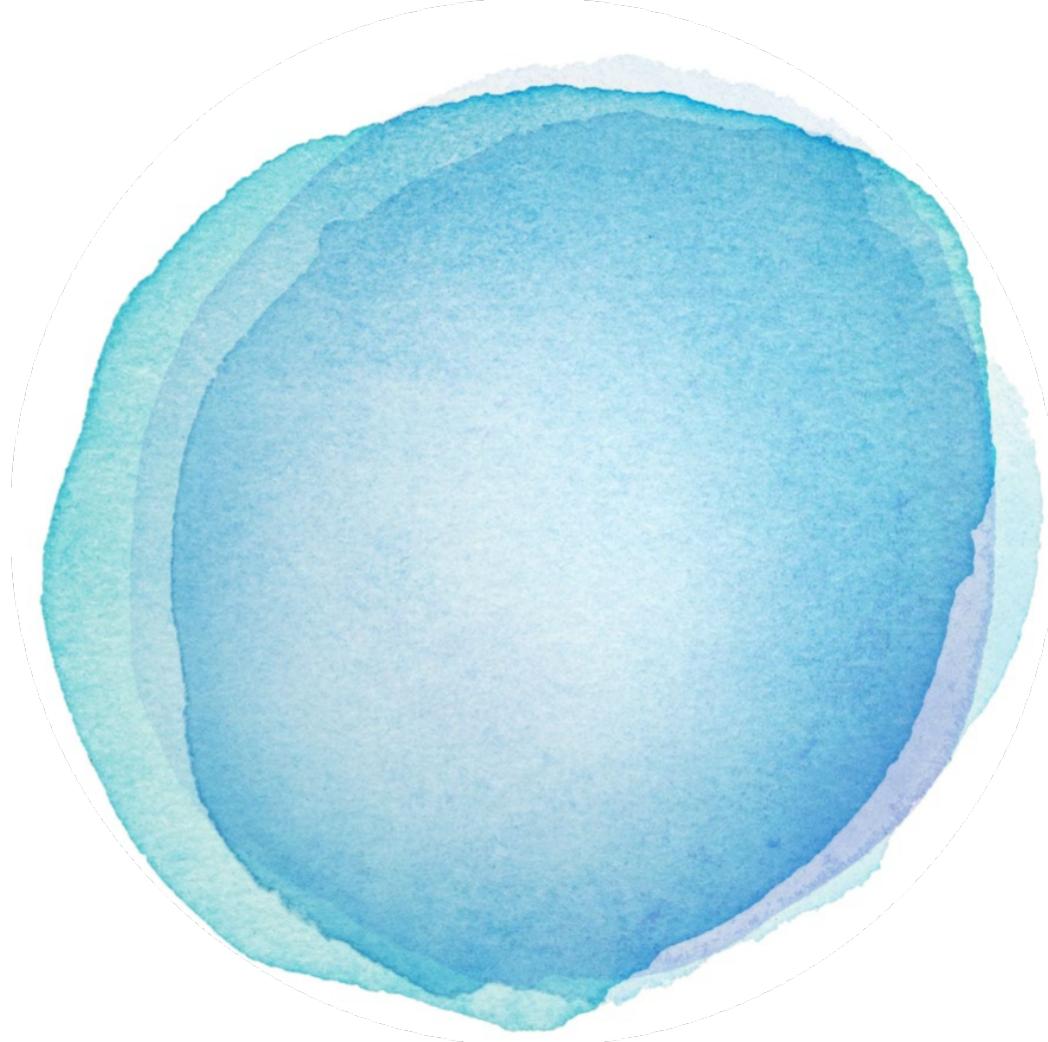


Beauty in Simplicity



Creativity exists within us all. ELIZABETH DENLEY explores the inherent nature of creativity.

We often think that creativity & innovation are for those special people – the artists and innovators – who choose a creative profession, forgetting that we are all potentially creative and innovative in whatever we do every day.

Creativity is an attitude. A street sweeper can be creative in how she cleans the paths, a builder laying concrete can find new ways for the concrete to set. It is all about attitude, and it requires a sense of wonder and discovery. I remember the first time I visited Bali as a teenager, and watched the local people creating their flower offerings to God at various places on the roadside and near their houses every day. They were done so beautifully, with so much care and love. It was a joyous thing to walk along a path between paddy fields and come upon one of those glorious pieces of natural art.

Where do creativity & innovation come from? Are they learnt? Can we switch them on and suddenly they are there?

It is a necessary topic to explore, because creativity & innovation are critical for anything to be really successful, and for us to contribute our own particular genius to our human community.

“ Every one of us has a genius, and our job is to find ours and excel at whatever that is. We don’t have to become famous, rich or ambitious, as genius can be expressed in every little thing we do every day. “

There is the old cliché, work is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration, and that is as true for Michelangelo sculpting David, Jagjit Singh singing ghazals, Joseph Strauss engineering the Golden Gate Bridge, Einstein discovering relativity, a family preparing Christmas dinner together, or an office clerk organising his boss’s appointment schedule for the next week.

One of the simplest and most elegant innovations I have seen in any office was back in the early ’90s, before personal computers were common, when I visited my Guru in India for the first time. He had retired from his role as a company executive in order to devote his time fully to our spiritual organisation, and ran his office with

an order that was inspiring.

One day he showed me his filing cabinets, and I was surprised by the innovative ideas he had used to organise membership cards and other administrative documents. His was a simple creation, unseen by the world and hence unsung, but it was so simple and elegant.

In fact any really creative innovation is simple. The 19th century composer, Frederic Chopin, once said,

“Simplicity is the highest goal, achievable when you have overcome all difficulties. After one has played a vast quantity of notes and more notes, it is simplicity that emerges as the crowning reward of art.”

The same concept applies everywhere. In mathematics, if there is more than one solution to a problem, the simplest and most elegant is considered to be the highest. Why? The answer to this question takes us to the heart of the matter of creativity! Reflect on it for some time, and a whole universe of understanding emerges.

Creativity is natural, as the same creative principle exists throughout the universe. It is one of the three main principles of existence - creation, maintenance and destruction. Creativity is intrinsically linked with our inner essence, the life force that is within us. Great artists, scientists and thinkers recognise this, from Leonardo da Vinci to Nicola Tesla.

In fact, if life is to be lived well, it is an act of creation in itself, from the moment of conception until the moment of death and beyond. Anything creative is evolving at every moment.

To be innovative and creative in any field, be it engineering, carpentry, mechanics, music, art, cooking, writing, gardening or running a business, we have to dive into the core of ourselves, the heart of our being. And for that we need to create the space and time to allow ourselves to listen to the inspiration that comes from within.

“ Inspiration comes from a place that is beyond our own limitations, and our own mundane existence, in what we call the spiritual heart of existence. Ekhart Tolle puts it in the following way: “All true artists, whether they know it or not, create from a place of no-mind, from inner stillness.”

So it is actually very simple: cultivate this ability. Do whatever takes you straight to the heart of the matter. Swim in the sea, meditate, walk in Nature, sing, play with children ... there are many ways to nurture creativity, and each person must find their own approach.

Let your heart expand. That in itself is a creative act!

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