

FAST FORWARD TO CIVILIZATIONAL GREATNESS: AGENDA FOR INDIA

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Draft Chapter 1

Paradigm of Civilizational Greatness

You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty - Mahatma Gandhi

In this book I want to share some ideas on how to create a great civilization, especially in the context of modern India. However, these ideas may be relevant to many other developing societies, and possibly even to First World societies.

A civilization comprises of not only individuals, but also numerous and varied collectivities of people. These range from families to communities to enterprises to government bodies to educational and other institutions to society or nation as a whole. I want to distinguish between culture and civilization. Culture is the way of life of a people. Civilization is both urban and urbane, and is featured by relatively sophisticated and benign economic, political, and social systems. Culture is scripted by humanness;

civilization by humaneness. The book focuses on how we can align and alter individuals, collectivities, and systems in such a way that they can contribute to civilizational greatness in our modern context.

Social scientists such as Gordon Childe have tended to see ‘civilization’ as a cultural evolution of primitive societies into urbanizing habitats (see G. Childe, *Man Makes Himself*, London: Watts, 1936). In a historical context, some ancient civilizations, such as the Egyptian, the Greek, the Chinese and the Indian, have been called great because they had towns and cities while the rest of the world was living in relatively primitive rural or forest communities. Besides, these few civilizations had made distinctive and lasting contributions to the evolution of global civilization.

In the ancient context, the historian Arnold Toynbee has shed some light on why civilization arose in one place and did not in another contiguous area (see A. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939). He argued that given the same or similar set of challenges in a society, such as recurring drought or flooding or threat of invasion by foreigners, if the dominant elite, meaning the people controlling the society, such as the king and his courtiers, wealthy merchants, and heads of clergy, make a proactive response to the challenges and innovate solutions, they would push the society into a higher orbit. In another similar society, if the dominant elite respond more or less passively or ineffectually to the challenges, the society would remain stuck in its groove. In our times the elites have multiplied manifold because of democracy, market economy, universal education and a free civil society. In this book, for civilization’s rise towards greatness, I have elaborated upon how to elicit proactive, beneficent and innovative responses to social challenges by this much widened and much more variegated elite base.

We urgently need to think of designing a great civilization. Market competition, when it is powered largely by greed for money, as seems to be frequently the case in several First World and Third World countries, and a democratic system, when it manifests largely greed for power, as seems frequently to be the case in several countries round the globe, tend to degenerate into widespread corruption, fraud, and violence. The beast in man comes to the fore, sophisticated though it may be in attire and communication. Ethics often go for a toss. Morality is like art, said Oscar Wilde, and means drawing a line someplace. When greed prevails, that line gets blurred.

Can we design a civilization that uses the creativity and enterprise of the market system and the freedom of choice of a democratic system to nourish the best in humankind rather than the worst in it? Later on in the book I have shared many examples of communities, NGOs, government bodies, institutions, countries, etc. that display a reasonably high level of creativity and innovation, humaneness, and excellence orientation. These role models have important lessons for designing societies. I will also be sharing ideas on practical ways of moving towards civilizational greatness.

In the modern context, to me a civilization nears greatness not because it has become a super economic or political power, but above all, if it is becoming more and more a humane, creative, and performance excellence seeking society. What good is great power status and high affluence if in the process public morality goes for a toss and society sinks into a cesspool of violence, crime and corruption?

‘Humane civilization’ evokes in me the imagery of a people that are, by and large, just, honest, and tolerant. They care for the weak and the needy. They are polite, civic-minded, law-abiding, generous, and caring even to foreigners. A humane civilization nurtures and upholds the best virtues of humankind.

By a creative civilization I mean a civilization which finds acceptable, indeed promotes, offbeat, innovative and constructive means for meeting human needs and challenges. It encourages creativity in the arts, sciences, professions, enterprises, livelihoods, governance, and even ideologies.

By a performance excellence oriented civilization I mean one that has a norm of performing tasks well beyond the call of duty. This norm impels people to engage in continuous learning, resourcefulness and improvement, and great satisfaction at doing a job really well.

The widespread pursuit of creativity and innovation, as well as of performance excellence and altruism can unleash a powerful virtuous cycle. Widespread creativity and innovation provide a stream of new products, services, technologies, professions and so forth. Widespread altruism tilts these towards benign uses. Widespread performance excellence orientation ensures high quality implementation. High quality implementation results in widespread commitment to the properties of the system that yield a rising quality of life, which then reinforces even more widespread benevolence, creativity, and excellence. Civilization becomes a rising spiral.

Throughout the world, but especially in what has come to be called the Third World of relatively poor populous countries such as India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Brazil, Mexico, China etc. there are huge challenges to be met: of alleviating mass poverty, controlling pollution, eliminating sex-based discrimination, improving the quality of education, housing, healthcare, improving infrastructure, and – this is infrequently mentioned – improving the ethics, character, competencies, creativity and performance excellence orientation of the people.

Paradigm of Civilizational Greatness

As I mentioned earlier, I believe movement towards civilizational greatness becomes faster when creativity and innovation, humaneness, and excellence orientation become widespread in a society and reinforce each other. The logic may hold true also at the level of individuals, communities, civil society institutions, enterprises, and the government. Let us take a closer look at each of these energizers of civilizational greatness. Let me begin with humaneness.

Humaneness: First of all, I want to distinguish humaneness from humanism. Humanism is a philosophical and ethical stance that emphasizes the centrality of human beings rather than of some divine being, and generally prefers critical thinking and evidence over acceptance of dogma or superstition. Radical humanism rejects the very idea of God (see R. Korde (ed.), Towards Twenty First Century Renaissance, Ahmedabad: Sudhesh Korde, 2011, especially the articles by M.N. Roy and Bertrand Russell). It emphasizes human freedom, human progress and kindness. It emphasizes science rather than divine revelation for understanding the world. While I endorse the emphasis on science for understanding and modifying reality, as well as on freedom of choice, human growth, development, and kindness in my concept of humaneness, I

accept human spirituality equally as a potential basis of elevated brotherhood and sisterhood.

