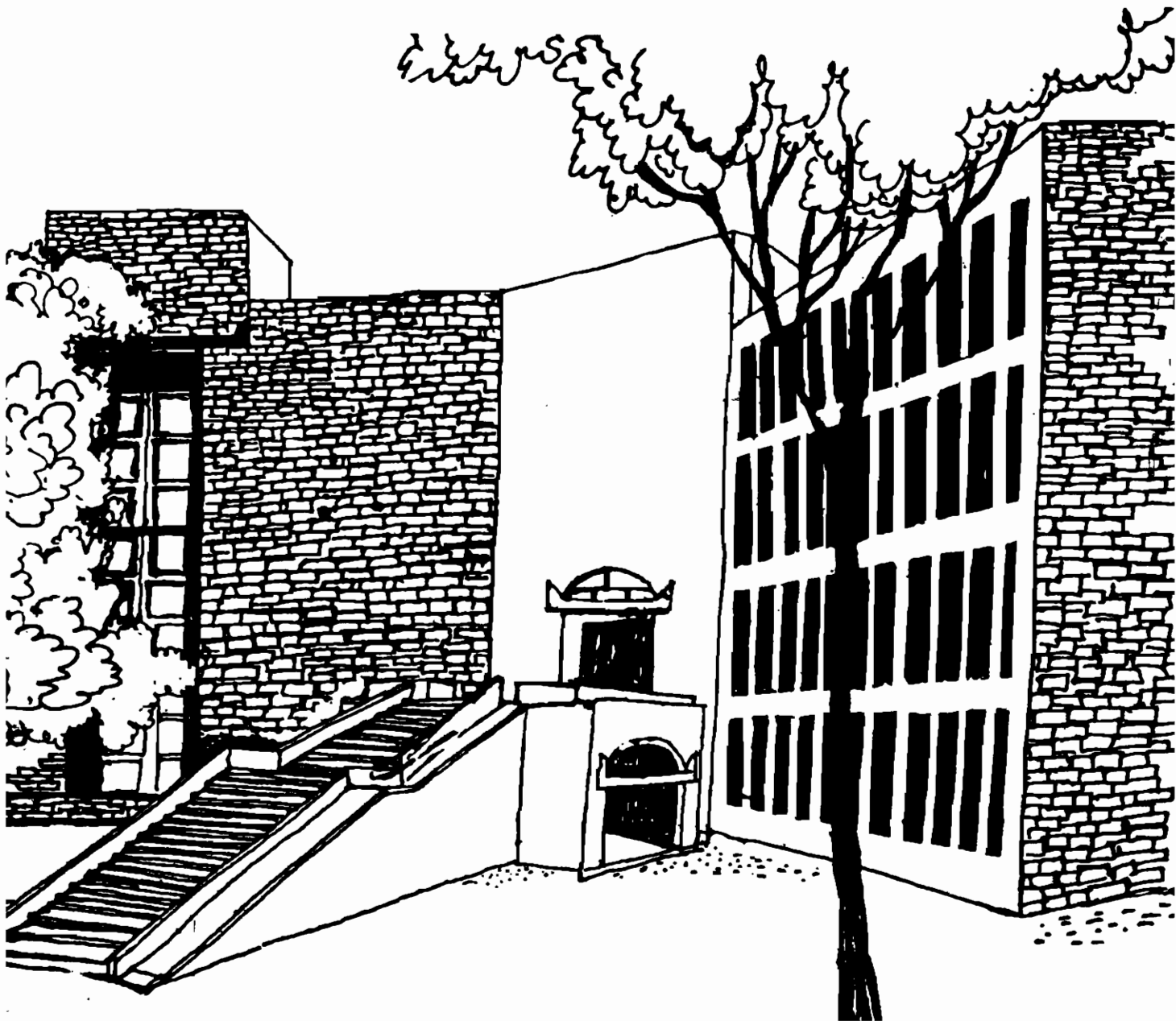




# Working Paper




**ENRICHED INDIVIDUAL AS A  
CENTRE FOR GROWTH**

By

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**Enriched Individual As a Centre for Growth**

