

Civilizations Past and Future

Lecture 3: Civilizations - Nostalgia and Utopia

Vivek Datta (Chairperson):

I have known Daya for the last sixty years, and very intimately known him. Let me try to tell you what I have seen. A sharp mind, combined with a critical faculty, functions in two ways: in defending its own insights, and in criticizing or destroying the insights of the other. That is how it functions. Between these two, there occurs something which builds up. Daya's mind, as far as I have seen, was primarily extremely destructive, destroying everything. But gradually, something changed. If you will see the difference between the two books he has written, *Indian Philosophy - A Counter Perspective* and *Indian Philosophy - A New Approach*, you will see the change. The first book was purely critical. In the second one, something new has entered, which gave absolute fairness to the other's point of view. How does this fairness come about? The mentioning of a *pūrva pakśin*¹, which is an integral part of our tradition, has always been an attempt to be fair to the other. This fairness widens the horizon

¹ *pūrva pakśin* - 'philosophical rival', competing view, 'the other'

of the mind. Yet, as wide as the horizon of the mind might get, the unknown will always remain. In Daya's development, I have seen this fairness entering more and more, and the acceptance of the disagreement gave rise to a beauty of a new kind. I am very happy to invite him to speak.

Daya Krishna:

When somebody talks about you, you feel very strange, because you are seen as an object, when you are not an object at all; you are a subject. In fact, this very dilemma comes forth also in our attempt to understand civilizations. We see them as objects, and yet, every civilization has an inward subjectivity in it; subjectivity which unfolds in time, and which we try to intuit through that in which it objectifies itself. The story of the human being is almost the same. It is a subjectivity, which we try to intuit through what has been objectified as a series of events and embodied in creations or writings, or the memories of friends, or a hundred other things. And yet, we see the subjectivities unfolding in time. If we try to understand a human being, it is a strange enterprise because we have to understand him in terms of causes, in terms of past, in terms of what he tried to achieve, his motivations, his ideals or anything else; and there cannot

be one ideal; there cannot be one value; there cannot be one cause; there cannot be one condition. These 'causes' can vary from genetics to planetary constellations.

Imagine! That which determines or conditions can range from the strictly biological to the cosmological. In between, you have all sorts of factors: sociological, historical, cultural, familial. This 'business' of understanding - and man has to understand - is an enterprise of a very strange kind. Because every understanding is in terms of certain factors, certain conditions, certain precedents, certain motives, certain ideals. An alternative picture is always possible; not merely possible, but different persons see in different ways. The understanding of a human being and his subjectivity presents the same problems as the understanding of civilizations. When Professor Bhuvan Chandel wrote me a letter, inviting me to this institute to give a series of lectures, I was reminded of the fact that when this institute was created, or came into being, I was invited by its director to deliver a series of lectures; and he said 'What shall be the title of your series of lectures?' I said 'Social philosophy - Past and future'. So when Professor Chandel invited me to lecture before you, I thought 'What shall I talk about now?' And I thought that perhaps it would be interesting to give another series of

lectures titled 'Civilizations - Past and Future'. In my earlier reflection on society, in those lectures back in 1967, I made a contrast between India and the west. I suggested that the western thinking is primarily socio-centric. It sees man primarily as a socio-political being, as a 'socio-political animal'. After all, in ancient Greece, unless you were a citizen, you were not considered to be a human being. I have further contrasted it with the Indian perspective, which I have referred to as *ātman*-centric. The Indian thought about man has seen him neither as a biological, socio-cultural or political, nor even as a rational being. It has seen him primarily as a-social, a-political, trans-rational. This was what I meant when I spoke of the *ātman*-centric perspective. Now, what about civilizations? I have been talking to you about civilizations, and yesterday I talked to you about understanding civilizations, focusing on two case-studies: the Indian and the western. Does 'understanding' grasp the essence of a civilization? Can we intuit this essence, and if so, how? How shall we intuit the subjectivity of a civilization? In the same way as we do it with a human being: through what he did, what he created over a long period of time. Is it a real enfoldment? Do not new factors come? Do not accidents happen? The story of civilization

has yet to be written, and there is not one narrative; there must be different narratives. They have to be told, these stories of man and his collectivity. As I said yesterday, we cannot grasp the full picture. It will take time. But it has to be written. The Indian civilization cannot be understood, and no other civilization can be understood merely by getting articles written by different people. Friends! One of the biggest projects recently has been directed by Professor D.P. Chattopadhyaya at the Center for Study in Civilizations. An amazing thing: Volume after volume have been released. Some of them must be on your shelves. Some of the most outstanding persons in this country were invited to write, and they have edited remarkable volumes; but edited volumes do not make a story. A picture is an individual picture, and unless somebody takes hold and grasps it, and writes alternative narratives, we can neither understand nor intuit the reality of a civilization. I am suggesting this because there are so many highly specialized intelligent people sitting here. Why don't you, each of you, write your own story? I invite you to rethink, not in terms of your own specialization; to get out of your specializations, and on the basis of it, build something. Do not worry whether it is true or false; it is **your** picture, of **your** civilization.

