetitive act further alienating the person from the present. Both at the level of activity and mind being here and now became unnecessary.

With the removal of unknown from our experience predictability / planning and reasoning became the dominant relationship to the outside.

Many people belonging to the textual culture is realizing the crisis and are also coming out with several solutions but are unable to break free as all these solutions are textual. Systems thinking/wholistic approach, their engagement with spirituality etc are attempts in overcoming these crisis.

The solutions to make the learning holistic is by adding more 'sensitive' subjects like ecology,gender,study of other cultures etc.

Whole is not a result of adding fragments.

The infinite is not the addition of finites.

This is the quality of the mind which is holistic, spiritual ,in communion with beauty all the time.

De-textualisation is essentially recovering the autonomy of senses and experience. A reconnection to the life sustaining knowledge accessible only to the selfless minds.

It will be interesting to look at the world that belongs to the experiential paradigm. The people we claim as illiterate, poor and under developed.

If we consider knowledge to be a biological response to sustain life, then the present level of estrangement between man and nature is unimaginable. How could knowledge and destruction go hand in hand to the extent that the very survival of the earth now edges on the brink of cessation? Knowledge, devoid of the biological content fostered the grounds for depredation.

This biological response is what is inbuilt in the knowledge of experiential cultures or the 'ecosystems people' This knowledge the result of collaboration between people and their surroundings guided by the natures need to preserve all life.The biological element in knowledge is what has made the indigenous communities to create 'life sustaining' knowledge.

The autonomy of the sense guide the people to access life sustaining knowledge. The so called indigenous knowledge (This is a term invented by the textual world) is the knowledge of experiential paradigm.

For over a decade now-since 1988to be a precise, I have been in a process of unlearning and through creative engagement with the rural and tribal artisan communities. The unlearning process I am involved in is intended to scrub off the western influence that I had gathered through the years of "learning " in the alienating environs of some of the elitist institutions in the country. In 1991 or so I decided to stop reading altogether as I was only building on the already formed framework of the western knowledge. In order to see clearly and authentically I felt I need to clean myself of all isms that dictated my cognition.

After years of spending time with the rural tribal communities who were still free from modern schooling and were still very much part of the indigenous knowledge system I began to see the fundamental difference between the two knowledge systems.

Once ,few years ago while I was in the process of developing exercises and activities to help children learn pottery, I was intrigued by the way with which the master potters arrive at a form. I wondered how the things they make could be so beautiful. I was keen to know what guides them to arrive at a particular form . Mulling over it for several days I realized that there is a biological assistance that guides our sense of beauty. People undefiled by modern ways are far more open and receptive to this biological guidance.

This internal capacity and the external natural systems collaborate in some manner to produce a distinct aesthetic quality to their lives. The rural, tribal or non literate communities seem to act holistically endowing an aesthetic quality to their every act. What we understand as culture is a result of this collaboration.

Sense of Beauty: In a profound sense, it is a community's sense of beauty that delineates its culture. When a society or community loses its authentic sense of beauty or subjugates its sense of beauty to the corruption of alien influences, it loses its authentic culture.

The classical forms in the human culture came about by this process. These are archetypal forms that came out as and when the need arose. The pyramids, the tombs, the ancient places of worship all over the world, the folk dances, traditional music, traditional healing systems are all evolved by a very different process adopted by modernity. These must have been the intuitive leaps of humanity.

Children in natural learning cultures are like any other newborn animal. The nature has its ways to make them grow and all the skills of an adult world is introduced in the games, toys children make. The way they explore the world of senses by the interaction with the nature and the world of nature through the senses. Senses are a two way tool, to know out side and inside.

And now with the information technology text is being replaced by computer.

The computers criterion for dropping various elements from the textual knowledge would depend on the manageability and softwareability. Like text it would also bring in new elements in the realm of what they claim as knowledge.

The comfort in seeking knowledge is far greater and they can also fake part of the reality though miniaturized and frozen. This could altogether remove imagination and bring in surety as they did see the event however miniaturized or even unreal it may be.

The calamity of virtualization of knowledge will be far more destructive and elusive. Already the ICT shareholders are claiming many advantages over the textual knowledge.

The ultimate loss is that of human creativeness and the life at large.

If our experience is destroyed, our behavior will be distorted and destructive.

The natural state of being is to be creative ,And in the creative state one is authentic and original.

To be authentic and original means to be inventing all the time, to be discovering all the time; to be new all the time.

This brings in concrete and first hand experience as the basis for what is knowledge.

Senses are our tools that connects us to the concrete experience as well as our inner nature.

This demands us to sharpen or sensitize our senses as that is our primary tools for knowing.

Beauty seems to be the spiritual way of relating to nature.

Sense of beauty is experienced when the experiencer and experienced become one however momentarily it may be.

It happens when all over senses are awake and we receive life in its totality.