



Evolution of Individuality

Ashok Natarajan, Fellow, World Academy of Art and Science;
Secretary and Senior Research Fellow, The Mother's Service Society

Abstract:

The concept of Individuality takes its rightful place at the far or highest end of a progression that begins externally, superficially with social conformity of manners and proceeds through successive stages of behavior, character and personality to elevate and internalize itself as the basis for knowledge, decision and action. As it proceeds, the person outgrows the need to conform to society and develops his own internal standards, ultimately arriving at a unique, original center of creative individuality. Human beings consist of physical, vital-emotional, mental and spiritual centers of consciousness. Each of the stages of personality development from manners to individuality has its own version in each of these centers. For example, Individuality can be physical, vital, mental or spiritual. So also about the other four concepts. Individualism and individuation are terms that denote the person in varying relationship with the collective society of which he is a part. Individualism may have an egoistic version, while individuation is non-egoistic and personal.

Man in his evolution originally identified with the tribe or small group from which he sprang. Tribes are linked by language to a wide social unit termed nationality. Culture is a deeper binding force, as Indian culture binds together 17 nationalities and English culture unites the English, Welsh, and Scots. The tribe develops in two directions: inwardly to develop the person, the individual, the egoistic, selfish person; outwardly to develop the nationality bound by language and culture. The Individual has the potential to overcome the predominant power of the nation-state and play a great role in determining the course of the 21st century, which may even come to be called the century of the Individual, as the 20th is called the century of the Common Man.

Man develops powers at the level of manners, behaviour, character, personality and Individuality. Powers of manners have a social function in relation to other people, which can readily change since its power does not arise from inner convictions. Behaviour draws its power from one's beliefs, which also can be changed by the individual if he chooses. Social success is determined by manners, while personal accomplishment in less weighty matters is determined by behaviour. Character is deeper still, not under one's control. It is expressed by the intensity of a person's temperament, known as swabhava in Indian culture, which is not under the person's conscious control. The Powers of character ultimately determine one's lasting accomplishment. Manners, behaviour, character are universally seen in all. Personality is a higher endowment, a subtle extension of character developed by a few. Power acquired by personality is transferable from one profession to another, while that of character is effective only in the profession or field in which it is acquired.

Individuality is not acquired either from one's profession or field of engagement. It is influenced by characteristics such as selfishness, self-giving, impersonality, the effects of

education, society and religion, as well as local habits, influences, biological and social needs. For example, early pioneers from Europe to America were compelled to be entirely self-reliant, since there was no supportive social infrastructure to nurture and protect. In a country of vast land and an atmosphere free from class structure and inherited authority, physical individuality developed with its characteristic "can do" attitude that has produced great wealth and still distinguishes the Americans even today from the emotionally secure family structure prevalent in Asia which nurtures dependence and the more class conscious conformity prevalent in Europe.

The history of human civilization is set forth in the archeological and historical record. It reveals an unending progression of increasing power for accomplishment. But the process which has generated this power remains a mystery. The natural tendency has been to attribute the advances in civilization to ingenious inventions and great discoveries, but these are themselves the results of the process, as much as the cause. It is human beings who invent, discover and create. The secret of social progress lies in understanding the process by which that creative capacity develops, organizes and expresses as social power. The progressive evolution of individuality lies at the heart of this process.

From the time mankind mastered the use of fire about a million years ago until the dawn of agricultural revolution, the pace of progress was so slow that we can count with our fingers the number of innovations made in the long intervening period. Though man is an intelligent and innovative species, he was apparently very poor at transmitting his discoveries to his descendants. As society has progressed, it has perfected the capacity for transmitting the fund of acquired knowledge and capacities to its members. With successive developments of language, writing and printing, the pace of social progress quickened considerably, abridging millennia into centuries. Education is the organization by which society transmits the accumulated knowledge of its past experience to future generations, so that the youth of today can start from where previous generations left off, without needing to repeat past experiences and discoveries over and over again. In the last 200 years, the spread of formal education has abridged the process from centuries to decades. Now the Internet has exponentially increased the speed of knowledge transmission, compressing decades into years, years into months.

