

# Leonardo of the 21<sup>st</sup> century

By Pranav Mistry, 28<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2005

A few centuries ago, a few people began questioning the assumption that people knew how to think about the physical world. Neither philosophy nor religion seemed to be able to stave off famine and epidemic. The enlightenment was about a new method for thinking. Part of that new method was the way of asking and testing questions known as science, which provided the knowledge needed to create new medicines, new tools, new weapons, and new economic systems.

Today, we are blessed with technology that would be indescribable to our forefathers. We have the wherewithal, the know-it-all to feed everybody, clothe everybody, and give every human on the Earth a chance. We know now what we could never have known before-that we now have the option for all humanity to "make it" successfully on this planet in this lifetime. But, still there is something that lacks, perhaps, a new method of thinking.

A tool is not the task, and that is why often the invisible, social or some non-physical aspects make all the difference. Years ago Peter Drucker answered it as "Technology is not about tools, it deals with how Man works."

New paradigms always throw new questions, and so new technologies did. Interestingly, technologies answered them also. There's some truth to each of these answers, yet they all fall short because we assume that we know how to think about technology. I think, just because we know how to make things doesn't guarantee that we know what those things will do to us or what kind of things we ought to make.

Knowing how to think about technology is a skill one needs to teach oneself the way we taught ourselves previous new ways of thinking such as mathematics, logic, science and design. One needs to think like Leonardo did. Yes, at the time we need to broaden our perspective to see technologies from design, humanities, art, psychology and social aspects and vice versa.

I think for me also, 'I know how to do something now I need to learn what to do'.

- Pranav Mistry