In the context of civilizational greatness, I can think of four kinds of humaneness. The first kind is visionary: for example, commitment to a democratic, egalitarian social democracy, or to a classless society, or a humane market economy, or to a welfare state, or to global peace, to sustainable development, or to eradication of poverty, gender equality, to equality of the people belonging to all the faiths, or to a spiritual society, etc. as exemplified by visionaries like Susan B. Anthony, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, Karl Marx, Swami Vivekananda etc.

The second kind is issue-based social activism, such as rehabilitation of beggars, helping the homeless to get identity cards, protecting self-employed poor women against oppression by the police and the vested interests, empowering the rural poor to get to decent livelihoods, enriching school curriculum in poorly taught classrooms of government schools, digital literacy for illiterate villagers, etc. as exemplified by many social enterprises and activist NGOs.

The third kind is emotive in nature – empathy and compassion for the suffering, regardless of class, caste, or community, love of motherland, and love for all humans and indeed for all life, exemplified by Mother Teresa and many other saints and seers.

The fourth kind is conscientiousness – people having a strong civic sense; a strong commitment to fulfil one's family, organizational, social and other commitments, as exemplified by parents committed to do their best for their progeny; people working in organizations who are loyal to their organizations, as many Japanese are reputed to be; and people who contribute their mite to the well-being of their less fortunate fellow human beings.

Needless to say, humaneness can be exhibited by combinations of the four types.

Performance excellence: I can conceive of two kinds of excellence that are especially relevant to civilizational greatness. The first is performance excellence in terms of quantifiable dimensions but with quality requirements. This kind of excellence has been promoted by psychologists like David McClelland (see D. McClelland, *The Achieving Society*, 1961, Princeton: Van Nostrand). McClelland in turn drew his inspiration from the Protestant Ethic idea of Max Weber (see A. M. McKinnon, 'Elective affinities of the *Protestant Ethic: Weber and the chemistry of capitalism', 2010, Google). This kind of excellence is particularly relevant for assessing productivity, quality of life indicators, crime rates, GDP growth rate, the greater equality of income and wealth, and the like.

The second kind of excellence can be called transformative excellence. This is the excellence of big positive change, often from a low base in performance indicators. It includes big, transformational change not only in quantifiable and quality indicators, but also in intangibles like human skills, knowledge, and consciousness, and level of human development, one's own and that of others. It can relate to how much more one knows compared to the past. In terms of Abraham Maslow's notion of self-actualization, it can relate to how much stronger than in the past is the attempt to grow, develop, and actualize one's own and others' potential (see A. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, New York: Harper, 1954). In terms of the Freudian concept of sublimation, it can relate to how much more one's bestial instincts are transformed into socially beneficial

activities, like, instead of fighting out with knives, by becoming an excellent surgeon; or how far physical aggression is transformed into sport; or sexual promiscuity into holy vows of marriage (see S. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, London: Penguin, 2002). In terms of the Indian Vedantic spiritual conception (see Swami Ranganathananda, *The Message of the Upanishads*, Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968), it can relate to how much more spiritual one becomes and how much more exalted human consciousness becomes.

Creativity: In the context of civilizational greatness, I propose six different forms of creativity (see P. Khandwalla, *Lifelong Creativity: An Unending Quest*, New Delhi: Tata McGraw Hill, 2004):

1. **Essence creativity or the creativity of ideas, viewpoints, perspectives etc., that may trigger innovations of new products, processes, services, technologies, professions, programs, philosophies, sciences, art or literary genres, faiths, etc.**
2. **Elaborative creativity, or the creativity that takes an idea, creative or not, and elaborates it into a distinctive, novel or unique product, process, service, technology, profession, program, philosophy, science, art, faith etc. through value adding additions, subtractions, linkages etc.**
3. **Expressive creativity, that is, creativity observed in offbeat communication, design, pattern, decoration, presentation etc.**
4. **Entrepreneurial creativity, or the creativity involved in launching or operating offbeat or pioneering ventures. These ventures may be commercial or not-for-profit, public or private sector and social or cooperative sector.**
5. **Existential creativity is the creativity involved in turning into a unique or uniquely talented person or collectivity.**
6. **Empowerment creativity is the creativity involved in offbeat or innovative ways of empowering others, especially the weak and the disadvantaged, so that the empowered entity pursues more vigorously growth, development, creativity, self-actualization, etc.**

There are two impact levels of each of these forms of creativity that need to be noted. One impact level is the breakthrough creativity that has a major, long lasting impact, sometimes even at a global level. The other is incremental in its impact, a relatively modest modification that initially, at least, may have a local impact. Both impact levels are important for civilizational greatness. Breakthrough level is obviously important because it pushes back frontiers of knowledge or re-structures an existing pattern so profoundly that it opens up major new avenues of growth, development and innovation. This is the most celebrated level of creativity, and may procure for the creator a major award such as the Nobel Prize.

The incremental impact level of creativity is not to be sniffed at. Many small innovations often turn, over time, into major transformations. Consider the chair as an example. The need for support while sitting triggered the idea of the chair. But over time it transformed itself from a log to rest one's back against or dangle feet from, to a structure with back support and elevation that began to resemble the chair as we know it. Over time, we got more comfortable chairs, the wheel chair, the swivel chair, the

climbing chair, and with much comfort and attractiveness added to the chair through colour, polish, lightness, portability, ornamentation, etc. etc. Incremental creativity is popular level creativity to which millions can contribute. They can do this by making a familiar thing more effective or intriguing, by adding to it, modifying it, enlarging or miniaturizing it, conjoining it with something else, by finding a new use for it, a new process for making it, etc. etc. Addition, modification and transformation through the unsigned incremental innovations of millions down the ages have given our civilization rich depth and texture. Stimulating millions of incremental innovations can be as beneficent in evolving a great civilization as coming up with major or breakthrough innovations.