The development of Social and Human Capital has been the primary means for the remarkable evolution of civilization. The individual human being is the catalyst that unleashes their remarkable power for collective progress.

Social and Human Capital

Social capital develops by organization. Organization links, relates and coordinates previously separate and independent activities over space and time. It creates an invisible web of relationships that enhances the reach, scope, productivity and power of people, places and activities by integrating them effectively within the larger social whole.

Language, writing, roads, markets, cities, money, navigation, printing, education and the Internet are major landmarks in the evolution of social organization. Each has multiplied the effectiveness of various social activities and exponentially enhanced the overall power of society for accomplishment. Language enhanced the capacity of individuals to relate to one another for self-defense, food gathering, reproduction, and raising off-spring, a basic

requirement for the formation of the family, village, tribe and larger social units. Markets provided subsistence farmers an incentive to produce more than they could themselves consume and to exchange the surplus for other desirable products. Cities enabled the division and diversification of human activities into specialized functions, thereby enhancing productivity, efficiency, and skill development, vastly enriching the range of goods and services, and creating central hubs linking and coordinating the activities of outlying rural areas with distant trading centers.

With each such advance, the cumulative power of society for accomplishment expanded in geometric progression. Thus, the introduction of Hindu numerals, double-entry bookkeeping and bills of exchange in Italy between the 12th and 14th centuries spurred a commercial revolution in trans-European trade and ushered in the Renaissance. An isolated 19th century French village of subsistence farmers was transformed into a prosperous community within a few years after a road was laid linking the village with regional towns and overseas export markets for its wine. These are isolated incidents of a process repeated countless ways and times in space and time to enhance the capacity for relationship which is the source of the productive power of society. The number and complexity of the interactions between functions, activities, systems, ideas, cultural values, customs, laws, skills, instruments and technologies defy enumeration and measurement. Together, they constitute the intricately woven threads of the organized fabric of society.

The inherent power of this social organization is unquestionable – it is infinite power for human accomplishment. In earlier times, it formed the basis for the formation of urban centers, city-states, kingdoms and vast empires. It made possible extraordinary achievements – the pyramids, Taj Mahal, trans-oceanic trade, universities, inter-continental railways, universal primary education, scientific societies, newspapers, democracy, the Industrial Revolution and the Internet. The magnitude of that power can be illustrated in a single event. Fifty years ago, US President Kennedy announced the objective of landing a man on the moon and bringing him back within a decade, and 55,000 scientific, commercial and governmental organizations coordinated their activities to achieve it a year ahead of schedule.

The evolution of social organization has its counterpart in the evolution of the organization of human psychology giving rise to a complementary power in each member of society. This psychological organization constitutes the essence of Human Capital. The two forms of capital are mutually dependent. Social capital is the means and essential requirement for development of capabilities in society's individual members. Human capital is the means and essential requirement for the development of capabilities in the collective. Together, they constitute the warp and weft of the social evolutionary process.

As biological evolution occurs as the result of a complex interaction between genetic and environmental factors, so also, the evolution of each member of the collective involves a complex interaction between psychological and social factors. Social capital encompasses the cumulative experience, knowledge and accomplishments of the collective which constitute the social environment for the nurturing and development of individuality. Human capital is the source of the personal aspirations, values, characteristics, skills and other capacities latent as human potential. Through their interaction, what society has acquired socially, the individual acquires personally.

The progressive enhancement of the physical, social and mental capabilities of the individual is a landmark in the psychological history of humanity. As in society, each successive enhancement in knowledge, skill and values multiplies the overall effectiveness of the individual member and enhances the capacity of the collective. While the invention of writing and numeracy dates back millennia, the acquisition of these capacities by the average human being is a very recent attainment. While modern educational systems were established in most countries more than a century ago, until recent decades relatively few people felt the need to acquire more than a rudimentary education. Around 1950, only 5 percent of adults in economically advanced countries enrolled in higher educational programs.¹ When a hundred new high schools were opened in Tamil Nadu in the 1950s, most had to be converted into primary schools because there were too few parents willing to enroll their children.

