

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

# ROLE OF CREATIVITY IN SOCIAL WELL-BEING: EXPLORING AMELIORATIVE MEASURE OF POV- ERTY ERADICATION IN INDIAN SOCIETY

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### Abstract

Notions of creativity, motivation and innovation are complementary to development in the global context today. Different culture defines and practices creativity differently. Variation in creativity may lead to a difference in innovation in any field, be it economic, social, cultural and artistic. Social well-being is primarily determined by lifeability and capability (Sen, 1970, 1981) of the common people. India has problems of both objective well-being (material affluence) and subjective well-being (happiness). Income disparity and capability inequality are extensively increasing in India. There is a vast difference in the living standard of the various sections of the population. Major sections of the population have been living in absolute poverty and even relative poverty is adverse too. Welfare measures are always considered as the primary remedy for poverty in India. In the advanced industrial era and globalization of economic and human development, we must see how creativity and innovation among the poor help eradicate poverty in India. It is a matter of research how creativity played a significant role in ensuring social well-being at the global level and in India particularly. The proposed paper will focus on creativity, motivation, and innovation among poor people in India. It will also focus on how far poor people depend on welfare measures. Whether creativity and motivation may lead to better lifeability and capability equality in Indian society? The research will be carried out in combination with theoretical insights and empirical data. We may take a sample from village, slum and pavement dwelling from India.

**Keywords:** Creativity, social well-being, poverty, skills, unemployment

### Introduction

In the era of advanced industrialization, global inequality in human development across the regions has a serious concern. India being a developing society often experiences low human development which indicates the prevalence of large-scale poverty, poor quality of life among weaker sections, and lack of employment or work. Poverty is a serious global issue, but in India, poor are

also responsible for their condition. Poor people mostly depend on welfare measures and participation in production is less. There is a lack of industriousness and work culture among poor is not conducive to development. Creativity, motivation and innovation can be a leading combination for poverty alleviation in India.

In this regard, we must see how creativity and innovation among poor helps eradicate poverty in India. It is a matter of research on how creativity may play a significant role in ensuring social well-being at the global level and in India particularly. The proposed paper will focus on creativity and motivation among poor people in India. It will also focus on how far poor people depend on welfare measures. Whether creativity and motivation may lead to better lifeability and attaining capability in Indian society? This research is a theoretical and conceptual proposition. Empirical case studies have been used to develop the indicators. Case studies are conducted among village farmers, agricultural workers, urban construction workers, and slum dwellers from Cachar District of Assam. A total of 40 individual cases have been taken, of which 10 are from each category of poor.

### **Creativity and Social well-being**

Creativity and innovation play a key role in individual development, economic growth and societal development. In the age of fast technological advancement and transformation, creativity and innovation among people have enormous importance. Creativity and innovation are inevitable for economic growth and sustainable development in Europe and so various initiatives are being made to incorporate creativity and innovation into the process of life-long learning. Initiatives such as Erasmus+ and the Horizon 2020 projects aim to foster sustainable and viable economic development. Asia has similar kind of initiatives like China's move for transforming China into "an innovation-oriented country" by 2020 and a world leader in science and technology by 2050; the establishment of the National Innovation Council in India; and the launch of the three Masterplans for ICT in education in Singapore since 1997 (Tang, pp-3-4). There is disciplinary differences in defining and using the concept creativity. Based on the history of creativity research, Sawyer (2012) classified three major waves of creativity studies: First wave was between 1950s and 1960 that focused on the study of personality of exceptional creators; second wave was between 1970s and 1980s, which focused on cognitive aspects (i.e., internal mental processes) of creative behaviour; and the third wave was between 1980s and 1990s, which focused on creative social system (i.e., groups of people in social and cultural contexts). From these historical development of creativity studies, Sawyer (2012) derived two definitions of creativity – 'individualist definition' and 'sociocultural definition'. Sawyer (2012, p.7) proposed the individual definition as "Creativity is a new mental combination that is expressed in the world". Characterizing features of this definition are: Creativity has to be something new, novel, or original; Creativity involves a combination of two or more thoughts or concepts that have never been combined before by the individual; (3) Creativity must be expressed in a certain way in the world. He proposed the 'Sociocultural definition' of creativity as "the generation of a product that is judged to be novel

and also to be appropriate, useful, or valuable by a suitably knowledgeable social group”.