I want to alert the reader that for civilizational greatness we need to promote benign creativity and restrain malevolent creativity. Benign creativity has positive outcomes that are humane. Malevolent creativity of clever frauds, crimes, destruction, terrorism, warfare, tyranny etc. hampers civilizational greatness. There is inherent goodness in human beings. But unfortunately, we also have savagery in our genes. Goodness needs to be nurtured and evil resisted for civilizational greatness.

Entry Points and Virtuous Cycles for Moving towards Civilizational Greatness

There can be several entry points for moving towards civilizational greatness. Managed effectively, they can result in powerful virtuous cycles that can move a society tangibly towards civilizational greatness. A virtuous cycle is one in which a beneficial entry point leads to other beneficial changes that feedback upon the original entry point. For instance, rapid economic growth is one entry point. The example that comes to mind is that of South Korea (see M. Breen, *The Koreans: Who They Are, What They Want, Where Their Future Lies*; London: St. Martin's Griffin, 2004; see also Wikipedia entry on South Korea). South and North Korea fought a bloody and destructive war during 1950-1953, and over a million died. In 1963, Park Chung-hee, a general, seized power in South Korea and relentlessly pursued an exports-led growth strategy, with emphasis on technologically sophisticated industries like electronics. He also stressed hard work to rebuild South Korea. The result was a 10% per annum economic growth rate that lasted from 1962 to 1994. During this period the South Korean economy expanded some 15 times, and currently South Korea is a prosperous nation with a per capita income per year of about \$40000 in purchasing power parity, about the level of Britain. This has been hailed as the Miracle on the Han River. Along with rapid economic growth came state altruism: heavy investment in healthcare, which is universal, and education. Currently, 80% of those who finish high school go on to study in colleges, and South Korean youngsters are world leaders in math and engineering aptitudes. Starting from 1987, South Korea has become democratic. What is more, it has become strongly innovation-oriented, spending nearly 5% of its GDP on R&D. It has topped in Bloomberg's Innovation Index. Thus, following the decision to go for rapid growth, South Korea has taken pretty big steps towards greater humaneness, creativity, and performance excellence that have reinforced each other.

Second entry point is innovation. The example I want to give is that of 19th Century Britain. Industrial Revolution took place in Britain during 1760 to 1840 on the back of the development of steam engine and the Spinning Jenny. These two innovations transformed transportation and textiles production. In the 19th Century, these were

followed by a host of other innovations (see Directories on 19th Century Britain, Wikipedia).

In the first quarter of the 19th Century came the first incandescent light by passing a current from a battery through a strip of platinum, the world's first locomotive-hauled railway journey made by a steam locomotive, invention of the percussion ignition, the foundation of modern firearms, and the electromagnet. The second quarter was blessed by the mechanical harvest reaping machine, electromagnetic induction used in all modern electric gadgets, the incandescent light bulb, the first commercially successful electric telegraph, the pedal cycle, the first superphosphate fertilizer, the launching of the first steam-powered passenger liner, the facsimile or fax machine, and the chemical telegraph. The third quarter saw the first steam-driven soil ploughing machine, an early version of the injection, Mushet steel, the first commercial steel alloy, and photoconductivity in the element selenium, which led to the production of solar panels. In the fourth quarter arrived the first light switch, a method for classifying fingerprints that proved useful in forensic science, and the world's first wireless station.

Given this avalanche of innovations, no wonder Britain produced a galaxy of industrialists and entrepreneurs in the 19th Century. These included Edmund Cartwright, the idealist Robert Owen, an inspirer of the concept of corporate social responsibility, George Stephenson, Joseph Locke, Isambard Brunel, and Sir Henry Bessemer. Inventions started many new industries, and growing industries wanted inventions, so the partnership between inventors and entrepreneurs remained strong, turning Britain into the most industrialized country of the world in the 19th Century.

The result was rising incomes (see T. Lambert, "A history of Britain in the 19th Century", Google). In the 19th Century, British per capita income grew three times. Higher incomes meant higher aspirations for fulfilling jobs and occupations, resulting in the creation of new occupations. Britain was a deeply flawed democracy at the start of the 19th Century, since neither women nor the working class had the vote. But industry gave birth to the industrial working class (proletariat), and increasingly the workers were able to pressure the parliament to improve working and living conditions. By the end of the 19th Century, Britain was a much more humane society.

There was also an abundance of literary and artistic creativity: the 19th Century produced a galaxy of writers. Wikipedia Directories have listed well over a hundred, including Max Beerbohm, Thomas Carlyle, Winston Churchill, Peter Cunningham, William Gladstone, Thomas Macaulay, G.E. Moore, and Bertrand Russell. It also lists well over a hundred novelists, including the Bronte sisters, Lewis Carroll, Arthur Conan Doyle, Joseph Conrad, Marie Corelli, Charles Dickens, H. Rider Haggard, W.H. Hudson, Rudyard Kipling, W. Somerset Maugham, and H. G. Wells. Over 175 British painters and over 110 architects of note are also listed. Thus, technological innovations led to industrial development, which led to rising incomes through performance excellence, to rising aspirations of the working class, and a more caring state. In the case of 19th Century Britain too, technological innovations triggered a whole lot of beneficial changes that reinforced each other.

