

Article

Face the Face beneath the Face: A Journey into the Creative and Expressive Art Therapy

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ABSTRACT

Emotions, being the principal motivators of behavior and learning from the very infancy, play a vital role in a child's development; in expressing and understanding themselves. Children's emotional development has held a strong fascination and has always become a subject of research, conversation, observation, formal as well as informal study since long. Emotional socialization & conducive environment assists children in learning desirable ways of expressing feelings and developing healthy patterns of understanding and regulating emotions. Conversely, if the childhood ambience ignores emotions or creates emotionally detached or harsh relationships, it can adversely affect children's growth and can harm their cognitive competence as well. EQ is more important than IQ.

Keywords: *face, beneath, creative, expressive, art therapy.*

Emotions naturally flow in our body, thus the expression of same too, is a natural phenomena and human necessity, for good or for worse. The very first emotion of the newly born child is expressed through crying and if the baby does not cry, it becomes a serious matter of concern. This highlights the fact that crying is one of the biological necessities and is spontaneous as well.

The incidence(s) that hurt an individual or influence him emotionally; if not released, keep popping up in his daily chores through his thoughts, situations and it becomes difficult for him to bandage them. The wounds do not heal, rather bleed through the layers of bandages and then slowly start creating the pressure in the system to reflect through different bodily ailments.

As one grows becomes conscious of the surroundings and self image, he gradually unlearns his natural expression and learns to suppress crying thus burying many emotions under the masked face. Children are taught to display only socially accepted emotions and behavior,

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thus suppressing the 'so called' not desirable emotional reactions *viz anger, fear, hatred, jealousy* and alike. Suppressed emotions have negative impact on individuals and societies at large.

"Accumulated massive amounts of repressed emotion, bodily tensions are always present but usually not recognized by us"

Suppression and Repression both emotions are forms of defense mechanisms, which people use to cope with a stimulus that they think can harm them. The only difference is, in suppression the subject is in the conscious awareness of the present situation for e.g a student feels angry when he alone gets scolded from the teacher for the prank played by the group. He then decides to confront his group mates later for not supporting him or keeping quiet. Here the subject buys time and controls his action. To some extent this response can prove helpful, however, if later on he doesn't speak up his emotions and put them under the carpet, they dwell into other areas of his life where he feels he alone is taking the brunt of the group's doing. He may develop distorted beliefs about his relationships while being unaware of the origin of his feelings.

In repression, the subject unconsciously forgets or blocks some harsh memories, unpleasant thoughts, uncomfortable feelings and impulses. An individual might use repression to become unconscious about traumatic memories of the past. The repressed emotion & thoughts, nevertheless interfere in the present life in various forms without his conscious awareness. However, it should be noted here that these memories don't just disappear; they manifest through a situation, pattern, symptom, or series of each and may continue to influence the behavior of an individual. For e.g an adult, having no memories of childhood abuse or another person who has experienced being drowned and suffocated in childhood. In the first instance, the person may find difficulty in forming loveable relationship with another, especially when there is touch involved. While in the second one he may fear from water or any place nearby water. Sometimes the fear of water could be as intense that he could feel fearful of bathing in water. In a similar vein, Barry (2002) suggests how Freud elaborates upon the unconscious aspect of human psyche as he says, "All of Freud's work depends upon the notion of the *unconscious*, which is the part of the mind beyond consciousness which nevertheless has a strong influence upon the actions" (96).

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) "Creator of Psychoanalysis", was also known for his popular theory of Freudian slip; the technical term for a Freudian slip is para-praxis. Para-praxis occurs when someone says something else than what they actually meant to say while speaking. According to psychiatrist Sigmund Freud, the slip is interpreted as the emergence of the contents of the unconscious mind. He further argued that the unconscious mind is hidden by a variety of mechanisms of repression. Sometimes in speech, inattention, distraction, or strong emotions can help the contents of the unconscious mind come out. My understanding is that these contents, in fact are causing internal suffocation and one's unconscious from time to time flushes them out through expressions of anger, blame, hurt, disrespect etc to allow itself to stay in a harmonious balance.

One such way that one's sub-conscious reveals it's stuck-up energy is Catharsis.

CATHARSIS

Catharsis, the word is derived from the Greek word that refers to 'cleansing' or 'purification'. There are two essential components of catharsis:

1. The emotional aspect (strong emotional expression and processing)
2. The cognitive aspect (insight, new realization, and the unconscious becoming consciousness) as a result – a positive change.