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### Abstract

This paper discusses the shifting paradigms of what is considered enrichment of an individual. In the traditional agrarian society enrichment was around relationships and institutions of belonging, age, experience, wisdom and sagacity meant an enriched individual. In to-days industrialised society achievement, success, and wealth connotes enrichment. Put together both the traditional and the industrial context, to-day the individual identity holds a vast canvas of life to locate oneself, has choices from multiplicities, can evolve a perspective for life and living and can design and define membership and roles in multiple institutions. The individual is truly enriched when she/he can give expression to the being in terms of relatedness and to the becoming in terms of achievement, aspirations and success.

The paper then focuses on women as enriched individual as a center for growth. Women enrich themselves through redefining their social roles in the socio-cultural context, achievement and success in educational context and performance and success in the organizational context. Essentially the movement toward a professional orientation anchored in wholesomeness and well-being will shape women where new processes can be initiated for themselves as well as others.

## Enriched Individual as a Centre for Growth

The human identity female or a male struggles to transform itself and the context in many ways. Culture creates a heritage and society designs, traditions and rituals for its membership, collectivity and the system. The human identity journeys to discover the unknown and experience the unfolding of itself. It attempts to answer questions about life and death. It searches for meaning of existence, add value to enrich herself/himself and find fulfillment. This process is unique to human beings. This makes human species distinct from any species on this earth.

An individual's biological and chronological growth follows the rhythm and flow of nature. However, an individual's identity is crystallized through experiences, meaning giving processes and action choices which are unique to the individual as well as to the socio-cultural context of belonging. As such the individual's context of growth which shapes its role and crystallizes its identity becomes a significant variable which influences and impacts the individual. An individual needs to be located in the socio-cultural context in which she/he is born and identifies with, acquires a role, makes action choices and gives meaning for enrichment to life space.

For a long time Indian Society grappled with the transition from an agrarian rural society to an industrial urban society. In this transition industrialization gave birth to formal work organizations. Individuals encounter both the agrarian and indus-

trial context. Birth and early childhood are an encounter with the primary system. While in educational institutions and work settings individuals encounter the secondary systems. The pull and pushes from both these systems create dilemmas for individuals, groups, societies and organizations. Individuals and organizations carry maps, definitions and meanings of their experiences in the primary system constituted by the socio-cultural context and the family. As they grow and enter other systems they evolve the emergent new maps, definitions and meanings of formal work organizations constituted by the environment, work culture and work ethos. [Parikh 1986].

In the primary system enrichment is around relationships, quality of relationships and institutions of belonging in the socio-cultural context. In the traditional agrarian society age, experience and wisdom signified an enriched individual who became the center around which systems and institutions evolved. An individual who inspired and evoked and held together a system became an institution. In the industrialized society of to-day individuals as institutions exist in the context of formal work organizations. Other forms and processes like education, occupation and multi-faceted experiences are also the contributors to the enrichment and as such growth of an individual.

The meaning of enrichment or an enriched individual has undergone significant changes from the traditional agrarian society. The current transformations are quite distinct from the earlier transition of the society from an agrarian base to an

industrial base. The focus on globalization and government policies of liberalization are rooted in the economic and political coordinates of the country. It confronts the individual, collectivity and the society with multiple life styles, definitions, maps and meanings of family as an institution social relationships, role structures and processes, the educational institutions, and work organizations. The dilemma is around the experienced socialization processes, values and code of conduct from ones own culture of birth to choices visualized and aspired for from another socio-cultural context. The assumptions of both these socio-cultural context about institutions, philosophy and values, about living and relationships, and about nature of man, nature of groups and nature of collectivity are distinctive and different.