Third entry point is nationalism, and the example that comes to mind is that of Israel. Palestine, out of which Israel was carved out by the U.N., was a British protectorate (see A. Bregman, *A History of Israel*, Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002; see also Wikipedia, “A history of Israel”). The yearning of Jews for a homeland after their horrible persecution in Nazi Germany led to a long struggle against British occupation, and eventually, in 1948 the state of Israel was formed. Histadrut, part union, part cooperative (see Chapter 8), played a major role in catalyzing the industrial development of Israel through cooperatives and companies. Israel became a social democracy, with many welfare measures for its citizens. It was an endangered nation because it had hostile Arab neighbours intent on its destruction. Nationalism and insecurity made Israel invest heavily in R&D and military technologies. There were also heavy inflows of funds from wealthy Jews, the U.S. (which has a highly influential Jewish population), and Germany (in the form of reparations). The result of all these factors was a benign state (for Jews, not for Palestinians), high orders of creativity and innovation that saw a nation of barely 8 million garner around ten Nobel prizes, and a hard working population known for its performance excellence that was intent on building a strong economy and an invincible state. The only dark spot has been the egregious treatment of Palestinians and the Israeli colonization of Palestinian land.

Fourth point of entry is the welfare state. The welfare state is based on the principles of equality of opportunity, a reasonably egalitarian distribution of wealth and income, and the state taking responsibility for meeting the basic needs of the people, such as for health, education, housing, infrastructure, employment, minimum income, etc. (see Wikipedia entry on the welfare state). The welfare state is a humane state. But it has far reaching repercussions. The basic psychological security it provides to people triggers in many the need for self-actualization that Abraham Maslow talked about, and this in turn leads to widespread creativity and performance excellence.

In Norway, for instance, the welfare state evolved over a period of several decades, based on a broad social and political consensus on its desirability (see J. Sorvoll, “The Norwegian welfare state 2005-2015: public attitudes, political debates, and future challenges”, 2015, Google; see also Wikipedia entry on Norway). It began with the establishment of the State’s Housing Bank to finance mass construction of affordable housing, and the introduction of a universal child allowance scheme in 1946. The compulsory sickness insurance scheme was introduced in 1953. In 1966, the parliament introduced a comprehensive national insurance scheme incorporating various public pensions. It encompassed pensions for invalids, the aged, orphans and widows; unemployment benefits, health insurance and insurance for occupational injuries. This was combined with a policy of rapid industrial development, and resulted in Norway having a higher per capita income than the U.S. Norway has frequently topped the world on Human Development Index and also Legatum Prosperity Index, and has topped OECD countries on Better Life Index, Index of Public Integrity, and Democracy Index. With a population of just over 5 million, it has won 13 Nobel prizes by the year 2014, suggesting a high order of creativity and performance excellence. In the case of Norway too, the investment in the welfare state led to many beneficial changes that

reinforced each other and resulted in a significant movement towards civilizational greatness.

Fifth entry point is removal or diminution of a major social, political or economic block that holds up the entire society. Kemal Ataturk dismantled the feudal Ottoman Empire. He modernized education, and turned Turkey into a secular state. He shut down religious courts and replaced the Sharia law by a civil code (see N. Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest*; London: Allen Lane, 2011, and “Ataturk’s reforms”, Wikipedia). His abolition of traditionalism and feudalism unchained Turkey and led to its emergence as a modern state with a growing economy and many changes that were innovations for Turkey. Beginning in 1979, China under Deng Xiaoping liberalized the over-regulated Chinese economy, and this opened the floodgates of Chinese entrepreneurship (see “Reforms under Deng Xiaoping”, Wikipedia). For instance, between 1980 and 1995 over 22 million manufacturing units were established in rural China, so that by 1995, 70% of rural GDP was not from agriculture but from industry (see H. Xu, “Environmental policy and rural industrial development in China”, *Human Ecology Review*, Vol. 62, 2, 1999, pp. 72-83)! This liberalization led to a large increase in the growth rate of the economy, virtually eliminated unemployment and under-employment in the rural areas (some 130 million were employed in these enterprises), a sharp reduction in poverty, and an improvement in quality of life indicators such as longevity and literacy. Indian liberalization of the economy in 1991 from excessive controls and regulations also led to an upsurge in growth rate and industrial development (see “Economic liberalization in India”, Wikipedia). By 2015, exports of goods and services had increased over ten times in dollar terms and the growth rate of the economy had risen from around 5% to around 7%. This led to a sharp reduction in deep poverty and improvement in quality of life indicators.

Another entry point is investment in human capital, meaning in education and skilling of people. Research has shown that investment in human capital yields three times as much growth as investment in physical capital (plant and machinery) (see “The contribution of literacy to economic growth and individuals’ earnings”, *Education Matters*, Google). Literacy has been found to have many beneficial consequences, such as economic growth, better health, greater cultural diversity and tolerance for it, greater capacity to reflect critically on issues, increase in self-esteem, empowerment, greater political participation, etc. (see ‘Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006’, especially Chapter 5, Google). An interesting research finding from Viet Nam is that the higher the educational attainment of an entrepreneur, the more innovative the entrepreneur tends to be (see S. Vixathep, N. Matsunaga, and K. Luong, “Human capital, innovation, and productivity in Viet Nam’s SMEs – a survey of manufacturing firms in Hanoi City”, 2015, Google). Thus, a concentrated effort by the state and civil society to improve literacy, educational levels, quality of education, and vocational skills can have far-reaching positive impact on increasing incomes and the quality of personal and social life, nudging a society towards civilizational greatness. The results can be even better, especially in Third World countries, if there is heavy investment in improving the health of the people, for healthier people are also more productive people

and possibly kinder people (see G. Martin, A. Grant, and M. D'Agostino, "Global health funding and economic development", *Global Health*, Vol. 8, 8, 2012, Google).