It is how you understand yourself. In fact, anybody who is born in a civilization or a culture feels that he alone understands. There is something in him, which tells him that this is the truth, and that all those who understand it objectively, do not understand it at all. How many a time have we been told by westerners that we do not understand their civilization? That we cannot understand, whereas they understand it intuitively, even if they write objectively. And how many times does an Indian feel that as great a scholar as a westerner might be, belonging to another civilization he simply cannot really understand our civilization? He may read Sanskrit; he may read the texts; he may articulate; but most Indians feel that he cannot understand. Personally, I do not think it is correct; but even if it is an illusion, still it is an altogether different thing to be born in a culture, to grow up in a culture, to have the language of a culture, and beyond it - to share, to take part in the festivals, in the rituals, in a hundred things. Yesterday in the evening, it was the beginning of *Navarātra*². Having been born in this country, grown in this country, I know what *Navarātra* means. I have memories. We had a function organized by the employees of

² *Navarātra*- A Hindu festival celebrated for nine (nava) nights (ratra). During these nine nights, nine forms of the Goddess (Devī) are worshiped.

this institute. They invited me and everybody else. What can I say? For me it was an experience, an experience of re-living something, of feeling the truth of a civilization; the truth of a culture; the truth of the people. What is this truth? This truth is not in worship etc. This truth is something deeper, greater than that. The reason I am telling you all this, is to invite you to go deeper into the understanding of the human person, his history and his civilization.

The title of our lecture today is 'Civilizations- Nostalgia and Utopia'. In the history of every civilization, these two notions intermingle continuously. The person who wrote the most about civilizations, in my opinion, is Arnold J. Toynbee. In his classic *A Study of History*, he has discussed the genesis, growth, and decline of civilizations. Civilizations arise, grow, bloom, and the bloom fades. In the period of growth, civilizations look forward; they are full of hope. When a civilization is growing, it is not yet expanding. Athens, for example was a very small place. In speaking of the formative period of the Indian civilization, we refer to small places. There were no empires yet; there were no expansions; and yet, something happened in these small places, and the fragrance

of those places reached very far. Imagine! When Alexander came to India, what was he requested by Aristotle? To bring back to Greece a wise man from the east, from India! Unbelievable! Aristotle had heard of the fact that in India there are some strange people who devote their whole life to the seeking of something. And the story goes on, and we are told that Alexander did attempt to find such a person, who refused to come with him of course (Audience laughs). Nowadays India is known not for its wise persons, but rather for its mathematics, for astronomy, for medicine, for so many other things; here is a movement in a civilization. See the development from the Vedic age to the *Upaniṣadic* period and the rise of Buddhism and Jainism. Check out the post-*Upaniṣadic* period when the *śāstras* are created. When does a civilization 'śāsterize' itself? It is a movement from unconsciousness or semi-consciousness through intuition and insight; and then, suddenly something breaks: a body of organized knowledge in terms of concepts, definitions, analysis. This is what is called *śāstra* or 'science'. When Pānini thinks about language, imagine what is happening. Something very strange! He analyses it. We live in language, as fish live in water. Can a fish think about water? And yet, man thinks about that in which he is. When the *Upaniṣadic* Seers are talking and thinking; when

the Buddha or the Buddhists are thinking and writing; when Mahāvīra speaks; when the *śāstras* are composed - what is the atmosphere? It is an atmosphere of fearlessness.

