

06 Aesthetics in Everyday Life

Tarit Bhattacharjee

The concept of using everyday materials in creating artefacts has a strong impact on education.

“The light in the distant eastern sky in a remote northeast village, my vivid memory of an unknown dawn filled with pearl fabric winter dew-- a wave of nostalgia hits me as the image of a bale of dry hay kept in a comfortable corner of a courtyard emerges. A few huts close together on the path around, the whole landscape changing through the seasons, wearing a new look every three months, vibrant seasonal changes—scenes infused with nostalgia. Ponds, mango and palm groves around paddy fields in green, ochre and brown tints—my vision takes a journey beyond the distant horizon and my eyes rest in an unknown perspective.”

Village folk with a sense of strong aesthetic seem to be natural in everyday life. Dawn to dusk, a generation grows up with ample natural resources for which skills, craftsmanship and creativity seem a natural instinct. In this journey, perhaps every generation could explore methods and materials from everyday resources.

Older generations created a relationship between the inner and outer, integrated skills and material, built huts, designed tools, worked with an intelligent touch of craftsmanship and used natural resources like



clay which was abundant. Man’s journey began by holding stones, clay and twigs, creating out of them form and design. Centuries later, the invention of the wheel gradually started moving through unknown generations. Industrialisation began for human comfort and easy living became the need of the hour. In this state of comfort, man slowly left behind his ability to labour and stay in touch with the ‘manual’. A new generation emerged who began an entirely new language and looked for a comfort zone. Technology produced a new generation of technocrats and as the world became faster and faster, man became a victim of technology: man lost his intelligence, became clever and started playing tricks. Subsequently, technology has occupied the inner space, and made it difficult to integrate the inner and outer spaces.

Integration between inner and outer spaces requires a keenness to observe nature and its resources and an innovative watchfulness: this, in turn, will help in integrating methods and materials. Natural resources and abundant waste material could give a wider sense of recycling materials and create a sense of utilization.

Rejection due to non-acceptance or by choice is common to any tradition or system. In relationships rejection plays an important role. In everyday life we abandon very useful things from our immediate surroundings.

The need of the hour is that our education system must embrace an intelligent inclusion, not exclusion. Perhaps future generations could visualise a new per-



spective - rejection is a gradual process of violence and it begins here.

I would like to share my own experience of growing up in the countryside of the northeast. Similar surroundings can be found anywhere. For instance, when one walks through one's surroundings, one might come across quite a few things which are abandoned—a coconut shell, for example, could be shaped into a mask. In the same way, anything could be designed from the waste around. There are plenty of things in our environment which one could call "Everyday Material".

Plenty of resources are available in our environment: clay, for example, is moulded by hand coordination which is a natural instinct. The hand gives shape and creates design very naturally. Holding clay awakens the senses to touch; the whole experience is one of natural feeling and touch and could be termed 'electrifying'. The pleasure of tying hay together and creating shapes is another such experience. Through these experiences, one learns to integrate methods and materials.

Clay, mud, stones, chips, old newspaper, cardboard, boxes, coconut shells, sawdust, bottle containers are available in plenty from our everyday life. Plastics, as we all know, have created a huge environmental disaster as they are not biodegradable. We cannot recycle them and dump them, littering our surroundings. Since this plastic could be reused, why not use it differently? Cutting out masks, placing them in these plastic bags and displaying them against a black or dark background is one such way.

Looking for aesthetics and creative order makes a difference in everyday life. It requires a strong sense of observation, watchfulness and an intuition for the creative urge which gives shape to the resources around.

Thunder after the star at dusk and the native folk take a stroll around a mango grove, gathering twigs

and branches along with tender mangoes—a nostalgic recollection of the early days of my upbringing. The native folk could create a hanging linear sculpture against the mud walls with these treasures from the mango grove—a brilliant sense of aesthetics, an experience beyond craftsmanship.

The inner self has a peace which goes back a million years. Man began his journey through a path in wild



grass. This primitive space still exists in the inner space of human existence. This intelligence helps to continue this journey with keen observation. With this intelligence, one could possibly explore nature and its resources around and not always depend on technology.

A system could explore creative and innovative space for learning which fundamentally is self-learning. To





create space for observation, give shape from the resources around, one can make toys tying hay or masks from coconut shells. Perhaps one could use easily available newspaper; also, one could explore sculptural dimensions from a bottle container; cardboard could integrate different areas of education. Aesthetic is basically an integral part of our creative upbringing in education.



Traditionally in the Indian context, a child grows in a strong fold of oral tradition, religious and social celebrations which are basically colourful and have a tremendous impact on creative growth. This ambience is part of an endless journey.

One could observe and possibly understand the possibility of using particular objects which are available in the environment as resources. The concept of using everyday materials in creating artefacts has a strong impact on education. Using recycling posi-

tively needs conscious effort; the economy of using waste material leads to an aesthetic understanding of everyday life as a whole, a down-to-earth feeling, an innocence, a spontaneity and energy, perhaps a true intelligence.

Man has always tried to explore memory and tap it as a resource which creates a link between object and reality. For instance, a scarecrow in a field near a small stream creates an ambience which generates a wider perspective beyond the horizon.

My memory again turns back to an unknown dawn, a vivid part of a haystack in a courtyard — an inspiration, energy, a journey that still continues.



TARIT BHATTACHARJEE is a painter, print maker and art educator. He received his education in Art from Kala Bhaban, Santiniketan. He is currently teaching Art and Design in The School, KFI, Chennai. He has been exploring the use of various methods and materials from everyday resources. Subjects of his drawings, prints and paintings are basically common people/environment and everyday life. A child's spontaneity has always been an inspiration in his creative journey. He can be contacted at tarit.mrittika@gmail.com