Another point of entry is digitization of the government and civil society (see C. Dilmegani, B. Korkmaz, and M. Lundquist, "Public-sector digitization: The trillion-dollar challenge", McKinsey & Company, December 2014, Google). Digitization of the government enables the citizens to access government information about the services the government provides and its schemes, rules, regulations, dues to the government in the form of duties and taxes, etc. almost instantly. Similarly, it enables the government to access inter-departmental information as well as information about organizations and individuals in the private sector, public sector, and civil society almost instantly. When appropriately organized, digitization can drastically improve administrative efficiency, lower costs of administration, meet the needs of citizens and organizations more fully, drastically lower the chances of fraud and corruption, and increase government accountability. It can unleash a whole lot of innovations in the government sector, the private sector, and the civil society (see M. Fleming, "Digitization changes everything: improving economic measurement in an era of radical innovation and transformation", *Monthly Labor Review*, October 2015, Google). There is evidence that digitization has facilitated the growth of the so-called creative industries in the European Union (see O. Acker, F. Grone, T. Lefort, and L. Kropiunigg, *The Digital Future of Creative Europe*, PWC, Google). Creative industries are the ones in which creative content has to be produced. These include publishing, film and television, music, and gaming.

Over 130 countries have developed various online services. As an example, Britain's gov.uk online site serves as a one stop information hub for all government departments. As another example, citizens of Estonia can use electronic identification cards to vote, pay taxes, and access over 160 services online, from unemployment benefits to property registration. An indirect benefit of digitization of the government is that it forces the government to streamline its functions, processes and services, and thus improves the quality of governance. Greater government effectiveness leads to lower transactions costs for citizens and organizations, and makes the economy more competitive and the society more egalitarian by creating a more level playing field. It also empowers citizens and organizations, since their knowledge of their entitlements, rules, regulations, etc. is at their fingertips, and they can use it to pressure the government for a fair deal. The benefits can be potentially very large for village populations, for many living in them are unaware of government schemes that raise living standards. We shall see in Chapter 5 the example of a village named Punsari that dramatically improved living conditions because of the ability of that village's local governance body to tap online into a large number of such schemes.

I may have given the impression that these entry points and virtuous cycles are relevant only for the efflorescence of societies. With appropriate modifications to suit the context, they could also be relevant to large collectivities like government bodies, associations, business groups and large enterprises, NGOs, institutions, etc. Surely, rapid growth, innovations, strong loyalty to the entity, greater benefits for the stakeholders of the

entity, elimination of a stumbling block like conservatism, extensive skilling, and digitization can trigger beneficial cycles that can culminate in excellence in any large collectivity.

The point is that movement towards civilizational greatness is not as difficult as it may seem. There are many entry points and virtuous cycles. If the entry points are appropriately supplemented by governmental and social actions, and appropriately managed, they can yield super results. Let me give, in some detail, the example of Sweden in which various entry points and virtuous cycles are discernible.

Example of Sweden

Sweden is not a great economic or political power. It has, however, used many entry points towards civilizational greatness as conceived in this book. Here they are (see Wikipedia entries relating to Sweden):

1. Sweden is an affluent country of 10 million with a per capita income in PPP terms of \$47000 in 2015, only about 10% less than that of the U.S. Sweden is a democracy and a market economy with sizeable public and private sectors. It has traveled far from the 19th Century when it was a relatively poor country with an autocratic monarch, and had been slow to industrialize compared to Britain, Germany, etc.

2. For much of the past hundred years Sweden has been ruled by the Swedish Social Democratic Party. The Party has promoted a liberal and egalitarian democratic socialism. It supports the provision of an all-encompassing social welfare system for the citizens, paid for from a progressive taxation regime. It supports an economy involving a partnership between capital and labour, with government oversight to resolve disputes between the two. The ruling party forms policy in consultation with the employers' federations as well as the union federations. Such society-wide cooperation has been an important entry point for Sweden to move towards civilizational greatness.

3. Sweden has evolved a distinctive system for maintaining industrial peace and harmony. Agreements between employers and trade unions are generally worked out by negotiation. A labour court, made up of three impartial members and five representing employers, workers, and salaried employees, has jurisdiction over the application, interpretation, and enforcement of collective agreements. Industrial peace has generally prevailed since the end of the 1930s. Swedish law requires employee representation on the boards of directors of companies.

4. Early in the last Century the Swedish Government evolved a cradle-to-the-grave sort of compassionate welfare state. It has become a model for many other nations. It provides financial security to all citizens. Monetary support is provided for children up to 16 and support is also available for older students. Benefits are provided to parents to be able to be home from work to take care of their children for up to 480 days per child. Special benefits are provided to care for sick and disabled children. Housing allowance is provided to those who can't afford housing. There are benefits if one is ill or disabled and can't work; for the unemployed for up to 60 weeks; for those who have retired; and for those who are indigent. Sweden's entire population has equal access to public health care. The health care system is publicly funded and run and funded by the county councils. Longevity in Sweden is over 80.

5. As a consequence of Sweden's welfare state and its funding through progressive taxation, Sweden is one of the world's most egalitarian societies. It has the third lowest Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality in a society. By way of comparison, the U.S. has the world's 57th highest Gini coefficient. The Swedish welfare state is an important entry point for Sweden's emerging excellence.

6. Education is mandatory for all children between the ages of 7 and 16. From the age of one, children can be admitted to pre-school. Pre-schools provide an environment that stimulates children's development and learning and enables parents to combine parenthood with work or studies. This pedagogy is continued in compulsory schools. The vast majority of schools in Sweden are municipally run. University education has been free of charge for Swedish, EU/EEA, and Swiss citizens. Interestingly, women are more educated than men: 26% of women vs. 19% of men have post-secondary school education of three years or more. Roughly 10% of students enrolled in Swedish universities have international backgrounds and this figure rises to 20% for those studying for research degrees. Swedish universities attract a high proportion of adult-learners, and over 60% of students are women. Nearly 20000 students are enrolled for a Ph.D. degree in any given year. Sweden has at least three world class universities. These attributes endow Sweden with a varied research culture that draws upon expertise from all over the world. This is an additional entry point for Swedish excellence.