Imagine! I sometimes turn the pages, and I am surprised. I am surprised at those people because I compare them to persons around me. Imagine! In the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, the *ṛṣi* says '*annam na nidyāt!*'³. Imagine! In this country, someone rises and says 'Do not talk ill of food'. Food is primary: *annamayakośa*! Imagine what the *ṛṣi* is saying to you, or to us, or to his fellow ascetics. He speaks of *annamayakośa*⁴ and *prāṇamayakośa*⁵. There is a difference between the life and mind principles. Life and mind are different; mind and *vijñāna* (knowledge) are different; He speaks of food or matter, life (*prāṇa*), mind (*manas*) and knowledge (*vijnana*). Beyond these, there is the *ānandamayakośa*⁶. The Buddhists have emphasized something else, i.e. *prajñā*. This term refers to the distinction between right and wrong. These people were not afraid. They could add something of their own. Take Śankara for example. He had disciples, like Padmapāda, Sureśvara, Maṇḍana Miśra and others. They write about their teacher's teaching, and they are not afraid - like we today are - to differ, to

³ *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 3.7.1

⁴ *annamayakośa* - 'the self consisting of food'

⁵ *prāṇamayakośa* - 'the self consisting of lifebreath'

⁶ *Ānandamayakośa* - 'the self consisting of bliss'

criticize, to suggest that the master was perhaps not quite correct in certain cases. But we? Excuse me, but we are strange people, because we do not have utopia before us, we have only nostalgia. For us, the golden age is over. It is in the past. For some people it is the *Vedas*; for some people it is the *Upaniṣads*; for some people it might be the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*; for others, Caitanya. We look backwards. We want to hold on to something. We are afraid. We cannot see. We prefer to be blind.

Let me give you an example: I was just talking to someone about the *Upaniṣads*. He has read the *Upaniṣads*. I asked him until what time were the *Upaniṣads* composed, and he said that up to the fifteenth century. I was a little surprised, because most people will not say that. And yet he said it. He is a young person, from Jammu, earlier from Allahabad; fond of Sanskrit; has many Sanskrit books with him; has all the *Purāṇas* and all the *Upaniṣads*. But my young friend had not reflected on the fact that the *Upaniṣads* continued to be written according to him until the fifteenth century or according to others until the thirteenth century. What is the significance of this? Why did the Cannon not close? How come people were not afraid of writing *Upaniṣads*? Why don't you write your own *Upaniṣads*? Why don't I write? Friends!

It is a sad thing that at least in the thirteenth century in this country nobody was afraid of composing a new *Upaniṣad*, and yet we feel that something is wrong in writing a new *Upaniṣad* today. Imagine the presumption: 'How can I write an *Upaniṣad*? Only the *ṛṣis* could do it'. But there was a time when nobody was afraid. Take the case of the *Vedas* themselves. Anybody who has attempted to read the *Veda*, even slightly, would be amazed at the fact that *suktas*⁷, new *suktas*, have been composed all the time. My own encounter with the *Ṛgveda* recently, has not only opened my eyes, but made me think. What has happened to all these wise people around me, who talk about the *Veda* and write about it? The *Veda* is full of people we call *ṛṣis*, who were not afraid. It is we who are afraid. The Vedic Cannon did not close. It continued to be composed. *Mantras* were composed all the time. We constantly hear of new *suktas*, new *ṛṣis*, new *ṛṣikās*, new gods and new goddesses. There can be a *sukta* dedicated to *samjñāna*⁸. It is in fact the last *sukta* of the tenth *maṇḍala* of the *Ṛgveda*. They could write on anything. Can I or you even dare? We talk of *chandas*⁹;

⁷ Sukta - Vedic hymn

⁸ Samjñānam- 'agreement'; 'Gather together!' pleads the *ṛṣi* in *Ṛgveda* 10.191, 'Converse among yourselves! Synchronize (*samjñātām*) your (*va:*) minds, like the ancient Gods who, being in agreement (*samjñānā:*) approach the share (*bhāga*)'.

⁹ Chanda- the Vedic metre

one of our friends, Pandeji¹⁰ is working on the *Alankāra*. Why can't he compose a *mantra* in a *chanda* and author a new *sukta*? He did not even think of it. He told me that only the ṛṣis could do it. But why have the ṛṣis ceased? Has god forsaken us? Are we not intelligent enough? Are we not sensitive enough?

