

CULTURAL GLIMPSES - AN OVERVIEW

By

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Transaction No. 82

**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF WORLD CULTURE
Bangalore 560 004**

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In December 1989 Shri K. R. Ramachandran, IAS Retd, a distinguished civil servant, was requested to deliver Smt. Sophia Wadia Memorial Lecture. He chose for his subject Cultural Glimpses — An Overview. This transaction contains the text of his lecture.

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Printed by W. Q. Judge Press, 97 Residency Road, Bangalore 560 025, and published by the Indian Institute of World Culture, 6 Shri B. P. Wadia Road, Basavangudi, Bangalore 560 004. Printed in India.

CULTURAL GLIMPSES-AN OVERVIEW

K. R. RAMACHANDRAN, i A S RETD.

Let me at the outset explain what I understand by the word 'culture.' I am using this word in the same sense in which the words “ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿ” and “ಸೌಜನ್ಯ” are used in Kannada Culture is what is consciously cultivated. It refers to the attainment of a measure of refinement in our modes of living and thinking. This is something which is peculiar to the human species. We frequently say: “Mr. X is a fine cultured gentleman.” We seldom say: “We are rearing a cultured cat or a cultured dog”, even though we may be inordinately fond of our pets. Culture touches on our sense of values and enables Us to perceive the difference between what is gracious and what is ignoble, between what is beautiful and what is ugly. In its sweep, it includes the manner in which people live in the interior of their families, — how they behave with their kith and kin and friends, and the arts and the recreational activities which they cherish and nurture. As a commonplace illustration, I may mention that many a lady in our society would gladly forego a meal for a bouquet of jasmines from Mysore, hence the sarcastic adage in Kannada: “ಹೊಟ್ಟೆಗೆ ಹಿಟ್ಟಿಲ್ಲ; ಜುಟ್ಟಿಗೆ ಮಲ್ಲಿಗೆ ಹೂ”, meaning ‘Though there is no food in the belly, Jasmines are needed for the hair!’ Here we see a facet of culture where a woman does not mind tightening her belt for the sake of some pretty flowers.

It can thus be seen that the scope of culture is so vast that it is scarcely possible even for erudite scholars to deal with it with any approach to adequacy in the course of just one lecture on an evening. The problem in my case is all the greater because I have no pretence to scholarship of any sort. Yet, I have taken courage in both hands to share with you this evening contain glimpses I have had of culture because this is an occasion to perpetuate the memory of the late Smt. Sophia Wadia, in whom one could have seen all that is best in the cultures of the orient and the Occident. I shall attempt to provide you certain peeps, no more than peeps, into the many facets of culture in different parts of the world. Thereafter, I shall further attempt to state what, in my view, would be the best policy to adopt in regard to culture.

When speaking of culture, one must not make the mistake of thinking that only persons who have been through the mill of education have a claim to be considered cultured. Education is, without doubt, a powerful tool for the nurturing of cherished values and for the sharpening of our intellect and aesthetic sense. However, it is possible for one to be educated in the worldly sense and yet remain uncultured, even as it is possible for one who has never been to any school or college to display a high sense of culture in daily conduct. Many years ago, I had occasion to accompany a team of experts from the World Bank on a tour of drought-prone villages in Bijapur District in North Karnataka. The members of the team had just arrived from Washington D.C. I casually mentioned to the leader of the team: “It must be a great cultural shock for you to see the poor villages of Bijapur District, reeling under a drought, after all the opulence you are accustomed to in Washington D.C.” The leader of the team replied with great feeling: “Oh no, not in the sense you imply. Think of the previous village we visited a short while ago. The villagers, despite the hardship caused by unfavourable seasonal conditions, felt so immensely pleased because we sipped a glass of butter-milk offered by them. Where in the world can we see such a deep sense of hospitality to uninvited guests?” I felt deeply moved. The realization dawned upon me that among the teeming millions of my unlettered countrymen are many whose basic honesty and sense of ethical values are such as to put many an educated person to shame.

In this connection, it would be interesting to recall certain observations made by Rousseau. In his famous autobiography “Confessions”, Rousseau had occasion to observe: “It was a saying among the philosophers themselves, that since learned men had appeared, honest men were nowhere to be found.” Rousseau has further stated: “Education does not make a man good; it only makes him clever — usually for mischief.” While I do not share these cynical and uncharitable remarks about learning and education, there is no gainsaying the fact that among the uneducated men all the world over there are many who are highly cultured. Rousseau’s reference to the “Noble Savage”, who, though unlettered, is nevertheless noble in his behaviour is not without substance or meaning.

