Life of contradiction



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HUMAN life is full of contradictions. Being human per se appears to be contradictory. We are human beings without all human qualities. Our behaviours are often inhuman, akin to that of animals. We attack and kill others, become jealous and greedy, serve self-interest and satisfaction, which contradicts our status as the supreme creation. We are still far from being totally rational and worthy of 'human'.

Our acts often do not conform to what we believe. One may proclaim oneself to be very honest but may not hesitate to indulge in bribery in the very first opportunity. One may pledge to protect the life of citizens but kill them instead. Ministers, MPs and high-ups of law enforcing agencies are often found to do so in our country. That is why the Bangla proverb: "Rakkhak-i Bhakkhak" (The protector is the thief). The role of protector contradicts with that of thief.

Most contradictions in life arise unconsciously and hence remain unnoticed by the contradictors until pointed out by somebody else. One may not believe in ghosts but fear to go out in darkness. I know some politicians who struggled hard for establishing the rights of the working class, but when they became industrialists themselves, unexpectedly, they left no stones unturned to exploit labour. The eastern people rebuke the western culture after being educated in the west, learning to eat, wear and talk in western fashion. You must find many people who hate the United States like hell; but once offered visa to that country, they will grab it without any second thought. Some people will castigate India but will not object to relishing the meat of Indian cattle. These are all contradictions, you see!

We often create contradiction in terms. We can say 'round square' or 'square circle', causing contradiction. We cannot say without contradiction 'The sun is a moon' or 'The moon is a sun'. Contradiction will occur when we say: 'My brother is female' or 'My sister is male', or when we say: 'The bachelor is the father of five sons.' This kind of contradiction arises from the violation of semantic rules associated with the words.

Professor Noam Chomsky has probably produced the best instance of linguistic contradiction. He made a sentence: 'Colourless green ideas sleep furiously.' First of all, ideas cannot be colourless or green. Secondly, what is colourless cannot be green and vice versa. Thirdly, ideas cannot have the animate property of sleeping. And fourthly, sleeping cannot be said to be furious. Remember the popular contradictory Bangla jest'Ghorai charia mardo hatia chalilo' (The man went on walking riding on a horse). Such contradictions are often great source of fun!

Contradictions are employed in ordinary everyday language as well as in literature. The figure of speech we call 'irony' comes from contradiction. An oddly dressed person can be ironically mentioned as 'looking excellent'. While talking non-sense, one can be described as 'speaking eloquently'. A student may score poorly in exam and yet his/her parents may exclaim, 'Great result!' Contradictions are often closely associated with culture. The traditional Bengali folks will never utter, 'Jai' ('go' in first person present indefinite) but 'Ashi' ('come' in first person present indefinite) when they are departing from house or family. Some English people would say 'Break a leg' while wishing you good luck!

People often pretend to be purely 'uncontradictory', because they believe contradictory things are untrue and hence contemptible. But in fact they (including me, obviously) are seldom uncontradictory. On one occasion some writers accused me of using technical words in my writing in a popular journal. After a few days I found, to my utter surprise, they themselves resorted to technical terms in their writing which was hurled at me. What a glaring contradiction!

I often wonder whether there can be a life without any contradiction at all. Earlier I used to consider myself to be an 'uncontradictory' man, governed by the pure logic, all consistent and impeccable. Only after marriage I realised, no, I am also not a man of 'uncontradiction'. My better half alleged that I was not as feminist in my action as I am in attitude. I analysed myself and found the allegation trueI discovered the contradiction in me. Contradictions remain in veil and can hardly be self-detected so that most people cannot figure it out in themselves. I am always in search of a pure uncontradictory man, but I have been disappointed all through. If you are so, please inform me.

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