Friends, let me return to the theme of our reflection. There is the time in the rise of civilizations, in their birth and growth, when Orpheus plays his lyre or Krishna his flute to attract people from all over. It is a sign that something wonderful is going on, that something happens to the world. This indeed is the rise of a new civilization. There is no nostalgia then, there is no golden age in the past. The golden age is ahead. But when the golden age ceases, everything is in the past. Nostalgia takes over. There was the Vedic age, the *Upaniṣadic* age, the age of Buddha and Mahāvīra, the age of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the age of Bhakti, of Kashmir Śaivism, of Abhinavagupta. I wonder where shall I close. Perhaps in the eighteenth century, in the great age of the Nyāya, when there was a succession of masters in small places in

¹⁰ Professor S.C. Pande who as a fellow of the IAS in 2005 was preparing 'a descriptive, critical and comparative Sanskrit *Alamkāraśāstra*'

Bengal, from Gadādhara onwards within a period of forty years. Or take for example the Kashmiri Śaivism. Friends, do you know about the miracle that happened in Kashmir? For a period of about two hundred years or more, there was a succession of masters of what we call the *Alankāraśāstra* or aesthetics. These people used to meet and create. They were not afraid.

The notions of nostalgia and utopia existed in every civilization. We all know what happened in the west. I told you yesterday that the west has started with the picture of 'man as a rational animal'. The center is reason, and people have asked: shall reason be analytic? Shall reason be synthetic? Shall reason be visionary? Shall reason be dialectical? Shall it be mathematical? Shall it be mathematico-empirical? Shall it be based on hypothetico-deductive verification? Shall it be based on falsification? The story of the articulation of reason or the exploration of reason in the west is fantastic. The story is long, and reason plays a part in what we may call its encounter with Christianity and the development of theology. Thomas Aquinas and so many other great philosophers have developed philosophy within the Christian theological tradition.

I must tell you a little story, the story of my own meeting with what we may call 'Catholic theology'. I had a student, a very bright person. I may have had an unconscious pride in my ability to argue, but theologians are really strange people. He was a young person, highly intelligent. I met him in Seattle, and we got friendly. I love people who like to argue. We had discussion after discussion, and I was wonderstruck to find out that to every argument he had a counter-argument. Theology means exactly this; it is the creation or rather the crafting of argument after argument, to meet an uncomfortable challenge. We had it in India too, but somehow the Indians have always preferred experience over argument. They have argued. They have argued incessantly, but somehow argument has been seen as secondary. What I am trying to suggest, then, is that the relation between reason and revelation in the west is different from the relationship between reason and faith in India.

Coming back to our main discussion- the story of a civilization closes at the point where the notions of reason, rationality and argumentation are being shattered. Postmodernism is the classic word for it, and Derrida and Rorty are perhaps the best examples. For them, there is no

such thing as a reason, and Logo-centrism is at a discount. I said in my first lecture that mathematics which was the heart of western rationality for such a long time, was challenged at the beginning of the twentieth century by the development of alternative geometries and by the proof that certain things cannot be proved, i.e. that consistence and complete proofs could not be given to any powerful deductive system from which arithmetic could be deduced. This was followed by something, which is even more dangerous and shattering to reason, namely the idea of alternative logics, or what is called 'end-valued logics'. What is an end-valued logic? We always think of a statement in terms of truth and falsity. Either it is true, or it is false; and we argue exclusively with an 'either or', two-valued logic. An end-valued logic is three-valued. Please try to understand the shock. This whole tradition, for more than 2500 years, was based on the belief that a sentence must be either true or false; that there is no third possibility; that this is logic, this is reason, and this is truth. Friends, when quantum mechanics developed, Professor Reichenbach wrote its philosophical foundations and proved that with two-valued logic, one cannot grasp, comprehend and articulate the reality of quantum mechanics. One needs a three-valued logic for it. Logic as been known

till then has become insufficient and inadequate for grasping reality at the physical, material level. The same thing happened when Einstein used Riemannian geometry in his physics calculations. As I told you in the first lecture, non-Euclidean geometries have been created. It was a shock to discover that alternative geometries were logically or mathematically possible. They were equally, deductively valid. But a pure alternative, a theoretical alternative does not mean much. They believed, as many still do, that the so-called-space which we have, the physical space, the physical reality, is Euclidean. This belief was shattered when Einstein used in his calculations a non-Euclidean geometry. He was using it in the context of physics, not of pure mathematics. That means that physics, or the space of physics, could be non-Euclidean, or Riemannian. The development of quantum mechanics raised the question of whether our intuitive understanding of phenomena can be relied on. Imagine this question! We believe in self-evidence; we believe in intuition; we believe in our ordinary experience, and based on these 'tools', we attempt to determine what is true, what is intelligible, what is possible. Quantum mechanics has questioned our so-called 'common-sense'. Everybody knows the story of light as wave and particle. A wave is totally