7. Sweden has been a top performer on quality of life indicators. On the index of Life Satisfaction, Sweden was 4th in the world, while the U.S. was 16th. The index measured material well-being, life expectancy at birth, the quality of family life, political freedoms, job security, fineness of climate, safety, quality of community life, lack of corruption, and gender equality. The U.N. has rated Sweden as the most gender-equal nation in the world.

8. Criminality is low in Sweden, and is on the wane. The Swedish Crime Survey shows that crime has decreased since 2005. Despite the growth of population, the number of convictions has remained between 110,000 and 130,000 in recent decades — a decrease since the 1970s, when they numbered around 300,000.

9. Sweden has been an altruistic nation. It gives 1% of its GDP in foreign aid, that is, over \$4 billion. This exceeds the U.N.'s target of giving 0.7% of GDP in foreign aid. The money goes to 20-odd needy nations. Nearly a fifth goes to promoting democracy, human rights, equality, sustainable development and environmental protection. The country has consistently supported the United Nations and has been one of the largest providers of personnel for peacekeeping operations. Around \$2.5 billion private sector foreign aid also flows out to needy countries. On a per capita basis, Swedish foreign aid may be about four times higher than that of the U.S.

10. Sweden has one of the best governance systems in the world. World Bank based research on governance systems of over 150 countries indicates that on the criterion of 'Government Effectiveness', Sweden was rated one of the highest, as also on 'Rule of Law' and 'Control of Corruption'. Its ratings on these criteria have been far above those for India. Along with Britain and many other countries, Sweden has opted for large scale 'agencification' of the government. This is a form of decentralization involving professional, instead of bureaucratic management of government entities. This

has added to the effectiveness of government functioning. For instance, the number of government decisions has been cut by a factor of 4 since the 1960s by delegating decision-making authority to the agency level. On Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, Sweden consistently ranks as one of the least corrupt. Administrative excellence is another entry point for Swedish excellence.

11. Sweden strongly favours creativity and innovation. It scores high on 'climate for innovation'. In the Innovation Union Scoreboard for 2011, Sweden was ranked as the leading EU nation out of 27 countries. In the INSEAD Global Innovation Index for 2011, Sweden ranked second, A contributing factor to Sweden's strong innovation position is that, relative to GDP, industry invests a great deal in R&D. Sweden boasts such major inventions as the pacemaker, the three-point seat belt, the GPS, the tetrapak, the telephone handset, the flat screen monitor, ultrasound for medical diagnosis, the safety match, dynamite, and the zipper. Besides, Swedish writers, scientists, economists, statesmen, medical researchers etc. have won some 30 Nobel Prizes despite the small size of Sweden's population. Americans have won eight times more Nobel Prizes, but their population is over 30 times larger.

12. The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2011-12 puts Sweden into third place. This Index measures the institutions, policies, and factors that set the stage for sustainable economic prosperity.

13. Literature and the arts are flourishing in Sweden. Swedish fiction is widely translated. Between 2006 and 2010, more than 3300 titles were translated into some 50 other languages. Swedish people read a lot. Each year, about 65 million books are borrowed from public libraries, over 6 per capita. About 40 percent are children's books. The Swedish Arts Council nurtures interactions between the state, the regions, municipalities and representatives of cultural life in Sweden. It does this through libraries, museums and performing arts centres. The aim is to safeguard and develop Swedish national cultural policy, and to promote cultural diversity. The country is renowned for its design and urban planning. The attempt is to design vibrant and aesthetic neighborhoods, complete with schools, workplaces, community buildings, parks, health clinics, and shops. Sweden is famous for the design in wood, glass and other media. The interplay of handicraft traditions and social democratic ideals has led to world-renowned work in industrial design, ergonomics, child safety, and products for the disabled. Artists are not completely dependent on commercial sales and wealthy patrons. Their creations are encouraged by public funding. The security provided by the welfare state frees them to take aesthetic risks without the fear of destitution. One result is an artistic community known for avant-garde innovation. A parliamentary act stipulates that 1 percent of the expenditure on new public buildings must be devoted to works of art.

14. A serious negative for Sweden is marital instability. The divorce rate is, with the Americans, the highest in the world. But children's upbringing has changed far for the better. Swedish parenting traditions have been developing away from traditional gender roles and authoritarian parenting styles since the end of World War II. Before World War II, parenting in Sweden was based on a strict and traditional model. Women stayed at home and took care of the kids. Men worked, made the decisions for the

household and disciplined the children with physical force. After World War II, Swedish society went through a series of increasingly significant changes. In 1958, physical punishment in school was outlawed. In 1979, it was made illegal in the home, too. Through the mechanism of paid paternity leave, Swedish fathers are now heavily involved in child care. Reportedly, 85 percent of Swedish fathers take paternity leave. Many Swedish men now identify with home life as much as with their work.

15. A people's values indicate what kind of persons they want to be and what kind of life they want to lead. Most Swedes are members of a Lutheran church, the Church of Sweden. It is a Protestant offshoot, and preaches liberalism, altruism and a strong work ethic. It has had a tradition of educational, social welfare, and missionary activities. Swedes are known for their pro-social inclinations and desire to be good persons. According to a survey, the top ten Swedish values are honesty, responsibility, justice, humour (some may question this), happiness, togetherness, meaningfulness, involvement, teamwork, and adaptability (see N. Shipley, "Top ten list of Swedish values", Feb. 8, 2010, Google). Most of these values are compatible with being a good citizen, family member, employee, employer, and professional.