The average citizen today knows far more about health and medicine than even a leading physician in 1800, which is one reason for the tremendous gains in life expectancy over the past two centuries. The knowledge, skill and managerial capabilities which are common endowments at all levels of society today far exceed what was prevalent among the ruling elite of European society in the past. Imagine trying to operate a modern factory with the staff employed by Henry Ford in 1910, to operate a nuclear submarine with the officers and men of a modern navy with the crews that sailed under Admiral Nelson in 1805, or conduct scientific research at a leading university today with the faculty of Cambridge at the time of Newton.

Human Aspiration

While knowledge and skills are the most tangible, easily measurable components of human capital, the true source of its power lies in the aspirations, motives and values that govern human endeavor. It is humbling to realize that virtually everything we possess is a gift to us from society. Every idea, belief, value, invention, social organization – logic, language, numbers, ethics, all forms of art, systems, social institutions, culture, money, cell phones and computers – everything is part of the inheritance bequeathed to us by our collective ancestry and rightly belongs to us all. Everything, except perhaps, the human aspiration which is our very own. We are each born with it, grow by it and accomplish in the measure that spark of aspiration rises and seeks for accomplishment as knowledge, power, relationship, artistic creativity, enjoyment and in many other ways.

Aspiration is the essence of our humanity and our individuality. Aspiration generates the ever increasing demand for higher levels of comfort, convenience, knowledge, mastery and enjoyment. Two centuries ago, European women were regarded as the legal property of their husbands, considered unintelligent and incapable of a productive role in society or politics. Their attainment of equal rights and status in Western society has been driven by an aspiration and demand for self-development and self-expression suppressed through much of human history. While slavery was legally abolished in America in 1865, the movement that won for the blacks effective equality under law emerged only in the 1950s. Although the freedom movement in India was launched by Sri Aurobindo's call for complete independence in 1904, it took decades to awaken the demand for freedom in the hearts of the people. Once that aspiration had been released, no force on earth could contain it. Everywhere we find that the enormous progress of humanity of the past two centuries resulted from the awakening and assertion of this aspiration in people to whom it had been long denied.

Aspiration is the source of the *revolution of rising expectations* which Harlan Cleveland first perceived sixty years ago spreading through the newly liberated countries of Asia and releasing the surge of energy that has led to their resurgence over the past half century. It is also the source of what Jasjit Singh termed the *revolution in human affairs* – the growing tension between rising aspirations and rising levels of social inequality – which poses at once an increasing threat to social stability and an unparalleled opportunity for more rapid social progress. Human aspiration generates the ever increasing demand for greater freedom, rights, respect and equality; for higher levels of comfort, convenience, mastery and enjoyment. Society establishes the minimum standard to be acquired by all its members. The urge to excel comes from the awakened and aspiring individual.

The Individual

The sheer power of human personality stands out in stark relief in its most developed form, the mature individual. Here we find almost baffling instances in which a single person has changed the course of history or led an evolutionary leap for humanity. The mental accomplishments of Socrates or Newton, the courageous leadership of Churchill and Gandhi, the inventiveness of Edison and Jobs, the inspired idealism of Jean Monet, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela give us a rare glimpse into the limitless power of psychological organization at its heights.

The individual is the pinnacle of this evolutionary psychological process. The individual represents the highest stage in the organization of human personality. The individual is also the catalyst for all the advances of the social collective. Creative pioneering individuals are the source of the new ideas, discoveries, inventions and organizations that enable society to enhance its power for defense, production, transport, communication, trade, education, governance, social welfare and entertainment.

The Internet is the most visible peak of the long evolutionary advance of civilization, visible at least in its expressions, though the structural foundations on which it is based include all the previous levels of language, mathematics, knowledge, organization and technology dating back millennia. The individual is the invisible peak of humanity's evolutionary advance – invisible because the psychological evolution of human consciousness is entirely a subtle, subjective process, visible only to the inward vision and manifest only in its most outward results. Countless research papers and books have been written tracing advances in technology and social organization through each minute stage of their development and charting their dissemination from their points of origin to the rest of humanity. Thus, evidence suggests the earliest written language dates back about 5000 years, paper was developed in China before the 2nd century BC, the Hindu numerals and decimal point appeared in India during the 9th century AD and spread to Europe via Arabia 300 years later, and so forth. But when it comes to the psychological evolution of humanity, we have neither fossil record nor artifact to delineate the path of our progress. We are compelled to rely on a more subjective and introspective form of evidence to discern its process, direction and future potential.