One other point needs to be clarified. In assessing culture, we must learn to distinguish what is genuine from what is counterfeit. Let me elucidate what I have in my mind with the help of an example. Two persons, “A” and “B”, sit at a table to share a Spartan meal. “A” does not know the nuances of accepted table manners, and even makes gurgling sounds while sipping his soup (like the Scotch Express passing through a tunnel, as Wodehouse would say!). But when it comes to sharing of food laid on the table, he is all consideration for the needs of the other diner “B”. “B”, for his part, is very correct in his table manners but when it comes to sharing of food, he is greedy and selfish and lacks consideration for “A”. In this example, there is no doubt that “A”, though uncouth apparently, is to be considered more cultured than “B”. After all, culture is not a mere matter of sticking to accepted norms regarding the use of cutlery and crockery on the table, although this is also not unimportant. A genuine feeling of concern for others is the hall mark of true culture.

When we talk of culture, we think of the ancient cultures of Egypt, Greece, India and China on the one hand, and the more recent technology-oriented cultures of the West on the other. There is no doubt that a high degree of refinement could be seen in the cultures of all these places. But it would be wrong for us to think that other human communities were totally bereft of culture. There is a strand of unity that binds all human beings wherever situated, and an aspiration to live in conformity with certain accepted norms is not the prerogative of the so-called civilized races only. As an example, I would invite attention to the culture of Tonga, a small island kingdom in the South Pacific. No Tongan can refuse to give a meal to needy relatives, no matter how distant. When a Tongan child is orphaned, the child is immediately adopted by a relative, regardless of inconvenience or expense. Such is the feeling of kinship that binds the community. A Tongan visiting Europe for the first time is believed to have observed: “When you leave Tonga you feel free. But when you reach Europe you feel lonely.” It can thus be seen that there is something truly admirable in the culture of Tonga, about which no trumpets are generally blown. The same may be said of many Red Indian communities in the United States, whose aversion to get ‘Americanised’ is not altogether without rhyme or reason, considering the rank indifference of an average American towards those who fail to come up in life.

Cultural attainments do not accidentally drop on us as a gift from the heavens. We in India have a rich cultural heritage because our forefathers thought deeply over important issues impinging on the well-being of man, and showed the path towards gracious and harmonious living, which included the pursuit of *Dharma* (righteousness), *Artha* (material wealth), *Kama* (sensual delights) and *Moksha* (salvation). The *rishis* and *Maharishis* of this land, after deep study and penance, recognized the true spiritual nature of man, transcending barriers of all kinds, and laid emphasis on spiritual growth rather than on the accumulation of material wealth. There is an interesting story by Voltaire about a ‘Good Brahmin’ of Banaras, who is restless and miserable because he does not know the answers to certain basic questions of life like the nature of the soul. His next door neighbour is a simple woman who is not

bothered one bit about the soul and who is leading a supremely contented life because she is able to have a dip in the sacred Ganga each day. The narrator questions the Brahmin why he is tormenting himself seeking answers to abstruse questions like the composition of the soul, and why he could not feel contented and be happy like his neighbour woman. The Brahmin replies: "I have said to myself a thousand times that I should be happy if I were to be as ignorant as my neighbour, and yet it is a happiness which I do not desire." This is only a story; but it brings out an important fact. Our culture today is all the richer because a few great thinkers have foregone the pursuit of worldly pleasures so that ordinary mortals like us get assistance and guidance in being, led from 'untruth to truth, from darkness to light.' Vyasa, Valmiki, Buddha, Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhwacharya are some of the giants among men who have imparted a distinct spiritual tint to the pattern of life in this country. The same may be said of Confucius in China. Imagine what a great loss it would have been to the spiritual wealth of the world if Buddha had not forsaken his crown and family for finding answers to basic questions of life!

Culture is not something static: it is evolving all the time. The shape it will take in the days to come depends on the efforts we make and the direction we impart to it here and now. We can, aping the less desirable aspects of Western culture, fall into the trap of unbridled materialism. Alternatively, we can open the eyes of the West to the strength of the human spirit and give a new and creative turn to the human condition all over the world.