Three characterizing features of this definition are: Creativity must refer to a concrete product; the product must be judged as novel, appropriate, useful, or valuable; and persons who make the judgment must be from a suitably knowledgeable social group (Tang, 2017, p-5-6). The sociological interpretation of creativity has varied implications. A contemporary sociological interpretation of creativity includes comparing creativity with key sociological concepts like originality, knowledge, innovation, atypicality, and consecration and highlights the relevant aspects of creativity research in psychology and economics (Godart, Seong & and Phillips, 2020, p-2). Psychology defines creativity as the capacity to produce ideas that are both original and adaptive. It means that ideas must be new and practical. Creativity makes a person capable to adjust in real life situations and resolve problem that comes unpredictably. So, creativity becomes very useful in everyday life and it also contributes to the development of human civilization. Simonton, 2001). In the context of contemporary sociology, to make the sociological definition of creativity a distinct one, two sociological components of creativity are taken into account – antecedents (structure, institutions, and context) and consequences (audiences, perception, and evaluation) (Godart, Seong & and Phillips, 2020, p-2). The Marxian idea of alienation showed how the creativity of human beings can be suppressed. His idea of dialectic signifies the proletariat’s creative contradiction with capitalist ideas and interests. Weber’s idea of rational action in opposition to traditional action implies new, progressive and innovative practices among humans in the industrial society. He also projected how rationalization can be a dominant force of oppression in capitalist society. Durkheim’s ideas of ‘creative power’ and ‘free creations of the mind’ shows how collective effervescence of religious life is the source of creativity and considered as power of society as well as a manifestation of collective consciousness. Frankfurt thinkers like Max Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse in their concept of ‘culture industry’ highlighted the issue of new age domination over masses through making the product of culture industry a source of satisfaction and entertainment. Masses instead of focusing on creativity go for consumption of culture industry products.

Though creativity had a long association with sociology, its use in sociology is less popular may be because of the absence of the term ‘creativity’. It was coined in the mid-twentieth century prominently in Psychology. Certain key assumptions of sociological understanding of creativity can elaborate the implication of creativity. Firstly, creativity is a configuration of cultural and material elements. In fact, the outcome is potentially creative, not necessarily the producers themselves (Marx, Adorno and Horkheimer). Creativity as a configuration is found in everyday activities not only in the highest forms of art. Secondly, creativity is intentional because it is not the result of coincidental events or just randomness taking place outside of social actions. Rather, creativity depends on human labour, interactions, and organization (Godart, Seong & and Phillips, 2020, pp-6-7).

So, creativity may be regarded as a determinant of the development of the individual, group, organization and even society. We should also focus on how creativity may be absent among people or in individual. The absence

of creativity is not cognitive but rather a consequence of political-economic hegemony in any society. Human potential of being creative may be obstructed by humans as subjects of a hegemonic system. Adorno and Marcuse's (1944, 1964) idea of 'free time' and its discursive power over the conscience of the masses signifies the domination of techno-rationality. Though advanced industrial society is characterized by innovation but this further put humans into the grip of its consumption through rationalization. The most crucial feature of advanced industrial society is 'freedom from limited needs' and in order to attain the freedom of needs, affluent society keeps upgrading the standard of development and priority of needs. Marcuse (1964) argues, in this condition, liberty can be turned into a powerful instrument of domination. People's 'free time' or time of relaxation is redefined by the culture industry or popular culture; visit of cinema halls, shopping malls, restaurants and visiting in commercial aesthetic places are the new medium of spending free time or entertainment.

We must focus on how creativity is linked to social well-being. Mainly social well-being has two dimensions: objective and subjective well-being. Social well-being is the configuration of both. Social well-being primarily refers the attainment of equality and social cohesion in society through objective and subjective conditions. Diener (1984) and Veenhoven (1984) developed the notion of "subjective well-being" for assessing the happiness and utility in life. Veenhoven (2008, 2000) defined subjective well-being as overall happiness in life. Subjective well-being can be assessed through two sources of information: cognitive comparison with standards of the good life (contentment) and hedonic level of affect (Veenhoven, 2008). Aamrtya Sen's (2000) capability approach, from which human development (Haq, 2003, Sen, 2000) concept developed is all about how human beings are capable of living a standard life. So social well-being encompasses the condition of equality, social cohesion, capability, lifeability in any society. It can be stated that creativity among people in any society leads to social well-being because they are able to make changes, manage the situations in a desired direction and contribute in the process of societal developmental activities. Sociologically, creativity should not be treated as an external feature of human being or organization to inculcate through rather it must be regarded as capability of human being exerts inherent potential, ideas and attitude towards an action.