The traditional Indian society anchored in the agrarian base was governed by the prescriptive code of conduct and duty bound role behaviour. The only autonomy and freedom available was the spiritual pursuit for one's salvation. In this location the dilemma of an individual was around conformity to the designed and prescribed role and the search for the infinity of one's spiritual existence. Between these two universes the individual made an either or choice. There was no other space to experience and experiment, to discover and design, to add and define and to make choices of acceptance, rejection or creation.

To-day the same individual has multiple choices. The individual is confronted with diversity of socio-cultural role models, life styles, code of conduct and meanings to add to ones



growth and enrichment. The individual can choose and give shape to the identity. The choice can be one of many, and follow the path made by other individuals and systems. In this the individual does not create space which is her/his space but is part of other spaces. The role is to accept, adjust, adapt and accommodate. At another level the individual makes a choice of creating a space which she/he can claim and owns the responsibility. The individual is also willing to pay a price for creating a new choice. In this choice she/he creates a context for not only her/his own unfolding but also for others. The individual identifies multiplicities, a vast canvas of life and locates herself or himself, holds a perspective of life and living, and restructures membership and roles in the multiple institutions. The individual designs and defines one's own behavior in a system anchored in excellence and self and systemic discipline. The individual attempts the integration between self, others and the system. The individual is truly enriched when she/he can give expression to the 'being' (self) in terms of relatedness and to the 'becoming' in terms of achievement aspirations and success. This means an individual is open to experience and encounter life in its fullness and accept growth of self and others as an ongoing phenomenon. The very basic values about the concept of life, relationships, and institutions need to acquire newer meaning, personal shaping and a configuration of many elements into a conviction to interface with the world of today and tomorrow.

In the traditional agrarian Indian society there is value given to societal stability, continuity, consistency and permanence. The fear of many is that any change in the socially designed role and behaviour pattern will create disorder and chaos and erode the prescriptive code of conduct laid down by the society. The pull of significant role holders is to perpetuate the stability. Over time this becomes static and stagnant. The society and role holders become frozen in their deeply coded structures and behaviours and become monolithic. Today the society is in continuous flux and transition. It provides an opportunity for the individual and places her/him in a most advantageous, exciting and challenging environment to locate oneself in to define, shape and create a new context, a new role membership and relationships, institutions and a world view to live by. It is a space to restructure ones identity and to be the anchor of one's own existence and enrichment in life.

#### Creating a Context for Growth

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In the process of socialization women and men are provided a context of society, culture and family in which to locate oneself. This context has heritage, traditions, ideals, philosophy, values. It also prescribes what is desirable and undesirable in the location and role taking of the individual. Today the individual encounters and experiences multiple contexts each distinctive in their uniqueness but confusing the individual. The diversity creates logical, rational and emotional contradictions.

Women and men grow up in Indian society to respect age, traditions and relationships. Their encounter and experiences of the diversity in society present models of role behaviour where individual choices, individuality, personal achievement and success, competition and self interests are promoted. The individual is confronted with a choice of 'either or' or this or that and ends up either conforming or rebelling. In today's reality of diverse contexts the individual has to grapple with these multiple constituents and give shape to his personal context. An individual cannot accept compulsion or absolutism of choices and find herself/himself helpless or victim of the context.

Indian society differentiates the location as well as the role of women and men. The cultural lore has men in search for their own identity and discovering the meaning of their existence. The women are in search for a relationship be it a man in marriage, a beloved, or God. Their focus is on finding the right person, the right space and the right moment to their identity. Today's context carries the continuity of socio-cultural code of conduct but also provides space and opportunity for both women and men to make new responses to the environment, institutions, roles and relationships.