In regard to the evolution of culture, both possibilities have to be borne in mind. A culture may get enriched and strengthened through interaction with other cultures. New elements may get introduced through cross-fertilization and diffusion of ideas. For example, various items of western culture have been acquired and adopted in India over a period of time. Islamic culture has also had its impact on the prevailing Hindu culture. Such conjunction of cultures eventually leads to the attainment of a better quality of life for the people at large. There is something charming in the participating of Hindus in the Moharrum observances of Muslims, and in the reciprocal participation of Muslims in many Hindu programmes of cultural value. I have a vivid recollection of a Muslim gentleman in a village in Tumkur District who used zealously to safeguard the long hair he had grown on his head because he had been chosen to play the role of Sita in a stage rendering of the *Ramayana*. Can there be any communal clashes when people are bred in such an admirable cultural ethos?

On the other hand, cultural decay may set in, if conscious efforts are not made to sustain and strengthen the value system we have inherited from our sagacious forefathers. Having a great past is no guarantee that our future will also be great. Alarming signs of cultural decay are already raising their ugly heads in many parts of the country. We see in the body politic an unholy desire to accumulate material wealth and power through any means, in utter disregard of the values enshrined in our age-old culture. Some of our youngsters seem to be having greater faith in what may be called in Kannada *chaku-choori* culture, than in the culture of *sanatana dharma*. Might seems to masquerade as right all the world over. If we do not take steps to reverse such trends, anarchy is bound to overtake us, and we will have none to blame but ourselves for such a catastrophe.

Having said this, I must also hasten to clarify that I do not consider all that is old as gold. There are many ancient traditions which are out of tune with reality and need to be rejected firmly. I wish to dwell on such outmoded and unacceptable traditions briefly.

It is customary to speak of *Rama Rajya* as the nadir of good administration, as some kind of a heaven on earth. Gandhiji's dream was to be able to see *Rama Rajya* established in our country in his own life time. In my view, *Rama Rajya* was not an altogether blemish-free

State. Certain social evils, tarnishing the image of *Rama Rajya* did prevail in those days. Take for example prostitution, that prostitution thrived in *Kama Rajya* is clear from the direction given by the sage Vasishta at the time of Sri Rama's coronation: "Let the musicians, dancers and prostitutes be gaily decked and seated in the second row." (Valmiki Ramayana, Ayodhya Kanda, Canto 3, verse 17) Prostitution may be the most ancient of professions in the world; but I have no doubt in my mind that it is an evil all the same, pointing to the prevalence of a dirty disease in society. I cannot conceive of any just society in which there is a place for prostitution.

Another equally unacceptable evil prevailing in ancient India was the rigid division of society into castes, based on the accident of birth. *Rama Rajya* was no exception to this evil. Indeed, the evil was so deep-rooted that Sri Rama was obliged to execute a person called Shambooka, whose only fault was performance of penance, though born a *sudra* by caste. Sri Rama's act is often sought to be vindicated on the ground that it is dangerous to let an uninitiated person acquire occult spiritual powers through penance. I, for one, am unable to see the linkage between a *sudra* and an uninitiated person.

Pundits sometimes tend to justify the caste system as an arrangement to promote the harmonious growth of people with differing innate propensities. They point out that an unstratified society with real equality does not exist and that all over the world people could be categorized under different classes, based on the professions they follow. Sri Krishna's statement in the *Gita*;

ಚಾತುರ್ವರ್ಣ್ಯಂ ಮಂಯಾ ಸೃಷ್ಟ್ವಂ ಗುಣಕರ್ಮವಿಭಾಗಶಃ!

(Chapter IV, V, XIII)

"Mankind was created by me of four castes distinct in their principles and in their duties according to the natural distribution of the actions and qualities" is also frequently cited to show that the division of societies into castes was based on *gunas* (qualities).

No ingenuity in explaining away the caste system as one based on *gunas* or propensities of nature will cut ice for the simple reason that we see before our very eyes that, in actual practice, it is the accident of birth that decides one's caste, and not any other factor or consideration. It has always remained an abominable mystery to me how our ancients who propounded the wonderful doctrine of *advaita* (unity of all existence) could, at the same time, give room for the practice of *asprashyatha* (untouchability) in human society. In any case, enlightened opinion is unanimous that the caste system as it is practiced today is an unmitigated evil, and the sooner we free ourselves from its clutches the better.