16. Despite Sweden's small population, a large number of Swedes have attained international renown, and that too in a wide variety of fields. This suggests that striving for excellence is a potent motivator in Sweden. These eminent Swedes include the likes of the chemist Svante Arrhenius, Torsten Wiesel, a Nobel Laureate in medicine, several Nobel Laureates in literature, Dag Hammarskjöld, the U.N.'s former Secretary General, Gunnar Myrdal and Bertil Ohlin, Nobel Laureates in economics, Ingmar Bergman, the famous film director, Ingrid Bergman, the famous actress, Carl Milles, the famous sculptor, Jenny Lind, the celebrated soprano singer, and Astrid Lindgren, who was awarded the so-called Alternative Nobel Prize. Sweden has also produced a galaxy of tennis stars, such as Bjorn Borg, Stefan Edberg, and Mats Wilander, winners of multiple Grand Slams.

17. Sweden has a robust civil society. Sweden ranks among the best countries in the world in the Freedom of the Press index. The media are able to access information through one of the most robust freedom of information statutes. An informant can choose to remain anonymous to avoid reprisals, and employers are legally prohibited from investigating the source of information. Social movements, such as for sustainable development, have been strong.

What makes Sweden such a remarkable civilization? Through its welfare state, Sweden provides a platform for the widespread rise of what Abraham Maslow called higher order needs or self-actualization needs (see Maslow, cited earlier). These include the need to excel in one's calling and be creative, and the urge to be humane. As a social system that promotes autonomous human development, good citizenship, and tolerance, the Swedes have developed a distinctive identity while remaining pluralistic. This identity is anchored in cooperation even between traditionally antagonistic groups like workers and employers. Such cooperation facilitates widespread innovations and changes. Sweden also is a relatively big investor in R&D, and this provides it with new products and services that facilitate a rising living standard and surpluses that can be spent for humane purposes. The result is the emergence of a virtuous cycle of growing

humaneness, creativity and innovativeness, and the pursuit of excellence by people in their chosen vocations feeding back into greater goodness, creativity and excellence.

Sweden is not an economic or political superpower; but it stands tall as a role model civilization. The world's nations differ widely, and each must forge its own distinctive path to civilizational greatness. But Sweden is a notable inspiration.

Concluding Comments

Some may think that the model of civilizational greatness outlined earlier is utopian and unattainable. Perhaps. However, I see civilizational greatness as a direction of desirable change rather than a destination that can be reached in full measure or known accurately. Great ideas have inspired many to travel on sublime paths even if very few reached the destination. Constitutions of democratic states do make grand statements about the quality and purpose of governance, though few, if any, nations fully live up to these. But these statements do outline what the state should aspire to do. Box 1.1 outlines in brief the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Indian Constitution. These are not legally enforceable, but they embody a lofty vision of a democratic, secular, and humane India. That vision has by no means been fully actualized, but several major steps taken by the Indian state have been inspired by this vision. In the same way, my hope is that the vision of civilizational greatness outlined here may trigger a movement towards civilizational greatness. The suggestions I have made later about the sort of governance, enterprise management, galvanization of communities, educational institutions, NGOs etc., if pursued with sincerity, competence and with whatever modifications that are contextually necessary, may accelerate this movement towards civilizational greatness.

Box 1.1

Directive Principles of State Policy of the Indian Constitution: Key Elements

- 1. The directive principles ensure that the State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by promoting a social order in which social, economic and political justice infuses all institutions of life. The State shall provide free legal aid to ensure that equal opportunities for securing justice is ensured to all, and is not denied by reason of economic or other disabilities. The State shall endeavour to secure a uniform civil code for all citizens.**
- 2. The State shall work towards reducing economic inequality as well as inequalities in status and opportunities, not only among individuals, but also among groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations.**
- 3. The State shall aim for securing the right to an adequate means of livelihood for all citizens, both men and women as well as equal pay for equal work for both men and women. The State shall endeavour to provide the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, within the limits of economic capacity, as well as provide for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief. The State should also ensure living wage and proper working conditions for workers, with full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural activities.**

4. The State should work to prevent concentration of wealth and means of production in a few hands, and try to ensure that ownership and control of the material resources is distributed to best serve the common good.

5. Child abuse and exploitation of workers should be prevented. Children should be allowed to develop in a healthy manner and should be protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment. The State should provide free and compulsory education to all children till they attain the age of 14 years.

6. The State shall also work for the organization of village panchayats (democratic village self-government bodies) and enable them to function as units of self-government. The State shall promote cottage industries in rural areas.

7. The State should work for the economic and educational upliftment of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other weaker sections of society.

8. The directive principles commit the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health.

9. The State should protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wild life of the country.

10. The State shall strive for the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security, just and honourable relations between nations, respect for international law and treaty obligations, as well as settlement of international disputes by arbitration.

The vision embodied in the Directive Principles has been pursued tangibly through government planned socio-economic development that has increased incomes, increased literacy, and improved health over the decades, the Constitutional rights to information and education, reservation of jobs in the government for historically disadvantaged communities, attempts to eliminate gender inequality, laws to ban child exploitation, partial employment guarantee for the poor, empowerment of local self-government, the doctrine of Panch Sheel, active contribution to the U.N.'s peace keeping efforts, etc. etc.

X

Let me conclude with a poem by Tagore that has abided with me since the time I had to recite it in a school assembly. It still captures for me some of the essence of a great civilization:

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father,*

Let my country awake.

Overview of the Book

In this chapter I presented the challenge civilizations in Third World settings face, especially India. The challenge is of how to harness democracy and the market economy so that the malaises that spring from the greed for power and greed for profit are curbed, and both democracy and the market economy are harnessed to yield widespread humaneness, creativity, and performance excellence. The chapter highlighted several entry points and virtuous cycles for moving towards civilizational greatness, and how Sweden has been able to move so effectively towards it.