Catharsis has been known and recognized as a very powerful and effective tool for cleansing, transforming and healing experience in history. It has been used in psychology, medicine, literature, drama, cultural healing practices and religion. The basic essence of catharsis remains the same; release of emotional, physical or mental burden followed by healing process for cleansing and removing the stuck old belief from its roots. Few contemporary modalities practice catharsis as their core technique to get the desired therapeutic result. To name few such modalities; Psychodrama, Emotion - Focused therapy & Primal therapy.

Aristotle, a Greek philosopher and thinker (384 BCE)

Aristotle in *Poetics* hinges upon catharsis as "purging of the spirit of morbid and base ideas or emotions by witnessing the playing out of such emotions or ideas on stage".

Through drama, the audience experience emotional release and cleansing during and after watching a tragedy and hence it must show a corrective and healing effect. He also gave importance to the cathartic influence of music on people.

Release through catharsis gives balance to one's emotions and enhances the understanding of his distorted beliefs.

Catharsis in religion and cultural rituals

The idea of catharsis in any form is similar to that in literature. It means 'purging', 'purification', although in a medical sense this implies a physical release, for example, expectoration of the sputa implies healing of cold. It was not until Hippocrates, who associated catharsis with healing, because it's role of a "purification agent" affecting the course of disease (both physical and mental). Menstruation, diarrhea, and vomiting were also regarded as cathartic processes (Scheff, 2001). The spiritual meaning of catharsis is very much the same: discharging everything harmful from one's mind and heart, so that one can become pure. However, to move towards purity, one must accept what one thinks is impure lying within.

Catharsis through audio visual

Metaphors through audio visual help to invoke strong emotional expressions in the audience. The effect of surprise and unexpectedness could be used as the key factor that leads to catharsis. For example, in the Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, catharsis occurs at the end when King Oedipus, driven by the guilt of impermissibility of incest and the emptiness caused by the loss of his beloved mother, blinds himself.

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This indicates that humans relate to and enjoy activities that help them to symbolically re-live their own painful emotional experiences, and therefore achieve relief or resolution. For example, crying about the sexual abuse shown in the play is nothing more than reawakening feelings of shame, helplessness, loss in the spectators' lives and reliving unfinished personal experiences. Scheff (2001) emphasized the fact that literature and theater provide safe 'distancing' from peoples' own experience. When personal distress is reawakened in a socially appropriate environment, such as theater, emotional experiences are not too overwhelming, because people are under the impression that they cry about the play character, but not about themselves.

Here we should also notice that catharsis doesn't happen to audience only, its essence oozes out through the characters the actors are playing and they themselves with the writer, producer and director, each one evolves and grows through it.

Many theories, psychiatrics and psychologist have spoken about, CAT (Creative Act Therapy) & EAT (Expressive Art Therapy) to be of great help to take the individual deeper and connect to his deeper emotions; those that have not been addressed for decades. So, both the therapies combined together can be used as PAT (Performance Act Therapy).

ART THERAPY

The Art Of Getting Better

Art Therapy that may involve a Stage Play, a Movie or Musical theatre performance, is a wonderful way to help audience release their emotions through them getting deeper understanding of their own stuff. Art therapy also helps the spectators to sometimes recall, reveal to self, accept and release unaddressed or ruled out thoughts, actions and repressed emotions.

Freud and Breuer supported the fact and importance of Spiritual and Cultural rituals known throughout the history to help people process collective stress situations, such as death or separation. Traditional societies have ceremonies of mourning, funeral rites, and curing rituals, which most often include cathartic activities, such as crying, weeping, drumming, or ecstatic dance.

Then and now

Curiosity to know more about psychology as a subject of research goes approx 3,000 years back in Asian philosophies. Ancient Indian Vedic literature coming from 750 BC dominates the teaching of Gautam Buddha. His teachings gradually reached to the Asian countries like China and Japan.

We will discuss four major pillars in Indian Psychology and philosophy that holds the basics of therapeutic techniques derived mainly from Hindu and Buddhist teachings.

1. **DHARMA: Dharma is a natural instinct in all beings that stimulates us to act at a subconscious level, without thinking.** It refers to basic rules of appropriate behavior and describes goodness in a given role.

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2. **KARMA**: Based on “**Cause and Effect**” that every action has an equal and opposite reaction, however, **INTENTION** here is a very important factor. Karma can be understood as the appearing of a situation, person or experience in this moment, which is stemming from past negative beliefs. The intention is to throw out or release such baggage to aid one’s present and maybe future.

