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Farming – The Basis of Human Culture

When asked, “What subject you think plays the most important role in human society?” for most people, probably the answer could be subjects such as math, physics, biology, and chemistry. However, farming is one of the essential subjects for all human beings even though it is ignored in most cases because people rarely have chance to get in direct touch with fields or crops. In fact, farming, as the oldest subject that almost follows throughout entire human history, breeds human’s arts, technology, and social science.

It seems that for most people, what farming brings could bring them is only food. Obviously, food is one of the most vital things for survival, and it is also what farming initially created for. However, as farming develops, human can do things other than farming such as advancing themselves and developing technologies if them got surplus foods and be able to afford crop failures. Imagine a world where all humans are still struggling for food because they lack of enough farming technology. It is easy to infer that such a world has no brilliant human arts or other technology. Farming not only provides living resources but also supports further human development. It is the starting point of human development, but not the destination.

Although the current technology allows people farming automatically and what they need to do are only machine operations, the history of farming is far rougher. Farming is a process where humans fought with got known, and finally took advantage of nature. Imagine during the prehistorian times, our ancestors are struggling against weeds, pests, and bad weather. As the preciousness of foods and seeds, crop failure is unaffordable to them. Under such a dilemma, they tried to farming prudently, and every failure accumulated their experience; they finally found ways to successfully grew and harvested foods, which is a significant stage for farming. After they could successfully grow foods, they are able to live in a more stable way and have the chance to think about things other than how to survive. Farming can be considered as a process that human overcomes nature; on the other hand, farming also changes human, that is what farming brings us underlying.

The most evident change for humans is that people are no longer just satisfied with enough food. They start thinking about how to work more efficiently, looking for a chance to go to a distant place, trying to get amusement, and getting a better life. All of these trigger the development of human culture. Also, because they had to take care of their field, ancient people stopped vagabondage, building shelters, and starting their agricultural civilization. For example, in ancient China, those once living near the Yangtze River who are called “Hemudu People” are described as “People who migrate to wherever water and grass are available.” They traveled, looked for foods, and finally found a place suitable for growing foods. After Hemudu People were able to farm steadily, they gave birth to splendid Chinese civilization. Agricultural civilization allows people to form small communities. Within such communities, people could help each other and work in groups. Farming not only brings human technology development but also provides rich material for literal and arts. One of the most important masterpieces in Chinese literal history, *The Book of Songs*, is considered derived from ancient farming people’s songs. Within this book, we can see the best wishes of people in ancient China for the future.

Farming contributes to the development of ancient human society, and it is believed that it would also play an essential role in our future lives. What will farming be like in the future? Nobody knows. Maybe crops with a higher yield, or more tolerate crops that could be grown in a harsh environment, or even the “super crop” that could provide all human required nutrition, but it is inevitable that farming would still be the basis of our society as the earth carries all human beings.

Farming, an ancient subject, is fading from people’s sight as technology develops. However, its importance is never faded; it is like an elderly mother, speechlessly supports its children growing, watching them creating wonders, while itself gradually becomes unobtrusive. It affects almost all aspects of human society, arts, and technologies on an enormous scale, much beyond people’s stereotype. It can be invisible, but it should never be ignored.

This essay, with great sorrow, also in remembrance of Yuan Longping, an academician of Chinese Academy of Sciences who passed away in May 21st, 2021. He is a man who gave up a munificent life, devoted himself in field investigating and growing hybrid rice throughout all his life, saving millions of people from starving. People like Yuan should never be forgotten.