As observed by the noted sociologist, M. N. Srinivas, "Caste is an institution of prodigious strength and it will take a lot of beating before it will die." The first major effort to root out caste from Indian society was made by no less a person than the great Gautama Buddha, whose egalitarian approach to human problems was a revolutionary step forward. In die *Dhammapada*, universally recognized as part of the Buddhistic Canon, it has been stated :

"Not by matted locks, not by lineage, not by caste does one become a Bramhana. By his truth and righteousness man becomes a Bramhana."

Unfortunately for us, the impact of Buddhism on Indian society was only short-lived. Many centuries later, Basaveswara made another significant thrust to destroy caste, but to no avail. More recently, Swami Vivekananda observed, with more of optimism than realism: "Soon after independence, the caste in India will disappear like the mist before a rising sun." Over four decades have elapsed since India obtained political independence, but alas, cleavages

based on caste still persists in Indian society. But we cannot afford to give up the struggle against caste, however protracted it may be.

The makers of our Constitution have wisely proclaimed that the Slate shall not tolerate any discrimination based on caste. I strongly urge that we should proceed one step further and amend the Constitution stipulating a provision that it shall be a directive principle of State policy to endeavour to promote the emergence of a casteless society in India as early as possible. That would give us a sense of direction in which to concentrate our future endeavours.

I now wish to invite attention to yet another blemish in our ancient culture. It pertains to the status accorded to women. During the time of the *Rig Veda*, although the society was on the whole male dominated, women had an honourable position in society. But fairly soon thereafter, there was a steep deterioration in the status accorded to women. Women became bracketed with wine and dice. In the ancient Code of Manu, once assigned to 1200 B.C., there are no doubt many chivalrous and gentlemanly passages touching on the status of women. For example: "Women are not to be struck even with a flower. A family in which women are suffering will soon break into pieces....The mother exceeds the father a thousand times in the right to reverence." Despite these complimentary statements, Manu debarred women from their right to stand with their male partners on equal terms. A woman was supposed to be under the tutelage of her parents in her childhood, of her husband in her adult life and of her children in her old age; at no stage was she considered fit for independent living. She lost her identity as a human being, and became a chattel for the amusement and pleasure of men. Man was accorded the right to take another wife, if his first wife did not bear him any *male* children. Note the indefensible emphasis on *male* children.

The inferior status accorded to women was not a feature peculiar to ancient Hindu culture. Let me refer to the view of the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, in the matter. According to Aristotle: "The male by nature is superior and the female inferior.... Women is to man as the slave to the master, the manual to the mental worker, the barbarian to the Greek.... The courage of a man is shown in commanding, of woman in obeying."

In the Christian tradition too, it is regrettable that woman was not accorded her due status. This is evident from the following extract from the New Testament. This is from the first letter of Paul to Timothy: "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children if she continues in faith, love and holiness with modesty."

Let me not be misunderstood. I am not a iconoclast seeking to destroy all established old-world values. In pointing out certain blemishes in our past culture, I am only doing the work of a scavenger. I try to remove the dirt so that the edifice of culture shines with its true splendour. It is a question of winnowing the chaff from the grain, as it were. I have the greatest reverence for all the great cultures of the world, for in them we can find abundant nourishment to foster our quest for truth, beauty and the pursuit of happiness is what distinguishes a man from a beast, our cultural heritage wisely used gives us strength and direction in this quest.

Against the backdrop of what has been stated so far, we can now consider what kind of a policy we should adopt towards culture in the present circumstances. The first point I wish to urge in this connection is that there is ample scope for cultural pluralism. There is

