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EDITORIAL

SOME PROBLEMS OF NATION-BUILDING



The appearance of Science and Culture is to be warmly welcomed not only by those who are interested in the abstract sciences but also by those who are concerned with nation-building in practice. Whatever might have been the views of our older “Nation builders”, we younger folks approach the

task of nation-building in a thoroughly scientific spirit and we desire to be armed with all the knowledge which modern science and culture can afford us. It is not possible, however, for political workers with their unending preoccupations to glean that knowledge themselves; it is therefore for scientists and scientific investigators to come to their rescue.

The problems in which scientific help is needed are manifold, but in this article I shall refer to only a few of the more fundamental ones.

The first problem I shall raise is a sociological one and is as follows: Is Indian civilization in the evening of its life, or is it on the threshold of a new dawn? (I do not want a sentimental, but a scientific reply). The awakening that we now witness, is it an organic growth from within, a new creation, or is it a mere response to the impact of the West, of the same character as the reflex of a muscle under stimulus?

The second problem is also a sociological one: What are the conditions essential for revivifying a civilization like ours that has begun to stagnate?

There is no doubt that when the European nations

began to quarrel over the possession of India, we had reached a stage of stagnation or decay. Is there any law underlying the rise and fall of civilizations which could tell us how we could give a fresh lease of life to our civilization? Or should we throw up our hands in despair and say that once stagnation has set in, there is no future for us as a nation?

The third problem is also a sociological one ; For increasing the vitality of our nation, should we promote inter-caste or intra-caste marriages? Are exogamic marriages more conducive to the welfare of a people or endogamic? Till quite recently scientific men would have been inclined to say unhesitatingly that India would do well to remove artificial restrictions on marriage. But the new racial theory of the Nazis has made us all ponder over the problem once again. If the Nazi theory is scientifically wrong and if exogamic marriages are really good for the race, then I think that it is high time to give a scientific reply to the claims of the Nazi race-theorists.

The fourth problem is concerning the proper population for a country like India. The census figures for 1931 (I am relying on the *Statesman's year-book* for 1935) show that there has been an increase of about 34 millions in India's population during the previous decade. That means that a nation that lives in a state of chronic starvation is nevertheless multiplying at a rate that puts animals to shame. Is it right? What is the maximum population which India should have, considering the food-supply and industrial potentialities? If India has already reached that point, how should we check the further increase of population? Should artificial birth-control be adopted as a public policy, seeing that birth-control through self-control has failed completely?

The fifth problem I should like to raise is concerning a common script for India. At present many prominent Indians are advocating the Devanagari script for India.

* Communicated from Karisbad, Germany.

But will our Mohammedan brothers accept this script? Will it help to bring Indian culture into closer contact with the outside world or hinder that object? To me, script is primarily a matter of convenience. What is of real importance is not script but language. And from the point of view of convenience, there is much to be said in favour of the Latin script. I confess that formerly I was very strongly in favour of adopting the Devanagari script and abolishing the provincial scripts-but my visit to Turkey last year has made me think. I now feel that the question has to be considered in a thoroughly dispassionate matter.

The sixth problem is a medical one and is concerning a uniform reformed diet for the whole of India. There is no doubt that the daily menu of the majority of the Indian people is unscientific and unhygienic—and this is specially true in provinces like Bengal and Madras. Should not steps be taken to draw up a uniform and adequate diet for the Indian people, in consideration of the law of health on one side and our circumstances on the other?

The seventh problem concerns a uniform dress for the people of India. While I do not desire or advocate the

abolition of the provincial dresses which have a charm of their own, I feel that alongside of them there should be a common dress which the Indian people should ordinarily wear both in India and abroad. It is because we have not fixed upon such a common dress for ourselves that our people generally adopt European costume when they go abroad. But this is not only unnecessary but humiliating. The whole of Europe has evolved a common dress for ordinary use, though each country retains its picturesque national costume. This is an example to us. Will our sartorial experts now take up this problem and make a recommendation after considering our average means, our weather conditions etc. ?

I have stated a few important problems. They are enough for our present purpose. I shall now ask our scientists to take up these problems one by one and give a satisfactory answer. Without the co-operation of science, no nation-building is possible. □

Subhas Chandra Bose

Editor's Note : This is reprinted from the first issue of the journal Science and Culture published in June 1935 (Vol. 1, p. 258-259). Bose's idea of Nation-building is the scientific spirit with modern science and culture. It is still valid even today to our scientists to discuss the problems raised by Bose to give satisfactory answer. He has also categorically mentioned that without the co-operation of science, no nation-building is possible. This is to pay our respectful homage to Subhas Chandra Bose as the whole country is celebrating 126th birth anniversary.