different from a particle: it spreads; it is not in one particular point of time; it weakens; it has a crest; it is hollow. A particle, on the other hand, is a point in space. Now, what to do when experiment after experiment suggests that light is both a wave and a particle? What do we do when a fact questions our logic? We have to accept that our ordinary, intuitive understanding of phenomena is inadequate; that reality is simply unintelligible if we continue to function with our ordinary concepts, with our intuitive understanding, with our sensory discriminations. The same story occurred when Freud talked of ambivalence. What is ambivalence? It means that I both love and hate a person. Can you imagine? If I love, I love; if I hate, I hate. But no, love and hate can go simultaneously in emotions. The story is strange, but the conclusion is a simple one: most of our concepts, which have been built on the basis of ordinary sense-experience and introspection during the last 2500 years of man's reflection on diverse areas of his experience, are inadequate for understanding reality at the level of what is called matter, leave aside at the level of what is called consciousness.

Friends, let me shift a little. It was Tapan Roy Chowdhury who talked to me yesterday, and suggested that there were

three great attempts in this country, of understanding modernity. He spoke of the attempts of Gandhi, Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. They were great people, not pigmies like us! They stood straight. Their spine was not bent. They were not afraid. Imagine! These people have tried to come to terms, tried to understand the Indian civilization, tried to reformulate it in the context of the emerging west. They did not entirely repudiate it; they met the challenge, each in his own way. Sri Aurobindo tried to come to terms with the west in a new way. He accepted the reality of matter, and he accepted the reality of evolution, which is not a Sāṅkhyan but a Darwinian evolution. His point was that if life has evolved out of matter, and mind has evolved out of life, then life must have already been implicit in matter. If so, matter must have not been so 'material'. Furthermore, mind - according to Sri Aurobindo - has been implicit in life. He also asked whether evolution has ended, and suggested that it could not have ended since mind has higher states, referred to by him as 'higher mind', 'intuitive mind', 'over mind' and 'super mind'. We need not accept all the distinctions, but let us understand the point he was trying to convey. In opened his *Life Divine* with a double denial and a double affirmation. The spiritualist denies the reality of matter; India has been

denying the reality of matter. The materialist denies the reality of the spirit. Sri Aurobindo starts his great, magnificent opus, asserting that both Matter and Spirit are real. Tagore's approach was different. His controversy with Gandhi should be read by everybody. Tagore was not in favor of rejection or even boycott on western goods.

Interestingly, Gandhi was not interested in art; Sri Aurobindo was interested in literature, but not in other art forms; Tagore was deeply interested in art. Tagore was also aware of Asia. Imagine! He was the first person to establish a *China Bhavan*¹¹, thus establishing a contact with China. I cannot go into further details. In the context of our present discussion, I would like to suggest that great as these three figures have been - and they were, no doubt, great - all of them forgot one thing, and I am talking of science, technology and economics. They have not touched on these themes. How shall one deal with the reality of economics, with wealth and power, with politics? How shall one deal with the reality of science and technology? We must not forget, though, that when Tagore was thinking, when Sri Aurobindo was thinking, when Gandhi was thinking, science had not yet taken the turn, technology had not

¹¹ *China Bhavan* - the Chinese faculty at Visva-Bharati University, Shantiniketan

taken the turn, and economics was still in its 'infancy'. Today the situation has overturned. Science and technology are both at a direction which is unimaginable. Economics and politics are on the central stage of history. Professor Sushil Kumar has reminded us in his talk of the relationship between history and politics. Politics wants to shape history in its own image. For the first time perhaps, man has self-consciously - as in the case of the Soviet Union for example - placed politics on the central stage, in order to transform everything. Man has become self-conscious, and this self-consciousness is at the level of politics. What is the level of politics? It is the level of taking decisions about investment in different directions: in science and technological research; in creation of wealth etc. Imagine! This centrality of politics can be understood in two instances: One, when Einstein wrote a letter to President Roosevelt and suggested a decision had to be taken about the manufacture of the atomic bomb. This is the first great political decision of modern times in the scientific-technological field; and scientists were brought together, and actually produced an atomic bomb. This is a political decision with respect to science and technology. The second great decision was taken in the time of Kennedy. When Sputnik was