The development of Individuality is the key to human progress in the past, present and future. All the great discoveries and developments of the past have resulted from the creative, divergent, original inspirations and actions of individual members of the group who

dared to think and act differently than others, to discover, invent and innovate new ideas, tools, technologies, organizations and activities that have been subsequently adopted by the collective and incorporated into the mainstream of social existence.

The individual is the pioneer in humanity's evolutionary social advance. When society faces crisis and people don't know what to do, it looks to pioneering individuals for original ideas and innovative solutions. Yet, at the same time, the willingness and capacity of the social collective to respond positively and accept new ideas and ways of life depend ultimately on the extent to which the seeds of individuality have been born in each member of society. Thus, India's Green Revolution could never have been such a rapid and resounding success had it not been for the aspiration and self-confidence of millions of illiterate farmers who readily embraced new crops and new production methods to raise India's food production by 50% and achieve food self-sufficiency for the country within five years. The organization of society is the lock which must be opened for humanity to advance. The organization of personality is the key to that lock. The individual is the smith who must fashion that key.

Individuality is the seed from which human aspiration arises initially as a tiny spark, then evolves progressively in strength into a firm will for personal accomplishment and at its highest into a flame for the collective advancement of humanity. To comprehend the nature of that seed and the means by which it evolves, it is necessary to trace the process of its development from its most rudimentary origins in primitive man. Unlike trees which grow from inside out, adding layer upon layer to the core as years go by, human personality grows from outside in, from the most external and superficial physical capacities to the deepest and most profound psychological endowments. Manners and behavior are its most visible external expressions. Individuality represents its inmost core. The evolution of individuality is a complex social and psychological process that is as yet poorly understood. This paper examines one line of its development.

Conformity and Differentiation

Historically, formation of the collective takes precedent over development of individuality. The survival and success of the group always mattered more than the success and happiness of any individual. Early human communities, like their animal ancestors, were characterized by a very high degree of conformity and imposed uniformity: conformity in terms of behavior, uniformity in terms of beliefs and values. There was a compelling necessity to impose authority and enforce obedience to ensure the survival and defense of the group against internal dissension and external threat. The imposition of authority limited the range of knowledge, skills, capacities and activities found in primitive communities; so also it constrained the specialization of knowledge and skill and individual variation in values, beliefs and behaviors. Sharing of a common language is essential for internal communications. Obedience to a chain of command is vital for coordinated action in the face of threats.

Over time, society begins to differentiate itself into specialized fields and functions, each requiring a specific set of knowledge and skills for its performance and providing greater latitude for individual variation and achievement. At the same time, it organizes the energies and movements of the community into well-defined acts, activities, systems, organizations,

and social institutions, which eventually mature into a distinguishing set of established beliefs and behaviors known as culture. Culture differentiates one group of human beings from another linguistically, religiously and socially as specialization of work differentiates one from another functionally and occupationally.

Differing environmental and social conditions lead to further variations between communities and the gradual emergence of larger social groupings – villages, townships, city states, kingdoms, nations and empires. Each stage of expansion increases the range of the collective pool of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, skills and behaviors, while imposing new standards of commonality and uniformity. Thus, today the entire world shares common standards for reckoning dates, time, measuring distance and facilitating exchange of currencies. We also maintain universally applicable measures for weight, temperature, pressure and voltage, and uniform protocols for cell phone and internet communications. Social capital consists of the rapidly growing body of infrastructure, technological and organizational capabilities, laws and regulation, knowledge and shared values which contribute to the progressive enhancement of society's power for communication, production, transportation, education, governance and so forth. Social capital generates *social power* for accomplishment.

As the social power of the collective develops, the capacity of each member of society develops in parallel. By a process of internalization, social capacities enhance the psychological capacities of the members of society. The interaction between them generates the dynamic field in which individuality is born. Several stages can be discerned in the psychological development of each person, which can be denoted as Manners, Behavior, Character, Personality and Individuality. In order to understand the significance of Individuality as a stage in human psychological development, it is necessary to first examine the earlier stages of which it is the ultimate result and the process governing transition from one stage to another.