In the gender based issues women need not accept the traditional ideals of sacrificing, surrendering, acquiescing role of Indian womanhood, nor the western models of womanhood. Similarly, it is not necessary for men to conform to and surrender to the duty bound role obligations of a son's role by denying them-

selves and their aspirations. The men in the Indian society are caught in the role models of epics and myths idealizing and glorifying the son's sacrifice and surrender of his life to the expectations and duty of the system or to the parents. The only options left for men in such a context was to conform, rebel or exile himself from the system. Redefining and redesigning the role or restructuring the system was not possible. Today's environment puts before an Indian male alternative western models of individualism, freedom and independence. It puts men into dilemmas of obligation-duty and role performance and choices for the self. It is a dilemma between emotional, logical, rational choices. It freezes the men from designing new responses. Exilehood seems to be the most often choice.

Both woman and men will need to explore the experiential meanings of the socio-cultural context and articulate the new meanings and definitions of the context. It is these new meanings which will create a new location for women and men which will free them from the bondages and baggages of the past and accept their value and legitimacy to include themselves in the choice. This will create space for both to grow and add to the context the realities of to-day. In operational terms it would mean that the birth of a child - be it female or male - is an event of celebration, heralding new life and harbinger of joy. The social structure and role processes context do not add positive, or negative value to either, but acknowledges the uniqueness of existence to each life. This process then takes away the biting corrosive edge of discrimination and denials between a female and

a male. This then creates a context for enriching experiences of life, people and settings. With the creation of this acceptance at birth of a female or a male child in the institution of family, its continuity is carried over to educational institutions, and work organizations and society.

#### Educational institution as context of learning and enrichment.

In the post independence era education has brought wings of freedom for both men and women but more so for women. In the initial phases education was categorized for men and women. As the time passed the barriers of knowledge in educational institutions between women and men dissolved. Research studies focussed on what is genetically, socially and psychologically the domain of women and men. Of course the focus of research was also determined by social codification of hierarchy between women and men and as such the legitimacy, sanction and accessibility of knowledge to women and men. In the educational institutions of to-day and tomorrow these obsolete codification would dissolve given the evidence that women like men and both women and men have equal potentialities to absorb, learn and integrate knowledge.

This acceptance will create centers for learning where women and men will have access to the multiplicity of disciplines, choices arising out of inner directedness and a context for enrichment. This will remove the inhibiting and limiting intellectual propriety based on gender, class, caste or colour. Knowledge as a resource would be available to both women and men

to achieve and accomplish as well as to get in touch with self, others and the human history and its unfolding. The individuals would discover the infiniteness of their potentials and translate it into investment in self, others and the system.

Educational institutions will become centers of learning rather than stepping stones to occupation and careers. New knowledge and relevant knowledge will be generated integrating the human context with technology in the social, psychological, philosophical and cultural context of the nation.

#### Work organizations as a context for growth

Educational institutions are interface institutions between family and occupation. In the traditional agrarian society occupation was determined by birth in a family and community in the designed social structure, order and caste. Industrialization, innovations in technology and emergence of new occupations have opened up new frontiers of occupations which go beyond gender, caste, class and colour. Education has become linked to occupation, and freedom of choices. Formal work organizations and technology have led to designing of organization structures, roles and processes. As education became available increasingly large number of women and men entered the formal world of work. Women's entry confronted the individual—both women and men—organization and the society with a phenomenon that did not exist before. Achievement, success, career paths, corporate ladder mobility and professionalism became a legitimate and acceptable paths for women.

Let us now focus on the entry of women in management and formal work organizations. In this path of occupation emerging out of education three distinct phases have evolved. Women entered formal work organizations about a decade later than men. For many job was an economic necessity. The women performed jobs often far below their competencies and skills or carried greater responsibilities than their designation and status. For almost a decade and a half many women worked with a job orientation linked to economic resource generation. Entry into jobs based the harshness of women's social environment, created a role for their own enrichment, a space to bring their skills and an additional meaning to their lives. The social system was demanding from the women that besides their work role they continue to be ideal daughters, daughters-in-law, wives and mothers. The women themselves were willing to accept the burden of both the systems as they found the work space an opportunity and a space for their own growth and unfolding of their capabilities and potentials.

