Book Review

Fast Forward Toward Civilizational Greatness: Agenda for India

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Generally, socio-economic development of a country is seen in terms of per capita income, industrial development, quality of life, etc. Moving forward, the author seeks to answer questions like, “Does socio-economic development make people more humane, more creative, more performance-oriented? Does it lead to better civilization? If not, then what kind of governance, business and civil society ecology the nation needs to create that not only yields economic development but also makes the country more caring, creative and performance excellence oriented.” Towards this end, the author examines certain ideas about how civilization in developing countries especially India, can rise to greater heights. According to the author, civilization is great when there are widespread humanness, creativity and performance excellence. This, in turn, would bring in changes and innovations that society and its institutions are likely to be humane, well created and performance excellence oriented.

The author strongly feels that the desire for civilizational greatness is feasible, though there are numerous concerns across the world such as the rising tide of aggression and violence, corruption, conflict etc. In support of his argument, the author reviews innovations and changes brought in, and research findings from all over the world to seek solutions so that societies shall mitigate or even eliminate such concerns. In the book, the author shares interesting experiences in the form of success stories of some nations like Sweden and post- World War II Germany and Japan which struggled a lot to create a much better society. He also shares experiences of these nations towards civilizational greatness when there is increasingly widespread humanness, constructive creativity and performance excellence in society.
To know more about civilizational greatness, it is necessary to understand how the major constituents of a society can become more humane, creative and performance excellence oriented which include social entrepreneurs, social leaders and civil society institutions. Several examples have been stated in the book as to how companies in particular can blend humanness and ethics with innovation to produce superior business results and thereby promote a high-performance innovationist civilization that is humane. The author talks about a model of excellent business civilization when enterprises strive for profits with social concerns and find an innovative way of increasing their share in the market. In addition, he highlights several design flaws of democracies and suggests remedial measures that would make democracies vibrant and effective in developing countries.

Talking about India in particular, the erosion of ethical values in turn is breeding widespread corruption, violence and discord. Hence, the author desired to seek a way out by holding conversations among the thinkers for pondering the fate of civilization, and what can be done. Based on the same, the author goes in for partnering between government, civil society and business to spread rapidly humanness, constructive creativity and performance excellence. He proposes the design of an ambitious programme of grooming a million change agents. The author suggests a one-year youth development programme to groom a million change agents a year for India’s rapid transformation towards a humane, creative and excellence oriented society. In regard to transformation, several role models of innovative social entrepreneurs, social leaders and civil society institutions to demonstrate how the civil society of a nation can strengthen the movement towards civilizational greatness. In addition, children and young people need to be groomed at home and at educational institutions to become more humane, creative and achievement-oriented.

The book is divided into sixteen chapters, each one is worth going through its contents. To elaborate, Chapter 1 on the Paradigm of civilizational greatness, discusses an illustrative list of literature of movement of civilizational greatness and also how Sweden which could move towards this end successfully. In chapter 2 on Germany and Japan - excellent societies, the author states how these two countries are known for their savage imperialism in the first half of the 20th century and demonstrated that greater humanness can be enhanced. Chapter 3 on Nurturing for greatness, deals with grooming of children to instil in the youth fine citizenship and change-agent skills.

Moving forward, Chapter 4 on Excellent post-school educational institutions, summarizes the key traits that can help any academic institution to a change-maker for fostering civilizational process. Chapter 5 on Exceptional self-learning communities, shares examples of several communities located in urban and rural areas in India and concludes that such communities shall be accelerated with the help of local change agents. Chapter 6 on Exceptional social enterprises and social lenders, talks about entrepreneurs with social mission could do a lot in
promoting civilizational greatness for which the author suggests the required skill-set that they should possess for organizing grooming programmes for entrepreneurs.

Both Chapter 7 on God and greatness and Chapter 8 on Towards NGO greatness, explains the work done by NGOs and the impact of their work in enhancing civilizational greatness. In Chapter 9 on Enterprise excellence; exceptional mission – charged government bodies, the author says that humane commercial enterprises can experience higher long-term profitability than ones that are only short-term profit maximization oriented. Coming to Chapter 10 on Exceptional mission-charged government bodies, the author gives examples from developing countries of how governmental bodies charged with major missions were managed successfully to high yield and national impact.

In Chapter 11 the author discusses the problems created by the administration of government, and how these can be largely mitigated by a new paradigm of the government administration called New Public Management. In Chapter 12 on Designing democracy for civilizational greatness, the author presents his reflections on why democracies often mal-function and what can be done to redress some of the inherent flaws of democracies.

In Chapter 13 the author provides an account of how India modernised, beginning with the 19th Century and ending with the present phase of globalisation, empowerment of the disadvantaged, digitalization and an emerging welfare state. In Chapter 14 he emphasizes what India can learn from China, the fastest growing economy and the US, the wealthiest country and avoid from their experiences. In Chapter 15 on India ascent through excellent governance, the author sketches an agenda to revitalize Indian governance. In this regard, the major items include agencification, e-governance, and effective functioning.

In the last Chapter 16 that highlights India's ascent through partnering, the author emphasizes that a powerful way of moving India faster towards civilizational greatness is for the government, the civil society and the business sector to join hands. This kind of partnering would boost the chances of India's rapid advance towards civilizational greatness. Thus, all these chapters are seemed to be rich in contents with a long list of references and experience-based. The readers would develop interest while reading the document being educative and motivate them to contribute towards civilizational greatness of our beloved country.

Overall, the book is brought out at a time when India is marching ahead to celebrate its seventy-fifth year of Independence in 2022. Keeping the society free from corruption, violence and build up the country economically stronger are the important missions to be achieved. The author deserves appreciation for sharing thought-provoking ideas to create a good society and great civilization by establishing a correlation between creativity, humanness and excellence based on his rich experience in research and teaching. All in all, this proves to be a rare
document for all those readers concerned with the task of promoting socio-economic development of India on a war footing.