Manners

The first necessity for the formation of any social grouping is the development of authority to which all members of the group submit – the physical prowess of a military leader or feudal lord, the divine right of a monarch, the spiritual authority of a religious leader, or the administrative and political powers of an elected government. Social cohesion necessitates adherence by its members to a code of conduct. Members of society respond differently to the pressure for conformity. Some acquire only the minimum conduct demanded. Others seek to consciously mold their actions into a form that is acceptable and pleasing to others. Manners represent a superficial, stylized set of formal behaviors deemed appropriate among members of the society signifying their acceptance of a common social standard. Manners are a social arrangement that facilitates smooth interactions between different people, irrespective of what the person actually thinks or feels.

This most superficial form of social conduct so often taken for granted is laden with power, a power most evident in its absence when people refuse to display overt signs of their willingness to understand one another, cooperate and act in the common interests of all parties. The formal manners of diplomacy made possible an evolution of international

relations from the battle field to the conference table and ultimately the UN General Assembly. A breakdown in negotiations has often led to war. A breakdown in parliamentary protocol signals paralysis of the legislature. The absence of respect for lower classes was once the hallmark of European aristocracy. Intolerance with other religions and races was the basis for untouchability, anti-semitism, and apartheid. Modern school education is impossible in situations where students refuse to listen quietly to the instructor.

Imposition of standards of conduct by society is of limited power unless or until the members of society themselves come to endorse and internalize the standards of their own free will. The courtesy extended to listen to the views of one's opponent, no matter how far at variance with one's own, is the basis for parliamentary democratic proceedings. The willingness to listen quietly and patiently to new ideas and theories at variance with one's own was an essential condition for the founding of the Royal Society and the spread of scientific associations throughout Europe. The courtesy extended to customers is an essential characteristic of the modern marketplace. Sears rose from a regional mail order house into the largest retailer in the world after it introduced a policy that guaranteed customer satisfaction, regardless of the cost to the company. Respect for neighbors and fellow travellers irrespective of class, caste, religion and ethnic origin is a relatively recent characteristic essential for the harmonious functioning of modern society. Society no longer sanctions the physical abuse of wives by their husbands or children by parents or teachers. American whites can no longer demand that blacks ride in the back of the bus. Nor can upper caste Hindus refuse to work in establishments with other castes. Novelist Anthony Trollope depicts the cutthroat competition for patients between physicians, a conduct that would be deemed highly unprofessional and unrespectable by today's standards. In today's knowledge-based service economy where the human resource is prized as invaluable, the courtesy extended to employees has reversed the traditional atmosphere of confrontation with employers.

Modern society accomplishes so much today because average citizens follow the instructions of the police without compulsion, voluntarily obey the laws and rules established by government, declare their incomes and pay taxes, respect the rights of other citizens, drive in the correct lane, refrain from littering, dress appropriately, and so forth. Students listen quietly and do not disrupt the class. Scientists follow experimental procedures rigorously and report research findings factually. Shopkeepers are courteous and customers pay for what they carry from the store. There are, of course, ample exceptions to the norm, but wherever the exceptions are prevalent, the capacity of society for accomplishment is seriously impaired.

Manners are a superficial code of conduct without which even minimum transactions in society would be difficult, inefficient and far less frequent than otherwise. Imagine the chaos on modern city streets and highways without traffic rules or an international credit card system where few care to pay their bills on time. Though the attainment is rudimentary, it generates an enormous power for accomplishment by the collective. It may also provide an enormous advantage to individuals who acquire the expected manners in greater degree than others. Thus, members of parliament have become famed for their skills in oratory, even when they were otherwise known to be far from ideal in either their beliefs or their actions. Intellectuals have risen to international fame for their superior capacity to listen politely and respectfully to others. In some instances, actors have become popular political leaders simply because the public mistook their skill in impersonating famous leaders in film for their actual

real life personalities and achievements. We may take these stylized social capabilities as natural and normal, but one need only witness instances in their absence to realize how great a power they bestow on the collective.