For eg if you drop a pebble in a vessel of water, the water will ripple out and then will return to its center after it has reached and rebounded against the extremities of the container. The return or effects might be very quick, or it might take a long time. Therefore, **effects** can happen even after years or decades after its **cause**.

3. **MAYA**: “The illusion”, refers to the distorted perception formed of reality and the experience (*of a particular situation*).

4. **AATMAN**: Refers to the concept of Universality, where self is seen not just as an individual but as the part of whole cosmos. Every being is a part of the Creator or we may put it as if, there is the Creator in every being. That way we all are the Creator Self, part of the Universe, Universal Wisdom and part of other’s past and future too.

My Profession and its reflection through ART THERAPY

Inspired by my few true case studies I decided to bring them into light with the use of Art Therapy, to help the issues reach out to maximum and give spectators food for thought. My first work was inspired by true case studies of SS (explained below). In my second work I used the therapy of Defence Mechanisim, of Anna Freud.

SERENITY SURRENDER THERAPY (SS) (2010)

Have you come across a time when your Conscious mind succumbs to the situation?

A time when the magnitude of reality is beyond your understanding?

These are the times when nothing else but your sub-consciousness is at work. In understanding the sub-conscious and its composition, the sub-consciousness can be seen as a part of consciousness which is not in focal awareness. Beneath the layers of consciousness exists a layer of awareness called the subconscious. The subconscious layer of awareness consists of the beliefs and ideologies which the conscious mind is not aware of.

Serenity Surrender or SS, is a modality which reveals a beautiful and simple way to understand how to live a life of awareness and feel empowered in each moment. This modality helps us to see our life, situations, relationships and many other concerns from a different and higher perspective.

For example, our conscious mind can carry unresolved issues, experiences that took place may be three to four decades back, but they still bring tears and pain whenever we think or talk of them. In a similar manner, our subconscious can travel thousand years back or more and may also carry unexpressed emotions and unresolved memories from there which get hooked for further lessons to be learnt in the present. It’s like we have been leaving breadcrumbs in time, so as to be able to return to unresolved emotions & memories as we grow wiser.

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The path that was travelled in the past sometimes carries the impression of its footprints hindering the journey of the present and thus the future. SS is a tool that empowers us to know and understand what is being held on to at the subconscious level. Releasing such past helps one heal from their unseen wounds and there is an increasing experience of wholeness & completion. Letting go of what has served one in reaching here surely creates space for new experience & learning in this moment.

Being a Serenity Surrender Therapist and Faculty of the basic workshop & NLP certified Practitioner; I decided to use the Art Therapy to enact a few of my case studies of SS. The main aim was to address the social issues prevalent in society till date, which we do not talk about openly or shy away from rather than resolving the problem. Sadly, consulting a psychologist or a therapist is still a taboo for most clients and their families.

In two of my latest work based on ART THERAPY, I intended to bring awareness to & provide valuable insight into solutions towards growing social issues like,

- *Body Shaming*
- *Child Abuse*
- *Sibling Competition*
- *Parent-Child communication gap*
- *PCOS disorder*
- *Need of acceptance from peers*
- *Bullying*
- *Lack of Expression*
- *Fear of Authority*

Both my works reflect the power of ART THERAPY, were well appreciated and accepted by the audience and helped them to relate to their issues, life journey and thus released them of their stuck emotions, gave them the realization, deeper understanding of their stuff and a pathway to how to release themselves from it. The feedback from my audience has been extremely encouraging. The engagement & interest of visionary educational institutions in the effectiveness of the process has compelled me to believe that this is a revolutionary way to change people's perspectives towards themselves & others and help build a more loving relationship with self & others, especially teenage children & above.

1. **Inhershoes; A journey within...**

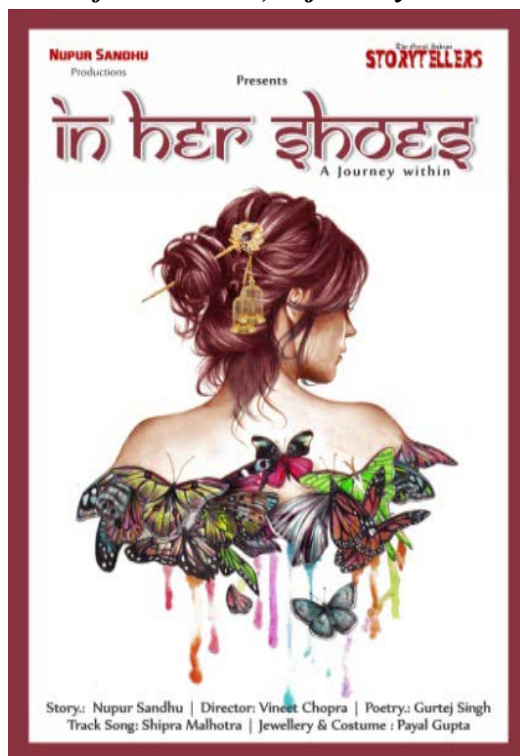
<https://facebook.com/Inhershoes-1978610985720060/>