Creativity and human skill of action may bring material condition of a society in a better state. Here comes the issue of poverty in India, which has been the result of poor skilling. Poor skill may the result of lack of opportunity to exert creativity or poor situation that compel poor to work silently without thinking of using creativity. India is a country of massive technological and industrial development, but on the other side larger section of its population are poor. Poor have the problems of work, employment and requisite income of living a standard life. So ultimately, we find lack of capability of poor in access to the result of economic and societal development.

### **Issue of Skills and Unemployment in India**

India is known as a labour-rich nation. On the one hand, domestic economic growth has increased employment prospects and demand, while on the other,

a skill gap is rendering more people unemployed. Economic and social progress can only be attained through the provision of high-quality employment. The development of high-quality jobs is widely recognized as being essential to maintaining rapid economic growth, reinforcing the importance of employment in public policy. Employment plays a crucial role in achieving a number of societal goals like poverty reduction, productivity growth, and social cohesion, in addition to its direct effects on enhancing personal well-being. In India, a new wave of transformation in employment in formal and informal sectors has taken place due to rapid globalization, integrated technology-driven marketplaces, and data-driven corporate decisions. In this situation, it is essential that the right policy measures be put in place to foster the creation of high-quality jobs that will contribute to more rapid and equitable economic development. Over the past few years, India's employment has been affected by the digital transition. Every organization and business has adapted technology which acts as an advantage for them. Foreign direct investment in different sectors, particularly in the field of technology created a huge demand for skilled professionals and workers. Most cities are actively coming up with high technology-based infrastructure for the manufacturing and service industry a vast majority of workers are still unprepared to meet the demands of the global technology industry (Sasikumar, 2015). Moreover, the activities and organizational structures of a company as a whole are being changed by the rapidly evolving technological environment. Together with the shifting market, it has caused new business models to emerge within firms, altering how people work and shop. People have shifted from offline shopping to online shopping by using various apps such as Swiggy, Myntra, Flipkart.

The foundation of contemporary commercial operations is robotics, AI, and machine learning. Robotics and AI algorithms are essential in a wide range of applications, including telemedicine for remote diagnosis and medical procedures, hospital staff management, and drug development. All of this innovation clearly paves the way for new career opportunities in the future that demand specialized technical skills and expertise. The large youth workforce in India, both in rural and urban regions, should be utilized by the various institutions of the country, which include schools, colleges, and vocational training facilities. Education will be crucial in reducing the skill gap and raising knowledge of technology-driven communications in order to fulfil the expectations of contemporary industries. It has been noted that the industry laments the lack of talent despite the country's sizable and active youth population (India Skills Report, 2021).

In India, vocational training is provided outside of the traditional educational system and is geared towards those who have completed at least their secondary education. Since Vocational training is listed on the concurrent list of the Indian Constitution, the union government and state governments both have legislative authority over it. While state governments are in charge of the programmes and their implementation, the Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGE&T) under the Ministry of Labour and Employment is the primary organization that develops vocational training policies and certification requirements at the national level. Only an advisory role is played by a business or the private sector in the current training system. The World Bank (2006) has highlighted that vocational training is considered a stigma in India. This is linked to the manual work requirement of the sector, which is considered to have a low status. IT industry only makes up a small portion of the Indian workforce, therefore fears about skill-related employability challenges (Hajela, 2012, pp. 4-5). India's construction industry containing infrastructure and real estate sectors employs over 26 million casual workers that have been the country's second largest employer after agriculture. The construction workforce in India is largely unskilled workers. A small section of workforce is skilled and educated professionals (Table 1).

