

The Aesthetics of Development

John Clammer · Ananta Kumar Giri
Editors

The Aesthetics of Development

Art, Culture and Social Transformation

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For Jyoti and Jane Sabi

PREFACE

The discourse and practice of development are at a cross-road now, and we need transformative visions and creative practices of development which help us realize integral development—material as well as spiritual, inner as well as outer. Art and spirituality play an important role in this much needed deepening and broadening of the meaning and practice of development. Our book explores these new visions and practices and cultivates pathways of aesthetics of development. Aesthetics of development is not narrow; it includes ethics and spirituality and thus creatively relates to and transforms the existing discourse of ethics of development by bringing ethics, aesthetics, self-cultivation and responsibility together. Aesthetics of development here is different from what (Harvey 1989) calls an “aesthetics of empowerment” where we use both aesthetics and power to dominate and annihilate others as it happened during Nazi Germany where the transformative Bauhaus art movement, among others, was crushed and as it continues to happen in many societies, cultures and polities around the world. Art and aesthetics have been and continue to be used to fuel hatred, bigotry and violence but in this book, we explore the way art can and does play a transformative role in human development as it presents us new visions and imaginations of alternative possibilities and as it challenges us to go beyond our fixed boundaries and discover and weave artistically our threads of connections with others in a spirit of aesthetic communication, solidarity and transcendence.

The book grows out of decade-long conversations between two of us and our larger circle of co-seekers which resulted in a session on the theme we had co-organized at the International Union of Anthropology and Ethnology Meeting at Manchester in August 2013. Some of the papers in our volume emerge out of this and we have also invited many other fellow travelers to join us. With this, we hope our book has become a richer gift to our world of knowledge and humanity.

We dedicate this book to Jyoti and Jane Sahi who bring art, spirituality, education, social concerns and human development in inspiring ways. Jyoti has nurtured Art Ashram in Bangalore along with Jane, his wife, where Jane had run an alternative school for the children of surrounding villages. In her work, Jane brings art, philosophy and education together building on Rudolf Steiner and Martin Buber as Jyoti's art works dance artistically across traditions such as Hindu and Christian icons and spirituality. Art Ashram is a place of inspiration for many of us. In dedicating this book to Jyoti and Jane, we not only pay our individual tributes to them but what we collectively owe to them and how the field of aesthetics of development can learn by walking and meditating with arts, engagement and lives of seekers such as Jyoti and Jane Shahi.

In bringing this book to light, we have incurred many debts. We are grateful to our fellow contributors for their enriching contribution and patience. We are grateful to friends at Palgrave Macmillan especially Sarah Crowley and Connie Li for their kindness and the anonymous reviewer for his or her helpful comments. We are also grateful to two Institutions—Madras Institute of Development Studies and United Nations University—for their support.

Finally, we hope this book helps us in cultivating new paths of art, development, spirituality, freedom and responsibility in these difficult times.

Sonipat, India
Chennai, India
August 15, 2016
Independence Day of India

John Clammer
Ananta Kumar Giri

REFERENCE

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