Is a stage play of one hour 10 minutes that was staged in 6 different states of India, viz Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and Haryana Including KalaGhoda Art Festival, Mumbai in February 2018 and the team was invited by the NPSC "National Progressive School Conference" monthly meet to stage it for 60 heads of the educational institutions of NCR. With every show, I grew as a writer and associate director and the shows helped me in my own catharsis too. ART THERAPY has helped to address

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both suppressed and repressed emotions of the protagonist and of the spectators too. The show was well accepted and appreciated and on demand it will be staged 11th time on 13th October 2018 in Gurgaon, India.

Fig 2. Pictorial Representation of *Inher shoes; A journey within...*



SYNOPSIS

Inher shoes; A journey within... is a stage play reflecting our inner deep rooted conflicts, that we don't address and keep putting those troubling emotions under different carpets. The Protagonist of the play is a girl in her late 20's from an affluent family, dealing with her fears related to body image and rejection. Her blame on others for her own situations further pulls her into the cocoon of self pity. The story shows how meeting a Therapist helps her sail through the demons of repressed emotions of being physically abused by a teacher in her early teens. Not being beautiful in comparison with her sister was a result of her past memory that she was not aware of.

The story of the play is inspired by the true case studies and written and produced by me (Nupur Sandhu) and I was also the associate director of the same. The play also has a track song that was formally launched at Hungama Digital Entertainment P. Ltd. Mumbai. The 1:26 minutes peppy song conveys the essence of the play & therapy. It has also been nominated for the Hungama award 2019 in shortest song category.

The key point to be noted here is that the play projects all the four pillars of Indian psychology and philosophy that have been well elaborated in the initial pages of the research and include *Dharma, Karma, Maya* and *Aatman*.

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The teacher's *Dharma* was to teach the protagonist whereas; he got trapped in his lust & violated his student. The protagonist's *Karma* was responsible for her aggressive response to her beau's loving touch for her repressed memory of being abused during childhood suddenly surfaced making her wary of being touched again. She created an illusion or *Maya* based world to protect herself from owning up to the fact that she did nothing to stop her teacher, merely to avoid him from upsetting her for her good marks helped her get attention & acceptance from her peers. As a result, she blamed her father for being responsible for her abuse. *Aatman* was realized by her as she chooses to forgive her teacher, not for the sake of pity on his debilitated state but rather to set herself free from the clutches of her past & to become one with herself & thus the universe through love.

This play reached approximately 10,100 persons and helped them to grow out of their self created blocks. The link provided above will give you the glimpse of the experiences spectators had after the play.

My second work was an animated short film of 7 minutes

2. "Belle Moi; Beautiful Me"!!!

<https://www.facebook.com/Belle-Moi-Beautiful-Me-241390853254349/>

- The film was screened and staged at 16th PleinLaBobine, Festival De Cinema, Labourboule, France on 27th and 31st May 2018.
- It was awarded Honourable Jury Mention Award at 7th Bangalore Shorts Film Festival on 17th June 2018
- It was awarded Honourable Jury Mention Award and best content at 7th Kolkotta International Film Festival 22nd July 2018.
- Second best in its category at 1st International Children's Film Festival, Jaipur on 27th July 2018, organized by JIFF
- Best Animation Award from India at 2nd New Delhi Film Festival, 22nd September 2018.
- Is nominated for screening at 7th Delhi International Film Festival, Delhi On 17th October 2018.

The film is based on the need of acceptance from the peer group, body shaming and bruises caused on a child while being the victim of bullying through labeling, tagging.

