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Art can create a new gene

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Even ten years ago it was difficult to get a new piano in India. Now multiple stores are selling all kinds of Western musical instruments. A music store will show you a high priced Yamaha piano made in Japan, and the same brand made in Korea with a price advantage. It's for the customer to decide the quality difference. India's economic reforms have addressed both the means and materials of creative arts: instruments, equipment, paints, brushes are imported from all over the world to indulge the artistic inclinations of the neo-rich.

Parents nowadays drive helter-skelter—taking their children for extra-curricular activities—be it ballet, karate, terracotta sculpting or micro-light aircraft flying. It's often their big show-off factor. They'd rather not inflict children to what they went through in childhood, the traditional guruji coming home to teach classical music to girls, while boys scampered off with neighbourhood kids to play cricket. These same neo-middle class parents cajole their children to study, study and study. They drive them for post-school coaching in at least two subjects. Parents, mostly the mother, study just as hard vicariously, burning the midnight oil to supply hot, strengthening badam milk to the child in the wee hours. After all, unless

children get 90-95 per cent marks by hook or crook, they won't be eligible for elite colleges these parents coveted but could not enter. Earlier, everyone vied for a government job; that's now shifted to post graduation in foreign universities. After such an exhausting effort, if the child joins a multinational company, the parents beam in achievement, anticipating a good marriage and big earnings. But, when within a year the child is ready to quit work, there's utter bewilderment.

'But.why?'

'The office job is too boring. I want a creative arts career.'

I've received SOS messages from several friends who've reached this devastated state. They ask: 'Please help! What's a career in visual arts? Does photography pay? What's a musician's earning? TV set design, is that a profession?' and so on. They know they can't control their children the way their parents restricted and indoctrinated them during the Licence Raj. My friends plead with me to advise their children to retain the superior job their higher education got them, and pursue artistic work only as an after-hours hobby. Now that's a tall order. They're my friends, but I understand their Zap generation children better. These under-25-ers belong to India's new digi-tech era, they've never experienced skimping, they operate in a cyber world where at the click of a mouse they get what they want. Right now, while deciding to take a creative arts option as mainstream, they often get restless because the Internet's inhuman virtual guidance can get

frustrating in providing the next step. When revealing this new interest to parents, they draw a blank, not of incomprehension alone, but of utter helplessness, as it's never occurred to parents to consider art as a bona fide career-building option.

Art has never been a mainstream focus in our country, either for masterminding knowledge or even in living style. India's beautiful artistic style of past centuries is neglected as ancient traditional art. There's been no disruptive art movement here as in Europe that triggered people to ideate differently from the history of classism. In the 20th century, British influence started some Western art painting with sudden spurts of copying Cubism, Surrealism, Impressionism, without focus of purpose or how it translates into India's culture. In contemporary times, there's been no transcending the Indian art movement that has swayed the imagination of society.

So my young friends of the Zap generation, if you want to be a painter, writer, photographer, inventor, industrial designer, fashion designer, creative director of advertising or a TV channel's set designer, you need to know of the struggles and evolution of painting, music, photography, theatre, cinema and architecture that the creators of new art movements in Western Europe went through. They have presented us with a bouquet of creative ideas that have carved the route of human advancement, always as shock-of-the-new. My proposition is not to say that Europe is the only example of art, but here they masterminded art to drive society with a creativity grid in every area. People continuously challenged the benchmark in every domain through art. They won control over nature through creative inventions, art has directed living trends, and creative superiority was established as the reference point of surpassmark that has influenced industries too.

Before the 17th century, Christianity did not allow liberty of art, literature, science or invention. The line of control was imagining God, never beyond. But in the last three centuries, the West has seen incredible artistic upheavals after the Church unfroze freedom of expression. Art has existed through cave paintings, almost 40,800 years ago, even before written language was born. Visual art has colour, symbolic expression, signs of communication and the force of human society. Today, no creative format can ideate without encountering the genesis and revolution of art in multiple media.

Whatever creative direction you want to specialise in, remember that hot bath of art you need to dive into. The only difference in pursuing art as a profession is that you cannot predict your income. If you stretch your creativity to extremes, money will automatically come your way. You have to simultaneously develop your commercial mind. While you architect your artistic ideation to create new distinction, you have to value your commercial compensation. Let's hope India's young generation can express a different creative tune to start a movement to establish creative art as a real vocation for certain kinds of people. Enjoy the creative art profession, teach people to appreciate art, and get it recognised as a profession in India. Being artistically imaginative in business or in social life will enormously contribute to our future. Let me continue this subject of art movements in Western society next week.

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