The outer organization of society is made possible by a corresponding advancement in the psychological organization of its members. Whereas other animals are endowed with the full range of instinctive behaviors required for their survival, human beings are born helpless and need to learn virtually everything needed for their survival. Alertness, self-control, action according to set procedure, punctuality in time, orderliness of arrangement are endowments only acquired by long experience, intensive training or compulsion. Introduction of the first traffic signal in a small South Indian town 40 years ago necessitated deployment of a platoon of traffic policeman for more than a month to impose order on unruly motorists, pedestrians and cyclists until the discipline of obeying the sequence of lights was acquired by the public. Lack of adherence to traffic rules is still a major source of road accidents worldwide. While the USA has about 15 times more motor vehicles than India, total deaths on the road each year are twice as high in India.

Behavior

Manners are viewed mainly in terms of the external compliance with established code of conduct and there is little interest in finding out whether the compliance is given willingly or out of coercion. A military general does not ask his soldiers whether they are willing to fight or agree with his battle plans. He simply demands their obedience. However, great military leaders know that winning the minds and hearts of their troops is a vital determinate of successful military campaigns. In his novel *War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy attributes the success of the vastly outnumbered and ill-equipped Russian troops over Napoleon's 800,000 strong trained troops to the deep and passionate conviction that inspired the Russian troops.

Behavior denotes the stage of personality development in which a person's external conduct is fully in conformity with his or her conscious convictions and beliefs. The distinction between external conformity and genuine conscious belief and intention is of vital importance to human accomplishment. As every successful professional knows from personal experience, the effectiveness of action derives its power directly from the understanding and attitude with which it is carried out. Recruitment specialists look beyond academic or work qualifications to the energy, confidence and determination of the candidate to perform. A student of below average intelligence with real curiosity and interest can master any subject by serious application, whereas an above average student who lacks those characteristics may perform poorly.

Reliability is an essential value for the development of society. Therefore, the collective comes to value those who speak what they believe to be true, keep their promises, and maintain their commitments. In centuries before written contracts were common or enforceable, a businessman's most precious possession was his word and reputation. If he could not be relied upon to do as he says, his prospects for advancement were severely limited. Leaders look for reliable confidantes who will tell them only what they know to be true, a quality all too rare in the psychological history of humanity wherever false words may serve as a temporary expedient, convenient excuse or source of advantage.

Modern society relies more on education and social conditioning of behavior than on force to achieve conformity among its members. Most citizens share a wide range of convictions and beliefs that generate psychological power for accomplishment. Where high standards of behavior are lacking, the efficiency of modern institutions is undermined by corruption among government officials, cheating in educational institutions, fraudulent business practices, substandard products and materials, falsification of documents and perjury in court, violation of contracts and treaties. The institution of bank lending would be impossible were it not for the genuine intention of most borrowers to repay their loans. In developing countries such as India, where this commitment is lacking among many farmers, efforts to extend bank credit are severely retarded. The global credit card system includes tens of thousands of banks, several billion card holders and trillions of dollars of transactions annually, yet losses due to credit card fraud average less than one tenth of a percent in value terms because control systems and strict enforcement are supported by well-established norms of behavior among card holders determined to maintain their good credit ratings.

Character

Still, behavior is largely conformity-based, outer-directed to meet social requirements, and outer-motivated to satisfy others. Character is a deeper level of personality formation in which values and beliefs become so firmly embedded as values that they are no longer under a person's conscious volition. A small community of Chettiars in South India has amassed enormous wealth because it is widely known that the younger generation will never rest until it has discharged any financial obligations left by their parents. Indian Sikhs and Nepalese Gurkhas earned a reputation as the best soldiers in the British Indian Army because of their unwavering courage under fire. The Protestant Ethic of hard work, American capacity for self-reliance and confidence in their ability to solve any problem, Japanese sense of honor, Indian deference to age, and German passion for physical perfection are deeply seated values that constitute the foundation for individual and national accomplishment. The English exhibited their character of stoical, courageous determination to resist the Nazi invasion after all the rest of Europe had surrendered. India's successful Green Revolution resulted from one politician's strong conviction in the ability of Indian farmers to achieve food self-sufficiency.

The internalization of social values gives rise to deeply seated character formation. Wherever people attain high levels of achievement, strong character formation is the basis. Character provides for stability, reliability and unwavering consistency.

