

Civilization and Culture

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Abstract

Disasters are as old as human history but the dramatic increase and the damage caused by them in the recent past have become a cause of national and international concern. India is one of the ten worst disaster prone countries of the world. The country is prone to disasters due to number of factors; both natural and human induced, including adverse geoclimatic conditions, topographic features, environmental degradation, population growth, Urbanization, industrialization, non scientific development practices etc. Hazards and the disasters they cause Natural hazards are agents or trigger mechanisms that can come into contact with a vulnerable human condition to result in a disaster. In this paper, we would discuss the following hazards namely earthquake, tsunami, landslide, floods, cyclone and drought etc. that we normally face in our country.

Key Words: *Disaster, Hazards, Management, Avalanches.*

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Introduction

It has often been asked if culture and civilization are synonymous and if not what is the relation between the two. In many cases culture and civilization are interchangeable terms. A cultured nation is a civilized nation and a civilized nation is a cultured nation. But going deep, we find that, though allied, they are two different things.

The word civilization has come to have a set meaning. Modern writers have dubbed certain nations as civilized and certain as 'semi-barbarian or barbarian. In the terminology of the nineteenth or twentieth century all white nations are civilized, all yellow nations are semi-civilized and all black skinned nations are uncivilized. It appears that our skins are like transparent glass vessels exhibiting the colour of the substance which they contain. How can a skin be white unless it encloses a white heart? And how can a black skin contain a heart which is anything but black. Then all that is European is civilized and all that has migrated from Europe.

The Americans are civilized because their forefathers migrated from Europe. The rest of America is uncivilized. The Australians and South Africa are also civilized. And for the same reason, as the rest of the world, Non-Europeans are uncivilized. What is criteria? White and non-white colour. Then there is one more criterion. All Christians are civilized? and all non-Christians are non-civilized. A white European Christian is therefore thrice blessed and thrice civilized. He is civilized by dint of his country, by dint of his colour and by dint of his religion. What virtues make him so is immaterial? what vice exclude others from the zone of civilization is also immaterial. To refer to a famous writer on civilization Mr Clive Bell, we are told that he rules out from among the characteristics of civilization such qualities as justice humanitarianism, respect for human life etc because they are found perhaps in a much greater degree among the less civilized and uncivilized peoples. But that is what a self supposed civilized man thinks for himself. Which man is there however ignorant, however wretched and however shabby. Who might think that he is uncivilized unless compelled to do so under physical pressure? The Chinese think that they are the only chosen people-wise, holy and civilized. All others are inferiors. A Muslim of Arabia thinks that light first dawned upon Mohammad the prophet. Before his advent it was all dark in Arabia and in the world. And even now those are civilized who have got their heart illuminated by Mohammad's light. Ask an orthodox Hindu Brahmin of Banaras. He thinks that others are so uncivilized that if it were given to him, he would not tolerate it. But if civilization is not a meaningless term it needs a more rationale treatment. 'Civilized' is a verb from 'civil'. 'Civil' means social or pertaining to society. Civilization is thus, something which makes a man social. Man is no doubt

a social animal .He loves society. Society hating men are only exceptions. But the size of the society is not fixed and it much depends upon the inner qualities of a man. The members of a society are compelled to surrender some of their interests to the well being of other members. It is the basis of the formation of a society. My society, therefore depends on nature as well as in size ,upon capacity to surrender my interests for the sake of the others. My heart is the hall in which the members of my society sit. How capacious is my heart is a question. Whom and how far can I accommodate in this hall? To socialize myself means, therefore, to widen my heart ,to make room in it for the greatest number of sentient beings. Big halls of brick do not make a real society. It is the largeness of the heart which is needed. Really speaking every man is civilized to the extent of the largeness of his heart.

Dr Dhirendranath Roy in his book asks a pertinent question. ‘Is there any civilization without some form of Agriculture , industry, language, literature, arts, science, morality, Philosophy and religion? They all spring originally from a desire of man to surrender his own interests to the welfare of the others.

Modern advancement of science has done much good to humanity. It has provided man with unprecedented comforts and consciences .It has added lustre to human being. But there is one very great loss that it has done to mankind. It has narrowed down man’s heart .The trend of thinking of Darwin and his successors has been to impress upon man that selfishness resigns supreme in nature. ‘The survival of Fittest’ is their motto .And unfortunately ‘the fittest’ in their sense means “the physically strongest”. A strong fish eats up a weaker one. This is the law of the dwellers of the ocean .The wolf eats the lower animals who are weaker than he. The lion is the strongest of all, therefore he eats up all. This is the law of the jungle. Man is after all a part of nature. How can he stand an exception to the general rule? It is why Bill says that Humanitarianism is no qualification of a civilized people. It exists where there is no civilization at all. Struggle for existence has of late been too common a phrase. It has narrowed down the walls of the heart. Upto the end of the nineteenth century ,the whole of Asia was dark and uncivilized in the eyes of the western world. In the beginning of the twentieth century ,a small portion of Asia came into lime light. It was Japan. Japanese killed Russians. They learnt that if one wants to be civilized he/she has to give up humanitarianism. Mercy is the weakness of a timid brain. The strong are never merciful. ‘Mercy is a double blessing” says Shakespere. “Mercy is all round curse” say modern scientist.

At the time of birth a person is nothing but a tiny drop of blood, with no power for struggle. The mother to whom we owe our birth constantly thinks of our

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life at the expense of her own .This is the first pattern of life that we began to experience. It is rather unfortunate that we were unfit to observe it at our birth.

It is written in the Shatpatah Brahmana that mother is one's finest guru or preceptor .She puts before us an example which is the basis of all civilization. It is not the struggle for one's own existence, but struggle for the existence of others what would have been our fate if the survival of the strongest were the law? The mother is surely stronger than the child. And yet the child survives the mother? Because the mother surrenders some of her might to the well being of their baby. This is the germ of civilization which the nature has put into the nature of our mothers.

'I am one, let me be many' this ought to be the basis of all society. It is a pity that the modern scientists overlooks this law which is omni-potent and omni-present. It reigns the land as much as the air or the ocean .Killing is not the first action of nature. It first bears life , then sustains it .It is only after these two actions that the third action of killing takes place.

If motherness is eliminated from this world ,if we succeed in driving out from the nature all that goes by the name kindness, what society will there be? Civilization is the act of civilizing. The act by which we become 'civil' or 'social'. We learn how to live in society. How to surrender our interests for the interests of our fellow beings.

Civilization is a part of culture as much as it helps the actualization of our seed powers. Culture is a wider term .It is much more than a civilization. A people may be civilized and yet uncultured. They may remain in society, a well cemented society and yet their natures may not be fully developed and much of their valuable parts may either die out or remain undeveloped. All the culture needs civilization. But all civilization does not contribute culture. In order to be most helpful to culture, a civilization ought to be based upon certain virtues, which if absent, will make it undesirable as a culture-making agency.

It is true that man is a social animal. But besides being a member of a society ,he is also individual that makes a society. In our personal culture we not only borrow from others, our own contribution is also very important. Civilization ,if divorced from this view-point becomes stale, it loses the zest which is the salt of life. In making estimation of civilization, the calculators have too often neglected this point and the result has been disastrous.

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