**Table 1:** *Employment in Construction Sector by Education Level of Workers*

Category	Category Percentage of Employment	Total Employment
Unskilled workers	83%	25.6 million
Skilled workers	10%	3.3 million
Engineers	3%	0.8 million
Technicians and foremen	2%	0.6 million
Clerical	2%	0.7 million

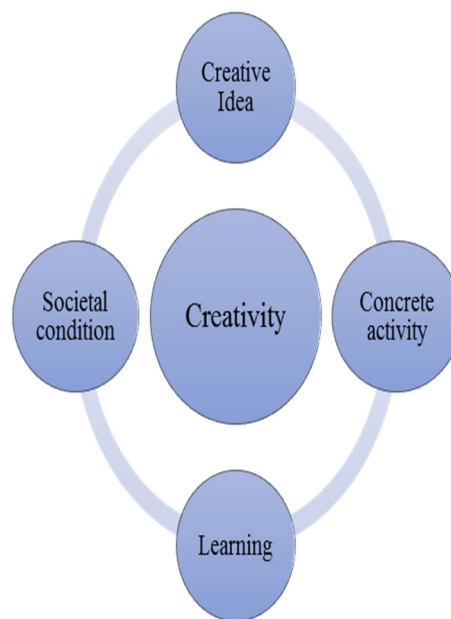
**Source:** Hajela Ruchi (2012) SKOPE

These unskilled manual or casual workers are seasonal, migrant workers from rural areas of states with poor agriculture. They have very low educational attainment, lack formal training and usually seeks job through any supervisors. Most of the skilled construction workers migrate to other countries, particularly in Gulf countries for higher wages. This results shortage of skilled workers in India (Hajela, 2012). Thus, low educational attainment causes poor skilling among workforce and consequently large-scale unemployment occurs in the country. India's poverty and unemployment has been facing new challenges due to frequent transformation in the global economy and education technology. It can be explored how creativity among workforce results skilling that leads to both employment and self-reliance.

### Creativity as ameliorative measure of poverty Eradication

It is a challenging task to establish the fact sociologically that creativity may lead to poverty amelioration. Often, we use creativity in the context of art and literature but making it relevant for poverty reduction will need more research and critical analysis. Based on the empirical case studies, we have proposed certain assumptions regarding creativity as an ameliorative measure of poverty in India. Case studies among village farmers, agricultural workers, urban construction workers and slum dwellers have revealed the fact that they are unable to trace their inner potential or creative potential. Poor are not a homogeneous group, so diversity is obvious in their creativity and skill. In this study, certain indicators are proposed to explore the creativity among poor and how far creativity is linked to skill.

**Chart 1:** *Indicators of creativity in economic and societal context*



**Creative Idea:** Idea may be of individual or group with new or unique essence that has the potential of making a change in one's economy. Creative ideas are not something coincidental or inherent rather a cognition through socialization in educational and societal environments. In a poor economic condition, creative ideas may offer a number of ways through which one can get rid of poverty. One cannot just think poverty as fate which is unavoidable. It can be avoided through alternative course of action. It has been found that poor people mostly rely on welfare schemes and are reluctant to think for self-empowerment. Educational socialization in village is more concerned for enrolment and attendance. There is a common tendency among poor people

that they fear ambition though they wish for a standard life. Some poor have shared their courage to overcome poverty by adopting new idea of business, skill of work and entrepreneurship. Creative idea in societal context is not necessarily a new one rather it may be modification of existing idea in business, skill, agriculture and others. Creative idea may lead to a new social organization for economic empowerment and progressive change.

**Concrete activity:** People's particular social and economic activity that has unique significance in terms of individual upliftment and societal progress. In the village, it has been observed that people are doing agriculture with traditional techniques, so productivity fails to be beneficial. Poor are almost ignorant about scientific agriculture and technology-driven production. Agricultural land remains unused for the maximum time of a year because farmers cultivate once a year. Lack of creativity in concrete form left the farmers unemployed for most of the time in a year. As a result, seasonal migration takes to urban areas, which further make an addition to the slum population. There is no entrepreneurial activity among poor people found. Business activity of the poor is marginal such as vegetable stalls, fish stalls, etc. Villages are full of resources and youth population but as such no concrete activity found to be called creative for individual upliftment or societal progress. An educated section is found who is persuading for Government job even of third grade or fourth grade in rank. A trend persists among educated people to get engaged in any Government organization not because it realizes their creativity but because they can live comfortably without much work pressure and allied facilities. Skilling is another concrete activity that may upgrade workers from casual to professional. Very less skilled workers are found but their skill is limited to some specialized unorganized jobs. Technical skill is still missing among poor people. Due to a lack of technical skill, large numbers of village youths and slum poor migrate to metro cities to join the job of a security guards and manual work. Bangalore and Mumbai are the most liked destination for such poor youths. There is also a section of poor people, who managed to migrate to overseas countries like Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries for semi-skilled job but eventually, they acquired technical skills.