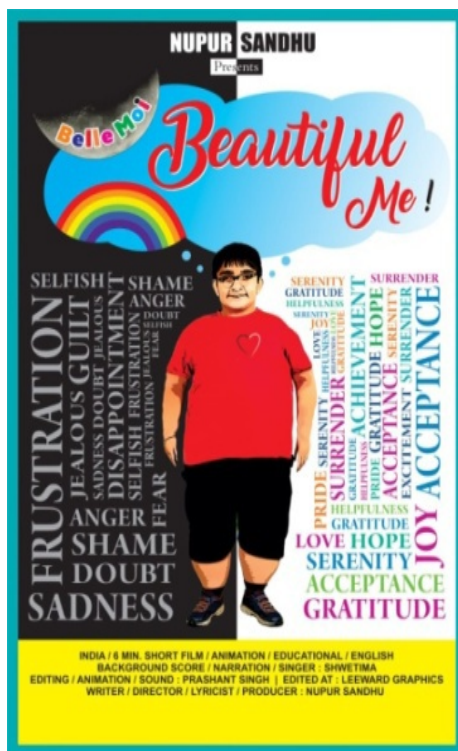


Fig 2. Pictorial Representation of *Belle Moi: Beautiful Me!!!*

SYNOPSIS

This short film showcases how all our emotions branch out from our two significant emotions-- Love and Fear.

The film revolves around a protagonist who struggles to achieve the acceptance he has always craved for. He is caught amidst a tornado of non-acceptance of self, thus always desiring to be loved and accepted by his friends. The whirlpool of emotions becomes even deeper because of the bullying and humiliation he faces.

The film progresses towards a resolution when a Serenity Surrender therapist guides him through this rough patch and helps him attain the understanding that we are a WHOLE and can only be seen as a 'COMPLETE' being when we embrace the binary of strength and weakness.

The message we intend on extending is that what we are, is defined by all our aspects (strength- weakness or negative- positive emotions). We need to embrace and love ourselves first, to be able to receive acceptance from others.

The film also refers to historical illusions of Glass Delusion and Cement Delusion.

In both of the creative ventures, ART THERAPY has been used to assist the spectators to understand their sub-conscious and experience catharsis. Further, the study also used Sigmund Freud's ICEBERG METAPHOR for the play and power of compassionate love of

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Aristotle to substantiate the argument. Freud compares the human mind with the iceberg as its great weight and density lie beneath the surface i.e., below the level of consciousness. He also emphasizes upon the significance of unconscious as he says, “most conscious process are conscious for only a short period; quite soon they become latent, though they can easily become conscious again” (Guerin et al. 2007, 155). In a way, it can be averred that the unconscious is a reservoir of feelings, thoughts, memories that are outside of our conscious awareness. The unconscious, according to Freud, continues to experience our behavior and experience, even though we are unaware of these underlying influences.

This film has reached more than 25,000/- children and adults. The link provided will take you to the reviews of our august audience.

It was shown in the film how protagonist was in denial (*theory of Defence mechanism*) to see the truth that his friends make fun of him and his looks and he was getting bullied by them. Yet, he did his best to please them. When this realization hits him on the face he felt shattered and mocked upon and that time the therapist helps him see the infinite love he carries within and to address his fears of rejection.

USING METAPHORS AND SYMBOLS IN MY EXPERIMENTAL WORKS

Metaphors are used for how humans experience life on a deeper level. Creating a unique language of metaphors and symbols for your play is an important part. Symbolic images help us understand abstract concepts that cannot always be translated into words. The word *metaphor* is used to encompass metaphor, symbol, motifs, and legit motifs.

Metaphor = Action/Sound. Visual or auditory representation of a separate action, experience, or idea. A character gets tied in ropes showed the helplessness of her thoughts, feelings and suffocation she is feeling within.

Symbol = Object/Sound. Visual or auditory representation of another object. Happy music and dance movements where the protagonist releases herself from the self created chains. An intense Music where she rises like a Phoenix.

Motifs = Collections. Collections of related metaphors or symbols used to represent a related concept. Lights or flames going on and off to show the deep conflict within

Legit Motifs = Repetition. The repetition of identical metaphors or symbols to represent a greater concept. The protagonist when releases herself, she is shown releasing the demons of her thoughts.

Metaphors and symbols can be used to develop plot, theme, and character in deeper ways visually. As a writer I created a unique metaphorical language in the story.

Objects/Props Music/Sounds. Background sounds, songs, atmospheric music bed, music in scenes, street noises, weather sounds, people laughing / sarcasm "Narrative Sound Design."

1. **Color.** The color of everything in the frame was taken care of. Moods of the character were easily understood by the color and type of clothes and different colors of lights.

