

THE SPIRIT OF CREATIVITY

Basic Mechanisms of Creative Achievements

Interview with Ashok Kurien

A phase of inspiration implies a relaxed organismic state and a receptive mind where the antennae of all sensory organs are able to catch even the most fleeting signals emerging from one's body and mind. Ashok Kurien speaks of the process of emotional cutting-off (detachment) that is important to enter a relaxed mood. Once more he mentions his childlike open-mindedness and playfulness and regrets that our education systems kill most of these personality traits, thus squandering valuable creative resources. He also speaks about the importance of having the right partners in order to succeed in a difficult task. Quite obviously he is fully aware of the fact that there are two windows of opportunity for excellent achievements and that a creative leader must see to it that over-stimulation and under-stimulation in the leader and in the teams under one's tutelage are properly balanced in order to obtain the best possible results.

Ashok KURIEN tells the interviewer Gottlieb GUNTERN how he was inspired to build what he calls a STORYEUM in order to make the whole population of India aware of their history, brighter side and darker moments included. His eyes sparkle, his facial expression and gesticulations become very vivid, and he speaks faster than usual: a telltale of the enthusiasm fired up by a great inspiration. As he tells the interviewer about his project, he is already describing how inspiration led to a phase of preparation, first mental and then physical, organizational preparation. He even mentions various aspects of that mega-project that has meanwhile entered the phase of elaboration.

GG: Do you go to certain places, do you do certain things to facilitate your inspiration and motivation?

AK: Yes! I visit bars – and (laughing) I want to go tonight! You have to cut off now and then. Nowadays it isn't as bad, but there was a time when I was running two businesses parallel, getting involved in some Internet project, diving into this and that. I would have to get into a noisy bar somewhere, so noisy that I couldn't hear myself think!

GG: The environmental noise served to drown out all the rest and calmed the waves of your mental activity.

AK: Yes, because I didn't want to think. I didn't want to be with an intelligent woman, I wanted to be with some dumb, giggly bimbo. If I sit around all by myself, I'll only think of another idea, and I don't want to think. But I suppose I've passed that phase now.

GG: When you say, "I wanted to be with some dumb, giggly bimbo," this statement implies that hard, focussed work must have a counter-pole, a complementary force in order to function in an optimal way. That counter-pole is playful relaxation.

AK: Because I'm a child.



GG: And a child can switch off his preoccupations by becoming completely absorbed in a game.

AK: I am a child, and I will remain a child! I think like a child. Every child is born a musician or a dancer or an artist. Give any child a pen and paper, give them coloured pencils, and they start drawing. Put some music on, they all start wiggling! They all sing with no embarrassment. Then what do we do? Our education system says, "That's not how you draw! Draw like this! That's out of tune! You dance badly!" We kill their creativity! We just kill it! And they don't draw or sing or dance for the rest of their lives.

GG: We kill it by imposing rigid rules and structural constraints where freedom and playful exploration should reign.

AK: When a child starts wiggling and moving around we say, "Stand still!" That child is hearing music in its head! That child is dancing! We kill our child's creativity with our education system.

GG: Absolutely. I fully agree.

AK: I didn't get educated, so nobody killed my creativity.

GG: What keeps a human being young?

AK: I'm young because I'm a child.

GG: What is the essence of a child?

AK: It's simplicity.

GG: Which mental faculty is the most vivid in a child?

AK: (chuckles)

GG: Imagination.

AK: Imagination, okay! Of course! I'm an *imagineer*!

GG: I have seen children prematurely aged.

AK: Exactly!

GG: You see them on television in regions where catastrophic events occur, for instance in Afghanistan, Iraq or Darfour.

AK: I agree!

GG: What happens to them is a terrible fate which kills their imagination.

AK: Education kills children's imagination.