**Learning:** Learning as a dimension of creativity is the result of everyday activities and various levels of socialization. It also refers foundation of the skilling of a person or group. It is a complex process that encompasses education, personal experience of life, aspiration for better life and attitude towards change. Poor people are found as mostly dormant in their everyday life. They have a bad experience of their poverty but it's not making any result towards aspiration for a better life. Those who have children are not making it hard to afford to provide them with education or they themselves are out of learning or skilling. There is a lack of technical skill training for the poor, so they rely on their traditional skill for manual work. Slum dwellers are doing various dirty jobs like manual scavenging, begging, sweeper, etc. Skill development schemes have been introduced by Government but implementation is not satisfactory due to a lack of interest, lack of awareness, and ignorance among the poor. So, they have become irrelevant in the age of the advanced work system.



**Social Condition:** It refers to the prevalent social environment in any society. The social environment itself may be creative in the sense that collectively afford towards creativity is widely accepted and recognized. Social relationships and social organization unify creativity for personal and societal progress and development. Unfortunately, social condition of poor is less conducive for creativity. Slum is worse in this aspect because dwellers lack any social bond or integration to collectively think and do. Village farmers have social integration but they lack any societal encouragement for creative activities in order to make their economic life better. They usually look for free ration and facilities provided by Government agencies. Instead of building their capability, they seek welfare scheme to maintain their livelihood. So welfarism is dominant force in the social condition that obstructs poor people think for upliftment.

### **Creativity is obstructed by Consumption trend**

Constant development of the culture industry in India has created a consistent consumer base. Masses show their satisfaction in enjoying time with the products of the culture industry. This trend has promoted the notions of 'entertainment' and 'free time'. We may take the reference of Adorno, who believes that the entertainment industry, radio, television, jazz and popular music and film etc., have become essential parts of everyday life. He stated that masses become engrossed to watch the hero and even do hero-worshipping (Witkin, 2003: 5). Thus, the present production trend in Bollywood is better described with the term culture industry or mass culture. Film and music, the art forms, have now emerged as the popular mass culture items. Film industry now believes in producing large quantities of films, music and dance as objects of entertainment for the masses. This is the trend of the entertainment business. So, rationality of consuming mass culture derives from the notions of 'free time', 'relaxation' and 'entertainment' in everyday life. Culture industry determines the behaviour of the masses in everyday life. Culture industry has affected the private space and time of masses. These OTT platforms are producing large numbers of web series and mutual competition among platforms further boosts the production and audience is absorbing all products.

Thus, an important point should be noted that consumption trend is 'spending of time' instead of 'investment of time'. The 'free time' may be used for constructive activities. So, mass culture has been pre-occupying this personal space of the masses. Investment of time could have brought some benefits for them. The most affected sphere of the everyday life of the masses is interpersonal relationship within family. In the domain of interpersonal family relations, this consumption trend has affected the relationship between husband and wife the most. Interest and excitement for personal relationship have lost due to engrossing consumption of mass culture. It affects the domestic activities and eventually conflict between husband and wife happens. Most crucial effect of mass culture is the loose of bond between parents and children. Because both parents and children are enjoying with smart phones and mass culture items. Some individuals shared their problem of mental exhaustion due to excessive watching of crime thrillers on Netflix and Amazon

prime video. They also shared that these web series are intoxicating; if you watch one episode, then you become bound to watch whole series.

### **Conclusion**

Creativity in a societal context involves social significance, personal value, and economic value. Various organizations and economic systems can accommodate creativity but at the same time can oppress or alienate it. India's poverty issue can be better understood through the conceptual framework of societal creativity. Poverty though an economic problem, can be eradicated by creativity among the poor. Creativity may result relevant skills for an industry as well as entrepreneurship. Skilling of the poor will result eradication of poverty that will lead to attaining objective social well-being.

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