The second landmark was when women educated and equipped with knowledge, skills, tools and techniques aspired for on their career growth. Generation of economic resource was a factor but the most significant aspect was independence, autonomy, career growth in the organization, achievement and success. They were in search for organization responsibility, role authority and task accountability. It was an effort to go beyond the centuries old limited and prescriptive assumptions about women's role, space and membership. Many of the social stereotyped myths were

shattered and women performed organizational tasks and found enrichment of their lives. Some women paid a social price, some psychological and some in terms of family and relationships. However, the personal breakthroughs across organization hierarchies and creating new role spaces and context seemed worth the price they had paid.

There were many other women who moved beyond the career orientation to a professional orientation. This meant that women took one more step to accept their work role and membership as integral part of organization structures, systems, tasks, policies and strategies. They accepted their leadership capabilities to bring resources, vision and a work perspective with multiple roles in multiple systems. They empowered themselves to breakthrough the barriers of social and organizational hierarchies. It was a process of social, educational, emotional and professional maturity. This contributed to women integrating themselves in the system. They made departures from their past coded roles and gave meanings to their new experiences.

All these movements from job, to career and to professional orientation in formal work organization settings added substantiveness, self worth and value. And with this the women initiated processes of investment and replenishment to the systems of they were a part of and legitimacy of belonging through their active membership and role taking.

The role demands and behaviour from individuals both women and men to respond to emergent socio-cultural, environmental and



organizational context had no role models before. The once eulogized and ideal role models from epics, myths, folklore, folktales and history began to be questioned. They were not adequate or sufficient for the times or the situation. These role models created ambivalences as experiences of life, opportunities of education and work all led to a role and task orientation which demanded new responses. The idealized role responses only chained and shackled women to be limiting and binding them with a set of stereotyped response. The struggle of women to let go of their captivity and find integration within the social, familial and organization context was filled with doubts, dilemmas and guilt. Yet the pull of the existence of life and living, of their own infinity and their own destiny provided strength and courage for women to crystallize relevant and meaningful roles for themselves. They found freedom to visualize and articulate their new role in the societal, familial and organizational context. They also found freedom to own up the expression of their choices in their social, psychological and emotional world.

Many women have moved away from their victimhood martyrdom and a secondary marginalised existence. They have come to accept their location in the living space to be, relationships to invest in, organization structures and systems to be partners with and to actively give shape to culture society, family and organizations relevant for the times.

The enriched individual then creates a context where others find freedom and invitation and a freedom to join. The enriched individual creates open systems which is simultaneously stable as well as dynamic.

For a new human context to emerge all institutions need to review their assumptions and codifications about individuals, roles and their relationships in the socio-cultural context of the past, present and future. Assumptions derived from agrarian societies, social structures, role differentiation and marginalisation based on gender, caste, colour and religion need to be reexamined in to-day's human realities. The institution of tomorrow will have to temper absoluteness of traditions with freedom of choices anchored in personal values to make it harmonious. Today's social environment represents multi-cultures each unique with its own assumptions. However, there is a fabric woven together of human existence cohered in the universes of solar systems and nature with shared elements of earth, water, fire air and space. It is this shared heritage of human beings that can create cultures, traditions, institutions and individuals for wholesomeness of being and destinations for becoming.

It is in the enrichment of the individual that women and men find frugtification. It is then they create a world which gives birth to a new order. Women and men grow into different kinds of daughters and sons, wives and husbands and mothers and fathers. They grow into emotionally mature women and men creating spaces

for each to unfold and between them create a rhythm. It is this enrichment where institutions are born, sustained and fostered, where relationships are anchored in faith, trust and openness and where structures and systems create inter-dependencies. An enriched individual evokes in self, others and systems an acceptance and a relatedness which is held in dignity.

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