

Thinking: Can You Change the Way?

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Let us look over the henceforth dividing fences and search for the solutions on either side of the divide. And this we can achieve by being a little taller than the fence.

The times are changing fast. The quantum of information, the distance it can travel, and the number of people to whom it can be sent and in the span of time; all has undergone unparalleled change. But has the man changed? Has his chemistry changed, has he reviewed his collective response towards the mankind, he belongs to? Has he become less evil? Has he become more beneficent, has he learnt to share more? Is there any change in his thinking about his self securities and insecurities? The roots of 'knowing' or cognition traces back to the times of Greek philosophers. Later the mantle was carried by the psychologist. A lot of explanations have been made how man thinks. At least three theories try to explain the process between the stimuli and the response. However, a further elaboration on thinking like concept, image and language could be fairly academic for average reader. To focus the effort on change; let me present a comparison between the conventional thinking and parallel thinking.

Has the Almighty designed us to think conventionally? I believe no. He has created us to think and think deeply.¹ What does He wants us to do here in His universe? I believe He has amply made it clear through His glorious Book. He has created man on His own image²; and the task for which He has created the man is not possible going by any particular

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way. So why get locked in conventions and traditions. Have we been able to accomplish the task? If not then, we got to change the way we were thinking. Thus a change is a must. We must change our historical and traditional ways of thinking. Let us call the existing ways, means, conventions and practices, 'conventional thinking', and the change being offered, 'parallel thinking'. Here is a comparison based on the thinking of Edward de Bono:³

- Conventional thinking is concerned with search and discovery. While parallel thinking will focus on design and creation.
- Traditional and conventional thinking is based on structured thinking leading onto structured decision-making. It wants immediate and ruthless answer in yes or no, right or wrong, here or there, with me or against me. While parallel thinking accepts possibilities without judging them. It understands the positions in between.
- Conventional thinking demands and offer 'rock logic', while parallel thinking uses 'water logic'.
- Traditional thinking uses hard edges, judgment boxes, definitions, categories and fixed sub-types. Parallel thinking use soft edges, overlaps, indicators, marker and spectra.
- Traditional thinking sets up dichotomies and contradictions. Thus forcing a choice. Parallel thinking allows the beauty of embracing both sides of contradiction. It helps to make design to find way forward rather than selecting one out of the existing boxes.

- Traditional and conventional thinking believes that information, data and judgment are enough. Parallel thinking endeavors to deliberate generation of ideas and concepts.
- Conventional and traditional thinking over uses criticism. It is considered that critique and purging the bad will leave behind all good. By removing bad we will attain and gain the objective. Parallel thinking sets out to construct wonderful things. Many examples could be given but for space. However, I can refer to the history of construction of Taj Mahal.
- And at last, conventional thinking uses the design of two opposite stand points i.e. adversarial arguments to explore the subject. It is very much like two opposing lawyers shooting down each others client. Parallel thinking works like a detective. It uses all arguments, all possibilities to move towards the objective.

Can this effort help us think a little different than the way we have been? Can we be more objective and less divisive and less prejudiced about our stand points? Let us look over the henceforth dividing fences and search for the solutions on either side of the divide. And this we can achieve by being a little taller than the fence. It will enable us to view the things farther and wider, deeper and higher; beyond the blocks and out of boxes. Can this effort help us to think in more accommodating manner may be, yes. Can this effort help us to be more flexible and less rigid, may be yes. Can this effort make us ready for the change, may be yes. Can this effort minimize our prejudices and insecurities to a degree, may be yes.

If you say yes to all these yeses, than I will conclude, yes we can grow to be better people, thinking more objectively more purposefully and contributing towards 'Better Pakistan'.

آزادی افکار سے ہے اُن کی تباہی
رکھتے نہیں جو فکر و تدبیر کا سلیقہ
ہو فکر اگر خام تو آزادی افکار
انسان کو حیوان بنانے کا طریقہ!⁴

End Notes:

¹ Quran 45:12-13

² Quran 95:5; Bible 1:27

³ Edward De Bono, *Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step by Step*, Harper, Paperbacks, 1973.

⁴ Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *Kulliat-i-Iqbal* [Urdu], Al Muslim Publishers, 1994.