

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar on: CIVILIZATION, SCIENCE AND

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WHAT IS CIVILIZATION? The subtle sense of refinement that we encounter in the various expressions of life is called civilization. Let me give you an example. Suppose some guests have arrived at our home. We may address them imperatively, “Come”, or we may welcome them by saying, “Please come in.” This polite address, by adding the word “please”, speaks of civilization or a civilized address, for herein the subtle sense of refinement is evident. The imperative word, “come”, bereft of warmth, only smacks of a lack of culture. So we see there are both good and bad sides to culture, but the subtle sense of refinement is the touchstone of civilization. The subtle sense of refinement that we get in culture intrinsically imbues the human power of discriminative judgement. We may call those human acts and behaviour civilized that give evidence of this discriminative judgement, in a great measure. It is sometimes noticed in certain groups of people that their actions have the support of judgement, and then again in some others that there is an absence of it. If judgement were based merely on this basis, to call the former civilized and the latter half-civilized would not be fair or desirable.

In the Indian social system, women have been given a motherly status, but in practice they are not accorded the same prestige. Conversely, in

European society, though motherly status is nil, women certainly enjoy equal rights and prestige in practice. Now it is very hard to say which of the two is more civilized. But I would say that the greater the support for judgement in action and behaviour, the better shall be the expression and development of civilization.

There is a subtle difference between civilization and culture. Culture is the collective expression of all the forms of life. Culture is the expression of the intellectual stratum, whereas civilization is the expression of the physical aspects of life. So people may be civilized by way of material development, but as far as their mental development is concerned, they may not be culturally endowed. In the absence of intellectual development, it is not possible for a person to be properly civilized.

How does the development of civilization take place? civilization has an intimate relationship with science. They progress together. But when scientific progress supersedes civilization, civilization meets its Waterloo. Take, for instance, the history of Egypt and Greece. So long as the scientific progress of these two countries did not supersede civilization, civilization prospered very well. But when the ingredients of enjoyment grew in abundance, the civilization of both countries



SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

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was destroyed, because science had taken precedence over civilization.

What is science? That which teaches the proper use of material things is science. Where the development of civilization is utterly negligible, and science gradually attains the apogee of development, it only paves the way for destruction instead of doing any good to humanity. And so, the study and practice of science, though unavoidable, should not be given a higher place than civilization.

Now let me say a few words about intuitional knowledge. In India, from the Tantric period to the Gupta period, civilization and science progressed side by side, and science never enjoyed greater prestige than civilization. The Gupta period was the golden age of India. After the end of the Gupta era, scientific progress was overlooked, resulting in degradation and downfall. In the Pathan period, there was neither the development of civilization nor progress in science, resulting in the stunting of society's progress. For the all-round progress and development of human society, both civilization and science have to be encouraged and pursued. If you observe the development of civilization, you will also find intellectual development. Where there is cultivation of science, intellectual analysis

is a necessity. And so, for both civilization and science, intellectual knowledge is indispensable. Spiritual or intuitional development is possible through the happy blending of civilization and science. Even where there is no such blending at all, intuitional progress may yet be possible, but if science and civilization are harmonised, intuitional progress is accelerated. Therefore, people of wisdom should proceed and progress by blending these two. It is useless to think of intuitional progress without affecting the harmony between the two.

What is our duty today? We should cultivate science, but we should equally pay attention to the development of civilization. Taking a comparative view between ancient India and modern India, we notice that the progress of science today is greater than that of those days of yore, but civilization in those days was certainly of a high order, particularly during the days of Vashishtha, Vishvamitra and Astavakra. In the present age, civilization is on the wane as science enjoys pride of place. But, as science is developed today, if civilization is pushed back to the top, people can reach a greater height than ever before.

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