made and flown in the heavens by the Russians, Kennedy called his advisors and decided that man shall go to the moon in ten years. It was again a political decision in the realm of science and technology. Kennedy decided that science and technology should take man to the moon, just as they had built the atom bomb. Space and atomic energy or space and the atomic bomb are shaping the world of politics and economics. There are other things too. Let me just mention genetic-engineering, cloning, artificial intelligence, the internet and so forth. Very soon, in fifty or hundred years from today, perhaps even less, we will have human beings produced artificially by genetic engineering. I am talking of human beings that will be born or rather created not in the natural womb but outside of it; cloned human beings. This will break down the family institution and will mark a dramatic change in the basic social institution which has sustained civilizations up till now. It is not merely in science and technology; it is not merely in conceptual fields; it is not merely in mathematics and logic; it is not merely in the realm of economics; it is striking at the very heart - if every civilization has assumed that sexual reproduction is basic and necessary, then friends, things are changing and changing fast. Family as the fundamental institutional

basis on which civilizations were based is in question, and not merely theoretically but practically.

Where should I close? Friends, we are suffering from nostalgia. We are thinking of the past, of the golden age of India, when the ṛṣis walked around and meditated; when the *ātman*¹² was sought and the *ātman-Brahman*¹³ identity was taught; when the *Bhaktas*¹⁴ were singing their songs and engaged in *kirtan*¹⁵; when people were talking of *sāmarasya*¹⁶ between Śiva and Śakti¹⁷. We live in a private world; we live in a nostalgic world. We live in a world which is very strange. When I talk to people, they seem to be unaware of what is going on. They know something of what economics is doing; they know something of what politics is doing; but they do not believe in the reality of politics and economics. For them these realms are unreal or belong merely to the *vyavahāric* realm¹⁸. Imagine! With this one word, *vyavahāra*, you reject everything. But Friends, the *vyavahāra* matters!

¹² *Ātman* - Self, metaphysical selfhood above and beyond the phenomenal or worldly 'I'

¹³ *ātman-Brahman* - 'me-world', 'individualistic-universal'

¹⁴ *Bhaktas* - devotees

¹⁵ *Kirtan* - devotional chanting

¹⁶ *Sāmarasya* - harmony

¹⁷ Śiva and Śakti - the 'masculine' and 'feminine' universal 'vectors'

¹⁸ the *Vyavahāric* realm - the 'daily', 'phenomenal', 'worldly', 'pre-philosophical' realm

Friends! You, we, are nostalgic; and what is the west? The west is centered merely on utopia. It is moving foreword, giving up its past. The west does not mind giving up anything, because it is driven by a new vision, a new utopia; utopia in which there shall be equality and justice; in which man shall become man, for the first time, without any inequalities; without deprivation of his individual freedom and human rights. This is a universal vision. This vision was first expressed by Marx. Marx may have failed, but the vision has not failed. The Marxist analysis may have gone wrong, but the vision has not gone wrong. The ideal still remains. This ideal is more relevant today than ever before. You have the Dalits¹⁹; you have the minorities; for the first time in the human history women are treated and accepted as equals, as equal in legal rights, equal in every field. Furthermore, we are now thinking in terms of universal ecology. Other-centricity is now engaging our consciousness. We know that earth is endangered. If gender is one thing, ecology is another, equality is another, justice is another. There are forces to the contrary; I am aware of them; but the vision that enthralled humanity now is a real universal vision. We do not want gender inequalities; we do not want any other kind

¹⁹Dalits - the 'untouchables' of the Indian caste system

of inequality; and friends, we do not want to be ascetics. We want to have wealth, comfort, goods and services. We want hospitals for everybody, we want health for all. We want education for all. We do not want to deprive the *śūdras* of education. We do not want to deprive any class. We do not want to deprive women. For the first time, a new civilization is dawning. All the civilizations have now to face the challenge of this new civilization that is dawning. And let us not be nostalgic about the past of our civilization. Let us be utopian, and think of the future!

Thank You.

Q: What does it mean to think in terms of forces?

A: We generally think in terms of substances and qualities. We think in terms of 'things'. But if you think in terms of forces, it is altogether different. The challenge set for us by contemporary physics is to think in terms of forces, not of 'things'. Force means that you can do things. Things are not static; things can be changed. I have suggested that we should bring forward the notion of 'life force', as well as of mind and psychic forces, and even the forces of consciousness and self-consciousness. I have further suggested in one of my recent articles that even if consciousness is an emerging property - and we have the

evidence to assume that it is, at least at the human level - it is not just an effect, but a cause; and the story of civilizations is the story of the causality and effectivity of self-consciousness. So we should opt for a new kind of thinking, just as Sri Aurobindo, Gandhi and Tagore were trying to do. We should take inspiration from them, but not imitate them. We should be inspired, but not limited or constrained by them.