In Chapter 2, I want to relate the evolution of two leading countries known for their savage imperialism in the first half of the 20th Century. Both have largely sublimated their terrifyingly aggressive instincts, and despite the humiliation of crushing defeat and extensive wreckage in the Second World War, they have taken many steps towards civilizational greatness. The countries are Germany and Japan. Both the countries demonstrate that greater humaneness can be socially designed despite a tradition hostile to humaneness through an activist state. They also demonstrate how creativity and innovation can be socially engineered. They further show how performance excellence can be enhanced through fostering a strong work ethic, making education affordable to the poorest, and a free market economy.

Children are the base of the social pyramid. In Chapter 3, I look at the future of children. I discuss how they can be nurtured at home and school for instilling in them greater humaneness, civic-mindedness, creativity, and high achievement orientation. I give examples of schools and pedagogies that can accomplish this objective. I suggest a national Youth Empowerment Program for Greatness and funded mainly by the state but managed autonomously, to instil in the youthful fine citizenship values, change agent skills, training of each participant in at least one vocation, etc.

In Chapter 4, I continue the emphasis on education based on values and innovative pedagogy, but for post-school youngsters. I give several examples of a diverse set of outstanding institutions that in their own fashion shape values, personalities, and skills of young persons. I summarize the key traits that can help any academic institution to be a change-maker for fostering civilizational greatness.

In Third World settings, communities based on locality, caste, religion etc. powerfully shape the values and beliefs of their members. In Chapter 5, I give examples of several diverse communities located in urban as well as rural areas of the Indian sub-continent, ranging in size from a couple of millions to a few hundred. These communities have vitalized themselves. I conclude by drawing the lessons the examples yield, and the way self-vitalization of communities can be accelerated with the help of local change agents. I suggest the kinds of persons who can play a change agent role in comatose communities.

In Chapter 6, I give brief accounts of several social entrepreneurs and their achievements. These are people who start ventures for profit or not-for-profit, but have a social mission that they wish to pursue through the venture. If such social entrepreneurs can be multiplied thousands of times, any Third World society would be well on its way to civilizational greatness. I identify the skills such social entrepreneurs need to possess, so that appropriate grooming programs can be organized.

In Chapter 7, I turn to NGOs, the bastions of a vigorous civil society. In the chapter I illustrate the work done and the social impact made by a number of exceptional NGOs inspired by a spiritual vision. In Chapter 8, I describe the work of another set of outstanding NGOs inspired by humanitarian rather than spiritual ideals. I discuss some of the traits of these outstanding NGOs. I also discuss the main challenges faced by most NGOs and the options available in tackling them, so that many more NGOs can pursue their mission more effectively.

In Chapter 9, I discuss the issue of whether commercial enterprises, primed to maximize profits, can also be humane. I describe many paths of humaneness of commercial enterprises, and present evidence that ‘goodness pays’, that is, humane commercial enterprises are likely to show higher long term profitability than ones that are only short-term profit maximization oriented. I also describe several successful commercial enterprises that are not only humane but also innovative. I argue that it is possible to build a business civilization that is humane, creative, and performance excellence oriented.

In Chapter 10, I give several examples from across the Third World of how government bodies charged with major missions were managed successfully to yield high, national-level impact. These are missions that often directly move a society towards greater humaneness, creativity, and work ethic. I especially

stress the use of ‘agencification’, a major government innovation of the 20th Century for this purpose. Agencification brings into the management of major national missions a high level of dedicated and competent professionalism often absent in the bureaucratic/political management of these missions.

In Chapter 11, I discuss the problems created by bureaucratic administration of government, and how these can be largely mitigated by a new paradigm of government administration called New Public Management (NPM) that has been adopted widely after suitable modifications in both First World and Third World countries. I present evidence that good, NPM-type administration pays in terms of indicators of national performance. I give the example of Malaysia that adapted the principles of NPM to its situation and improved its economic performance and the quality of governance.

In Chapter 12, I present my reflections on why democracies often mal-function and what can be done to redress some of the inherent flaws of democracies, especially parliamentary democracies. I present suggestions about how to stabilize the tenure of elected governments in parliamentary systems, how to improve upon the first-past-the-post electoral system that frequently installs governments that have got a minority of votes polled but due to vote bank politics, manage to get a majority of seats in the legislature, how to improve the quality of people who become ministers, how ministerial accountability can be increased, how to curb elections-related corruption, how to improve the performance of legislators etc.

Chapter 13 is a status report on modern India. I touch upon various sources of information about the behemoth that India is and try to reach some sort of convergence. I examine nearly a dozen generalizations about India and try to assess their fit with data, highlighting both achievements and failures. I trace five phases through which India modernized, beginning with the 19th Century and ending with the present phase of globalization.

Chapter 14 looks at India, China, and the U.S. Can China and the U.S. be role models for India? What can India learn from the world’s fastest growth economy and the world’s wealthiest economy? What should India avoid absorbing from them?

In Chapter 15, drawing on the conclusions of the previous chapters, I sketch an agenda to revitalize Indian governance to speed up India’s ascent towards civilizational greatness. This roadmap, with suitable modifications, may well be useful for most other comparable Third World countries, and possibly also First World countries suffering from civilizational ennui. In the light of the launch of numerous public welfare schemes by the Modi Government, I indicate how their implementation could be greatly improved through agencification.

In Chapter 16, I emphasize that a powerful way of pushing India towards civilizational greatness is for the government, the civil society, and the business sector to join hands. I stress the partnering of the government with the civil society, especially with quality NGOs, academic institutions, and associations, and the partnering of the business sector with the civil society. I also outline in some detail a program in which the government, the civil society, and the business sector can come together for grooming a million young change agents a year to speed up transformation, and describe the curriculum, the pedagogy, and the costs and benefits.