

CREATIVITY

— Dr. Mohan P. Joshi MBBS*

We work in the present with the help of the past. Past experience is helpful, no doubt. But it has its dark side as well. If we surrender ourselves completely to the past and always take this as a sole guide to our present action, no new creation can be expected. A completely open and receptive mind without any preconceptions is a mind that will add something extra to the existing store of knowledge.

Most of us have preconceptions about almost everything and it is this preconception that prevents us from being open. A dull mind that only knows to follow the known and does not want to see anything more than what is just necessary to somehow manage to do a piece of work can not enrich our profession with some new contribution. Life is easier to pass when one is dull than when he is alert and ambitious to improve the knowledge of Medicine. Most of the doctors have never thought that they could be of some creative use to their field. They think that some new work is always the work of a genius who has an exceptionally capable and extra-ordinarily imaginative mind. But they so sadly ignore the fact that genius is 99 percent diligence and only 1 percent intelligence. Apparently, they do not want to become geniuses because they do not want to be diligent. It is hard to be diligent. It is painful, at least initially, to keep the mind agile and wholly involved in what one is doing or seeing.

At this place I think it can be said that our method of education is at least partially responsible for the production of unproductive medical personnel. Most of the institutions do not usually give attention to originality. Though emphasized in curricula, problem solving practices are usually neglected. Students are not made to think for themselves and show some work which entails the contribution of their own mind. It is generally accepted that a student will make a good doctor of himself if he has memorised the text and just knows how to do a few things correctly. Very few questions, if ever, are asked which demand the student's reasoning and analysis. Our method of education does not on the whole try much to develop problem solving attitude in students.

While examining a patient we feel content if we can make a working diagnosis of a certain disease and find in the patient those features which are ordinarily the

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manifestations of the disease concerned. But is it always necessary to be so stereotyped? Is it necessary to be so closed? Can not we look at every patient, every disease without too many preconceptions? Preconception makes one's vision narrow and limited. Is it always necessary to stick to things described in books or told by seniors and be closed to anything other than these? A very new clinical feature might just as well be present in a patient and unless our minds are open enough to receive something new, we can hardly recognise it and it escapes our attention. Our eyes fail to see it even when it is staring at us. There are certain symptoms/signs described in the text books pertaining to some particular ailment. Sometimes a hitherto unrecognised but quiet helpful symptom/sign associated with the disease might be present in the patient. But we are very much liable to miss it as it is not described in books. Even if we do by chance happen to see it, we overlook it, as we are not confident enough to try to establish some relation between this new symptom/sign and the disease in question nor are we curious to derive pleasure from search and exploration.

It is true that eyes do not see what the mind does not know. It is true, but can not be true always, as there has to be a first time in everything. When a new observation is made for the first time, the mind was ignorant of it prior to the observation. Here a pair of acutely observant eyes see something which other eyes had never seen earlier and it did not exist in the knowledge of any minds before this. Because he gives total attention to the thing he is occupied with, he gives the world newer and newer knowledges. He may not by nature be an extraordinarily intelligent man. He can be as ordinary as you and me, but what he has extra that we do not have is his quality of being absolutely involved in what he is doing. And it is this quality that makes him a pioneer, a creator.