something charming in the many ethnic cultural traditions in different parts of the world. There is no need to liquidate all variety in culture in the name of either national integration or economic development. Over four decades ago, I had a welcome opportunity to spend a couple of years in Wales as a post-graduate student. Not many in this country are aware that the Welsh have a language and a cultural identity of their own, very different from that of the English-speaking Anglo-Saxons. For us, they are all considered the same, under the category 'British.' As a matter of fact, a Royal Commission was appointed some time in the nineteenth century to look into the economic backwardness of the Welsh people and suggest remedial measures. The view then taken was that there could be no salvation for Wales as long as they do not give up their "outlandish" language. Pursuant to this mistaken view, all kinds of retrograde steps were taken to suppress the speaking of Welsh by children in Welsh schools. Fortunately, there was some kind of a cultural renaissance, and wiser counsels prevailed later on. Many positive steps are now being taken to foster and promote Welsh literature. Most profound and moving hymns have been composed to the Welsh language, which are sung with great gusto not only in churches and chapels, but also in foot-ball fields and other places where Welsh crowds gather together. A function peculiar to Wales, called "*Eisteddfod*", is held during the first week of August every year. This is a competitive festival covering singing, recitation, poetry-writing in metres peculiar to Welsh literature. There are '*eisteddfods*' at village level, regional level and national level. In the national '*eisteddfod*' one is exposed to a whole week of pure Welsh culture. The Welsh people derive immense joy and satisfaction through participation in such festivals. I am mentioning all this only as an example to demonstrate that it would be folly on our part if we fail to nurture the cultures of numerically small ethnic groups on the pretext of overall national development.

Let me give you another example to show the importance of preserving variety in culture. We have different styles of music — the western, the Hindustani classical, the Carnatic classical, etc. No one suggests that we should integrate all this into one uniform style. The result of such a *kichdi* (hotchpotch) would be simply horrendous! Each style has its own aesthetic charm and appeal and needs to be fostered for its own sake.

At the same time, many traditions associated with ethnic groups have over-flowed their narrow grooves and become intermingled with others. There is nothing wrong in this synthesizing process taking place in a natural manner. In any case, as individual human beings, we have the rights of access to the best that has been thought and said in the world. The famous British poet, Rudyard Kipling, once wrote the following oft-quoted lines:

“Oh, East is East and West is West and
never the twain shall meet
Till earth and sun stand presently at
God's great judgment seat.”

This, in my view, is a cultural myth, on par with the myth of *apartheid*. There are many areas where the east and the west can and do commingle for the ultimate good of humanity. Kipling himself is not unaware of this. His subsequent lines in the same poem need to be quoted as often as the lines already quoted:

“But there is neither East nor West,
Border nor breed nor birth
When two strong men stand face to face
Though they come from the ends of earth.”

A wise cultural policy to follow is to seek and unreservedly accept what is best in all

the great cultures of the world. There is no impassable barrier between the modern technology-oriented culture of the west and the age-old traditional culture of the east. Mr. Gorbachov has done a signal service to mankind by ripping open, through his policy of *glasnost*, the veil of the iron curtain which used to shroud the U.S.S.R. from the rest of the world. He has also done well in seeking to restructure the Soviet society through his policy of *perestroika*. However, the Soviet Union is not the only country in the world in need of *perestroika*. If ever any society needed re-structuring, it is one where 5-star hotels for the elite few co-exist with insanitary shacks for a far greater number of disadvantaged sections of the community. It is an unhealthy sign of rotteness which we have tolerated for too long in this country.

We need not shy away from modern science and technology, for it is a useful tool to satisfy basic material needs of a human being. Plato's statement that man does not live by bread alone is no doubt true. It is, however, equally true that man cannot live without bread. That seems why in many ancient Hindu rituals, a high measure of emphasis is laid on *anna dana* — giving of food. The well-known saint Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who did not care two pence for material wealth, himself said once: "Religion is not for empty bellies." It is therefore essential to take advantage of modern technology and science to satisfy basic physical needs of human beings.

But technology alone is not adequate. We must have real concern or compassion for the welfare of our fellow human beings. Computers and calculators do not fill us with such compassion. We need to go to the very roots of our culture, to the eternal truths enshrined in the teachings of the great ones, and realize that, in the ultimate analysis, humanity is one, and that when we injure a fellow human being, we are in fact injuring ourselves. The greatest need of the hour, therefore, is to combine technology with humanism. This is very beautifully expressed by the well-known Kannada writer, D. V. G., in the following lines of untranslatable charm taken from his *Manku Thimmana Kagga*:

“ಹೊಸ ಚಿಗುರು ಹಳೆ ಬೇರು ಕೂಡಿರಲು ಮರ ಸೊಬಗು;
ಹೊಸ ಯುಕ್ತಿ ಹಳೆ ತತ್ವ ದೊಡಗೂಡೆ ಧರ್ಮ;
ಋಷಿ ವಾಕ್ಯದೊಡನೆ ವಿಜ್ಞಾನ ಕಲೆ ಮೇಳವಿಸೆ;
ಜಗವು ಜನ ಜೀವನಕೆ -ಮಂಕು ತಿಮ್ಮ ”

The level of cultural attainment of a person is better seen in the pattern of behaviour in the ordinary course of events than in the style of participation in learned discourses in gatherings of pundits. As illustrative examples of what I have in my mind, I would like to refer to three totally unrelated episodes, all of which have made a lasting effect on me.

