

SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS OF CULTURES AND CIVILIZATION

The symposium proposed is an attempt to claim that all cultures and civilizations have a spiritual foundation. It is unlikely that all cultures and civilizations have a spiritual foundation. That they ought to have a spiritual foundation if they have to survive or have the capacity to grow fully is another point. Further the world culture is having dubious meaning as some sort of training into a pattern of life that has been decided upon by a community. We know that of late ethnologists and anthropologists have been studying primitive culture and have indeed been anxious to preserve such cultural traditions. Civilizations too are institutions which have for the individual and his community provided certain lines of development for their continuance and persistence and perpetuation. Both cultures and civilizations do not therefore have a definite connotation as being valuable. They are just pattern which have been forged as desirable and are relative to the needs emphasized by the community as a whole.

Culture as refinement is quite a different thing and is what character is to an individual. However we know that culture and civilization have to be differentiated as high or low by the direction of the ends or goals that they

have placed before them selves. Indian thought has basically analysed the human goals and indeed men move or are rather moved by one goal and can be typologically distinguished from others. There are thus men moved by wealth-motive (acquisitive), and there are men who are moved by desire for happiness (hedonistic) and comfort. The modern cultures which have been growing are centered in the business of integrating these two basic motives through the concept of power of procuring both for every man. Our civilization is less in respect of psychic development than in respect of material welfare and comfort. Our sciences which are the wheels of modern culture (as in ancient times crafts have been) have shewn that the goal of man is well-being. We are quite a long way from our ancient ideals of right-living and free-living and free-living. Indeed there is today a growing consciousness for a righteous world. Righteousness then does not inherently a fact of either wealth or happiness. Those who speak as if material prosperity will ipso facto bring in the age of righteousness or justice and those who speak of happiness as the just goal of man are finding that we want a different goal to be superposed to control the wealth and comfort incentives. But the clarity of perception as the nature of dharma or righteousness or dharma is not yet had. Righteousness or justice is a term which is bandied about as if it is but a form without

matter, and that matter is to be supplied to it by wealth and desire for happiness or objects which procure them and the means required to procure the objects of this category.

Man's true culture or development takes place when he passes through these satisfactions of cravings of his nature, and he has come to realize the necessity for knowing himself as an independent personality, free from the incessant dependence on the wealth-happiness cycle. Most of our modern trends of thought and culture are aiming at the proper distribution and production of this cycle of artha and kama. Dharma has come to mean just means of this distribution. However the human individual is getting himself pushed into all sorts of institutional formations both cooperative and collective and has become at once the person to whom justice is being done and who will have to be the individual who will mechanically get it in the process and realize it also. It is in this process of squeezing the individual into all sorts of procrustean patterns, that man discovers his own real nature as different from all that had contributed to his pleasure and comfort. Bondage to these being the one thing that enforces his compulsory loyalty to them, he seeks to find himself by freeing himself from these ends of life, wealth and happiness.

It is verily a triumph to say that no until one has become aware of one's bondage to the ordinary and common

ends of life wealth, power and happiness (in more trenchant terms, wealth, wine and women), will one really arrive at that culture which is the process of releasing the individual or oneself from the thralldom that appears as justice. In a civilization in which there is hardly an attempt to bring about this awareness but every attempt is made to encourage the bondage to the 'basic' needs of life, such as the above, not to speak of increasing the quantum of such supplies of 'basic' needs or the minimum of them, as decided by social justice, there is hardly any doubt that it will have to awaken with a rude shock and terror at the self-defeating nature of its enterprise. History is strewn with the derelicts of such cultures and civilizations as of individuals. **The moral that one can draw from the of the historical cultures and civilizations is that without the vigilant subordination of wealth, wine and women, or artha and kama, to the supreme aim of continuous liberation of the self from its dependence on these, there is bound to be a collapse of our civilization also.**

Liberation-incentive is as strong and firm in man though it comes to full force only when maturity of experience arises. The liberation incentive expresses itself firstly negatively as vairagya or renunciation, which is a result of discrimination which is not got merely by study but by painful experiences. Without this basic revolution from the lower ends of life there is hardly any possibility

of even taking up the higher ends of life. The latter does not even enter the view of man.

In a sense the liberation-incentive is closely tied up with the need to discover oneself. This is the beginning of a conscious culture and a self-directing civilization.

So far mankind has been advancing unconsciously impelled and governed and reason has entered into the several phases as a handmaid colour wants. The time has come for a self-directed conscious evolution. May be it may be necessary to go higher up in the scale of our consciousness and demand the operation of a disinterested reason and higher than reason which is purely spiritual with its directives of truth, intelligence and liberty gotten delight, not depending on objects other than that highest self or God.

Till now there have been god-centered cultures and civilizations. But the gods themselves have been stepped down to the level of our wants. A culture that does not step down God to the level of man but brings up to the level of God is a truer culture and such a civilization is a truer and happier civilization.

The march of true civilization constantly discovers through its mighty and pioneer spirits the drive towards the Ultimate God. This is a continuous inner history of mankind, lived through its luminous self realizing selves, who constantly free man from his physical and mortal

chains.

To such a band Sri Ramana belonged. All honour to Him.