

A Reflection on Expression

by John Mathai

I recently came across the following quotation by Einstein:

"The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. Whoever does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed." From Albert Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions* (1954).

It inspired me, and reminded me of something so easy to forget these days:

If we but create the space within ourselves, the mysterious can be experienced in each and every one of us. We cannot use our minds to analyse it, we cannot explain it. We can only intuit it, and touch it, deep within ourselves. And then, if we have an appropriate language, we can express it. Through poetry, music, painting, movement - these are but forms to give expression. These are the bridges through which we can draw others to feel, and share our own experience of the mysterious.

Whenever we see, hear or feel something that captivates us, and fills us with wonder, we can be sure that it was created by somebody who reached into the mysterious within himself or herself, and had a means to express it. This wonder can only come from the heart, never the mind.

We, in our times, often search for answers with our minds. But our minds can only analyse, and reach conclusions, based on what the mind sees, which is such a tiny, tiny fraction of the whole that we are living in. It can never touch the mysterious.

Just look towards nature. It expresses itself through a thousand colours, textures, and temperaments – from peaceful meadows to great storms. We are all, in more than a poetic sense, nature's children !

The world we live in, if we but pause to reflect, is so abundantly full of the mysterious. The mysterious is what the mind cannot describe. It was there before us and it will be there after us. It's all around us. We are a part of it. It is our primary life giving force. It is what can expand our perception in giant leaps.

And how can we find time to pause, so that we may discover, and wonder at the mysterious ? We need not search far, for it is so much within us. We just need to let our minds go quiet for a few moments. Letting our perceptions and judgements rest awhile.

When the artist reaches out to encompass the music, his mind goes still for a moment, as he allows his energy to flow along with the vibrations of the music. And then, the mysterious happens. He connects with his wholeness - to the spirit of the composer, the spirit of the moment, or some unknown depth within himself. And then, there is a happening. One hears a unique expression of the music. His spirit is playing the music, while his mind is at rest. The next day he plays the same piece, the expression is different. For, the true artist that he is, he can only reach into and express what he finds inside himself.

But, so often, our minds cannot let go of their hold, and we are caught up in different beliefs, and needs...of being good, of succeeding, of not failing, of getting recognition...

Yes, we could play the violin or the piano well, and with good technique. But the wonder and mystery could well be missing.

The technique is surely necessary, as a tool to express. And the mind is required to master the techniques. This is the foundation. The flowering happens only when the mind learns to let go, allowing the artist and the human being to surface.

We have an 8 year-old at home, who has the violin for an instrument. He needs continuous discipline to learn techniques; and we parents need to exercise continuous discipline to shield him from the pressures of having to be something or the other, or meeting the requirements of somebody else. So that he can, open the inner space to touch the feelings of the composer, and travel with the sounds of his instrument - to reach within himself, and taste the life essences living there.

A true artist will always have integrity. And in this context, I will call integrity the inward quest to open space - to touch the mysterious within one, and to express what one finds there. The results will vary. There might not always be an audience. There might not always be fame. But one would surely have lived intense moments. And somehow, touched the wonder of life.

LET SOUND TRAVEL,
UNIMPEDED,
TO YOUR INNERMOST PLACES,

AND WAIT,
IN SILENCE,
TO HEAR ITS ECHO.

(John Mathai)