The first episode is taken from a novel by Pearl Buck, entitled 'The Good Earth.' There is a head on collision in a Japanese city between two cyclists driving from opposite directions, each carrying a basket of fruits. As a result of the collision, the fruits get littered all over the ground. Each cyclist picks up and delivers to the other the fruits belonging to that person. The two cyclists thereafter bow to each other and go their way, after expressing profound regrets, owning responsibility for the mishap. When I first read this, I told myself: "This is culture at its best by two ordinary citizens of Japan. No wonder the Japanese are a great nation."

The second episode actually happened in Mysore some years ago. A certain poor lady needed immediate surgical treatment. She could not afford it at any place other than the local Government Hospital. Blood transfusion was urgently needed for the treatment. The Wood group of those near and dear to the lady did not match with the lady's blood group. There was

also no stock of that type of blood in the Blood Bank maintained by the Hospital. Delay in treatment involved taking a tremendous risk on the life of the patient. The attending surgeon, Dr. Kaulgud by name, realized that his own blood suited the patient. Without batting an eyelid, he donated his own blood and eventually saved the patient. His concern for a poor unknown lady is most heart-warming. It is amazing that such a thing happened in a Government Hospital, where the persons on duty do not have a good reputation for extending tender care to the patients.

The third and final episode is taken from the life of Lenin, the great leader of the Soviet Revolution. I cannot say whether the episode is true or apocryphal. But I wish to think it is true. Lenin once went to a hair-dressing saloon for a hair cut. Two other customers were already there in the saloon. The barber, recognizing Lenin, said: "Come, comrade, I will attend to you first. Your time is more precious and you cannot afford to waste your time waiting for a hair cut." Lenin replied: "In the Soviet Union, nobody's work is less important than the other's That should be our principle, our discipline and duty I certainly won't set an example against this great principle. As for wasting time, I have brought with me a newspaper, which I shall be reading while awaiting my turn for the hair cut." Here again note the deep concern Lenin had for his fellow countrymen.

I dare say similar anecdotes are within the knowledge of many assembled in this hall. In fact, I feel that several volumes can be written compiling such instances which bring out the beauty and sweetness of culture in the ordinary course of life. Such instances serve to show that it is well-nigh impossible to set any limit on the extent up to which a man of culture will stretch himself to promote harmony and sweetness in the environment. But what has been stated so far, in the course of this admittedly disjointed over-view, is, I think, adequate to establish how right Mathew Arnold was when, in his famous classic, "Culture and Anarchy", he described culture as the pursuit of perfection. If that be so, as I believe it is, one cannot obviously reach perfection. One can only stretch one's arms in the direction of perfection. It is this quest for perfection, in which are included all the graces of living, that distinguished a man of culture from the rest of creation. A man engaged in such a quest will: (i) perform all the tasks that come his way to the best of his ability in conformity with the *Gita* statement: 'Yoga is skill in action.' (ಯೋಗಃ ಕರ್ಮಸು ಕೌಶಲಂ) (ii) be scrupulously fair and just in all his dealings; and (iii) ceaselessly strive to saturate himself with concern and compassion for all fellow human beings, transcending barriers based on caste, race, creed, colour, sex or social status.

Such is the exalted concept of culture I am placing before you — culture as the pursuit of perfection, which includes pursuit of beauty, truth and above all goodness. Goodness is indeed the bedrock of any great culture. Having placed such an exalted ideal before you, it is perhaps natural for me, a layman, to end this presentation on a prayerful note. The passage I have chosen is from the writings of Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore. It reads:

"He who is one, who is above all colour distinctions,
who dispenses the inherent needs of men of
all colours, who comprehends all things from the
beginning to the end, let Him unite us to one another
with wisdom, which is the wisdom of goodness."