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2. **Words.** intense poems were used as narrative expression, to give deeper essence of the scene in lesser words.
3. **Sets.** What does the setting say about the mood of each scene? A conversation in a therapist room has a different context than one in the restaurant or in natural surroundings.
4. **Character types.** People who represent the theme or plot to the extreme (positive or negative, even an extreme mix of the two). Costumes, stereotypes, fashion preferences, cultural backgrounds, accents, jewelry, clothes, masks, were taken care of.
5. **Lighting.** Colored lights, light sources, brightness, lighting subject's specific to metaphor. Good characters may be in bright light, whereas evil characters may be darkly lit. Quality of light (time of day as a metaphor). Glowing around certain characters, face-lighting strategies to evoke emotion, source of light as metaphor.
6. **Staging.** Placement of characters and metaphoric objects inside the frame to represent relationships. Where are the characters in relationship to each other metaphorically? Use of Fog Machine helped to show the thoughts or scenes from past memory
7. **Symbol dictionaries.** We collected resources for metaphors, such as symbol or dream dictionaries, to help one tap into universal subconscious visual metaphors. Visual metaphors through the posters were very effective.

The play poster fig 1 depicted a woman's back with butterflies. Butterflies are symbol of life and hope, it represents transformation and new beginnings, accepting our bleeding emotions and wounds. The hair stick has shown a cage hanging, representing the caged emotions and also the apt time that has arrived for bird to fly high, representing freedom.

The Film poster fig 2 represented the Black and white colour and all emotions are ours, we are package of black and white...and the infinite power our heart has to keep pumping love.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The ART THERAPY is extremely effective for the catharsis that has been considered to have a strong healing effect and has been previously applied in various fields of medicines, healings, rituals, society. The concept of catharsis has been widely used in modern psychology, starting with Breuer and Freud. Some modern therapeutic modalities emphasize the value of expression of repressed emotions and use catharsis as the essential tool for the positive therapeutic change. While the supporters of cognitive-behavioral approaches dominate the field of psychology, most of the contemporary schools underestimate the importance of catharsis. They consider affect regulation as the primary goal, therefore leaving full emotional release in the periphery or often perceiving it as a negative direction. The existing scientific evidence about catharsis resulting in a positive therapeutic change is still controversial.

My intention is to bring recognition that not only can catharsis leave one feeling lighter & better, it also allows them to engage in new experiences & relationships for they feel

uninhibited & more unburdened to do so. Catharsis can also allow people to express their emotions & thoughts once the charge is neutralized to understand their existing relationships & situations from a new perspective & hence changing their lives. ART THERAPY allows catharsis to happen in a safe environment where it is left to the subject's choice, so as to allow or accept the release of their emotion to the extent they deem fit, thus removing the danger of a complete outbreak.

CONCLUSION

Wisdom and Knowledge are two aspects of the being of which we need much deeper understanding to be able to realize the self and others through this therapy.

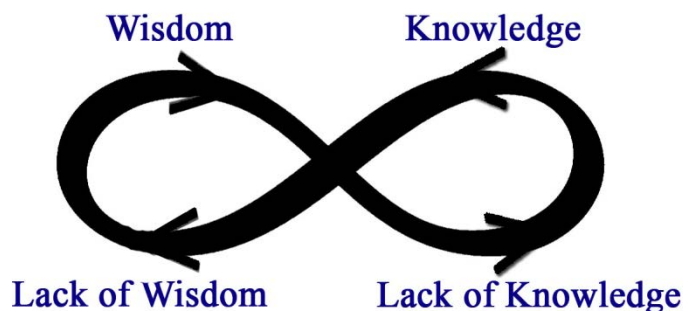


Fig 3. Pictorial Representation of how the art therapy helped to understand the flow of the our knowledge and wisdom and their lack too

Knowledge is, 'knowing' something, and wisdom is the internal experience of that knowledge when it's applied to a life situation. For eg Knowledge is that 'tomato is a fruit' but wisdom is knowing that it 'cannot become the part of fruit salad'. Knowledge and Wisdom both have their respective places in the cycle of evolution of humankind.

The audience of both my work accepted that they blocked the flow of this cycle as they feared to face the past and all the emotions it carried. It became evident that what they thought was past had actually not passed from their energies. ART THERAPY helped them to face the face beneath the face (the real face) and further helped them to understand what they thought was their wisdom in masking, was their 'lack of wisdom' that what they mask from self is still playing out in their lives, and now they have moved to gaining new wisdom & new perspective about self and situations. This way art was used to bring them closure of a cycle of knowledge & wisdom where they are ready for a new experience. This is an eternal cycle and hence each 'lack' will only give way to the next knowledge or wisdom, however, if resisted or blocked, one can experience intense stagnation, suffocation & lack of growth in their lives.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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