Personality

Until 500 years ago, large portions of land on this planet remained uncharted, but now the world's land surfaces have been mapped down to the smallest details. Still the depths of the oceans, which constitute seventy-one percent of the earth's surface, remain unexplored and beyond lies the infinite reaches of the universe. Manners, behavior and character can be likened to the known continents. Personality and Individuality are dimensions of limitless magnitude that defy measurement.

Character is the capacity for accomplishment in any field arising from deeply entrenched values and attitudes that express as consistency and persistence. Personality is the capacity

to extend accomplishment from one field to many. If character makes possible the efficient manager, specialist or skilled artisan, personality makes possible the dynamic entrepreneur, polymath and Renaissance man.

Who could have imagined fifty years ago or even thirty the vast new realm of cyberspace, the first truly global social organization that would emerge apparently out of nowhere in the mid-1990s and exponentially multiplying the total power of world society for collective action and accomplishment? Personality can be likened to the totality of social potential out of which all new ideas, discoveries and inventions emerge. Personality is such a creative dimension of human consciousness out of which ideas, artistic creations and new inventions emerge, like the i-Pod, i-Phone and i-Pad of recent times. While character is denoted by a structure with limits, personality is a borderless realm where human imagination combines afresh and recreates.

Individuality

Still, there lies something beyond which is original, unique, and limitless. It is a vibrant source of human aspiration, unconditioned by social norms, expectations and established values. It is our true unique identity, yet at the same time fully in harmony with others and the world around us. Individuality surpasses education, training, family upbringing and social inheritance, etc. It has an impersonal and universal dimension which makes us conscious of our unity with other human beings. It is that which gives some people a spark of originality that emboldens them to face any difficult situation, and recognizes no ultimate boundaries or barriers to human accomplishment. The shift to individuality is like the shift from religion to spirituality, from many people following the inspiration of one saint to every member following his own unique inspiration.

Uniqueness shorn of ego and conditioning becomes universality. Acting from that center, Churchill confidently announced that Britain would never surrender to Nazi Germany after the whole rest of Europe had meekly succumbed. It was that which enabled President Roosevelt, who assumed office in 1932, during the worst banking panic in US history, to tell the American people “we have nothing to fear but fear itself” and then to request them to redeposit their lifelong savings in the banks, thereby stopping the panic by the strength of his spoken word. It was that which gave Gandhi the strength to confront the might of the British Empire with nothing but Satyagraha and non-violence as his weapons. It was that which reportedly made Napoleon exclaim on seeing Goethe enter the room for the first time, “At last, a man!”

Individuality is the essence of manners, behavior, character and personality; it is that which remains after everything else has been accounted for. As fallen leaves are converted into rich organic compost, compressed and concentrated to form coal and oil, then finally transformed into the sparkling crystal purity of diamonds under extreme pressure, individuality represents the distilled universal essence of human capacity shorn of the limitations of physicality, locality and specificity arising from the time, place and circumstances under which it was acquired.

Internet is the social counterpart of individuality which is psychological. The Internet offers an infinite playing field through which one individual can literally change the world.

Individuality is the infinite psychological endowment which alone is capable of tapping the unlimited creative potential of the Internet. If personality gives rise to the entrepreneur who can found an enterprise to tap social opportunities, the individual who relates to the world around him creates his own original field of work and constitutes a complete enterprise in himself.

“The more subtle an instrument, the more powerful” is a truism of life. Thus, the famous dictum that the word is more powerful than the sword. Ideas are a subtle formation with the power to change the world. Universal values, which are ideals of perfection, have literally transformed the world over the past few centuries, bringing a level of freedom, social equality and opportunity to the common man which is unprecedented in human history. As cultural values possess the concentrated power of society for accomplishment, Individuality represents the distilled essence of power in each human being for highest accomplishment both for himself and for humanity. Society is the infinite, the individual is the infinitesimal. With the right strategy the individual can tap at any point and release the infinite power of the society.

References

1. Ulrich Teichler, “Changing Structures of the Higher Education Systems: The Increasing Complexity of Underlying Forces,” *UNESCO Forum Occasional Paper Series Paper No. 6* <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001467/146736e.pdf>