I-3.   Critical Contemplation

A matrix of questions, concerns and criteria guide an active and systematic exploration of the real world. Answers and insights follow if the observer takes the lead. Real time use of real world inputs requires ability to identify the experience in terms of defined attributes and criteria.

Jeevatthan is meant to encourage critical thought that works for tangible representation and also for the representation of the tangibles. It is an anecdote free approach. The text is not a compilation of aphorisms. The integrity of the material in Chapters A-H is retained in essays, insights and notes where I have tried to provide a basis for the ideas that may not be apparent other wise. The matrix of the thought process in Jeevatthan is fundamental and has enduring relevance. It guides individual behaviors (*Dharma*) by building on the ability to perceive the quality (*gun*). On the other hand, institutional thoughts build on ad hoc (dogma, kismet, and worse).

Hearing to listen and looking to see. How often do we hear but not listen? Or look but not see? The difference is critical for active interaction with the observed and for sharing the experience. Deeper connectivity of what is behind our eyes (*parokch*) lets us peer into the content of what is in front of our eyes (*pratyakch*). This is possibly the main reason that people respond differently towards the same events, painting, or even a passage from textbook. The difference prevails even among those with perfectly intact natural abilities to respond. Such differences are not for skeptical reasons. Shared knowledge thrives on the distinctions rooted in honest difference of opinion. Is it about mind? Nature? Genes? Nurture? Culture?

Rules for quitting: Origins and significance of the observer-observed interactions lie deep in the human condition. We grasp reality in stages. Some times you have to search for a while before you know what you are looking for. We have elaborate expressions for not-listening, not-responding, and not-caring behaviors. Even when we know what is said, do we really understand? After we understand, are we able to evaluate the consequences? Above all, do we make meaningful decisions based on what we hear, listen, know and understand? How do we make decisions that lead to successful behaviors? Does it always end up the way you wanted? Virtually all languages have redundant inputs to facilitate such searches.

People often give up without trying. The insight came home to me while playing with my four year old grandchild. While responding to my quiz on counting the body parts he suddenly gave up in response to a question. It required putting together some information that we had teased out few minutes earlier. His response was that it is not a part of the game. Game-players often give up because something does not fall in the way they interpreted the rules. Its natural outcome is chaotic actions. Continuing playfulness of thoughts, and even words and actions, is necessary to discover but also explore what one does not understand or lies outside the rules of the game. Reexamine the rules before quitting. Certainly, a defeatist attitude is a non-starter.

What is profound? Some people tend to look for profound through the incomprehensible. Learning to comprehend the simple is a profound ability. In the tradition of shared knowledge profundity lies in the simplicity and consistency that can be shared. The other side of the coin is: "There is enough mystery in the content (represented and abstract) so as not to create mystery of semantics" (Joseph Berger, 1988).

Thought is guided by observer-observed interaction. It is triggered by the way we ask questions and the way we represent evolving perceptions. Consistency facilitates the dialog, both in the way ideas are presented and in the emphasis on rational consistency and consistent rationality. A systematic matrix approach is appealing to the innate sense of looking at the world without being distracted by rhetoric, semantics, prevailing beliefs, and the forces of personality.

Learning as a matrix of thought. All cultures place emphasis on systematic search. For example farmers plow their field in regular furrows. We teach our young geometrical forms as in basket-making, pottery, weaving, or the Euclid's theorems. The same process is at work in the use of languages and other means of linear communication. It is also the hallmark of effective reasoning that builds on the consistency of the information with the experience and established knowledge. Rule based consistency facilitates exploration of the concerns in terms of the observed worlds and beliefs. Whether we appreciate it or not, as is common to most creative processes, systematic variation on a theme is an efficient way to identify and explore the unknown.

There is little in any seminal work that cannot be grasped. It is because seminal ideas are about shared thoughts that relate to personal experience. On the other hand manipulating ideas and thoughts for personal relevance requires patience. Getting into the deeper thought process behind the seminal ideas also requires a good grasp of language and the basis of human understanding. Beyond this, a bit of healthy skepticism is far more helpful for the understanding than anything accomplished through preconceived notions, devotion, or blind faith.

Reasoning creates value if guided by identified and cognized basis of the entire awareness (*pratyabhigyan*). For example, effective reading requires contemplation to identify

experiences that influence the narrative. This is also necessary to peer into ones own mind and thought processes. Titillations may keep a reader interested, and possibly sustain curiosity, but such distractions can hardly engage thought and reason.

Art of sharing thought and getting into the author's mind.
Occasionally, one comes across a work that defies common wisdom of being interesting but not entertaining. The appeal lies in the uncommon sense of developing the usable concepts from the curiosity about the world and ones own experiences. As is apparent from the abstract (Chapter I-2), Jeevatthan does not resort to sermons and preaching, nor does it evoke fear or prey on ignorance. Clearly, there is little here that is ready-made, or could serve fast food for thought. Certainly, there is substantial food for thought for those willing to prepare it to one's own liking.

What is the use of the past? The present comes after the past, and answers follow the questions. Just as there is *de ja vu*, one can formulate undefined questions from answer to other questions. Itthivay is about the empirical thought process through which we "internalize" experience for future use. The hallmark of human experience is to provide a way to identify concern and develop arguments to arrive at a resolution. This approach is timeless, engaging, enduring, and relevant. It bu8ilds on basic human curiosity uncorrupted by faith. Reasoning relies on willingness to keep open mind to create own matrix of thought to address a concern. Each re-visit provides newer insights.

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