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## **Modernity and Culture**

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### **Introduction.**

Today's life is very much under effect of 'modernity'. It automatically impact on culture so I think that modernity & culture are depends upon each other because culture of today with technologies, smart phones, internet etc. & ancient or traditional culture there is a difference like huge difference which is affected all Indian culture. So here I want to recognize all these things through this paper.

### **What Is Modernity?**

Modernity can be defined as connecting to the new and the contemporary, rejecting the old. According to The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language: the word modern was first recorded in 1585 in the sense 'of present or recent times'. In Latin, modernus is derived from modo, meaning 'just now'. The English word modern was not originally concerned with anything that could later be considered old-fashioned. Obviously, modernity often is used to reject old-fashioned ideas and traditions. In the cultural and social contexts, modernity is also interlinked with the values of equality, freedom, feminism and democracy. It is generally assumed that the modernity in 19th and 20th century unleashed the power of scientific and industrial progress, which led to social equality, freedom of downtrodden sections of the society, freedom to women. Democracy is also thought to be a modern concept of governance as against monarchs of ancient times. Modernity is also thought of as increasing the role of rationality in the public sphere and reducing the role of religion. Let us take these modern values one by one and explore them more.

### **Modern Values**

**Social Equality:** One of the popular assumptions is that modernity provided equal status to downtrodden sections of the masses. Before the advent of modernity, people in the weaker sections of the society were controlled and oppressed by the landlords and the religious leaders. With modernity, all the sections of the society have equal rights. However, according to Professor Arvind Sharma, equality before law did exist in ancient India, especially in the sphere of criminal law. The Pali texts clearly allude to it, and the Nibandhas -- legal digests of the twelfth century onwards -- specifically eliminate unequal punishments. King Ashoka also tried to enforce it. The Nepala-Mahatmya (13.46) of the Skandapurana also seems to recommend such egalitarianism. Moreover, even today in the 21st century, global spiritual movement Swadhyaya rooted in Hindu cultural values has devised many innovative experiments and projects to ensure social equality in thousands of Indian villages.

One of the novel Swadhyaya concepts is Amrutalayam, meaning house of immortality. This is similar to a village temple but its priests come from different castes of the village and every evening the entire village gathers here as a social, economical, and spiritual family. Just a small example to show how social equality can be achieved by Hindu cultural values.

**Democracy:** Another popular assumption is that modernity gave rise to democracy, ending centuries of autocracy, and therefore governments for the masses, of the masses and by the masses were installed in many parts of the world. This gave tremendous power to the masses in choosing their own

rulers and removing the ones they didn't like in the elections. But, contrary to this assumption, India in ancient times did have its own form of democracy and republics.

**Modernity: Meaning, Definition and Aspects of Modernity!**

Generally, the meaning of modernity is associated with the sweeping changes that took place in the society and particularly in the fields of art and literature, between the late 1950s and the beginning of Second World War. There is, however, no clear demarcation by date, and although the term 'postmodern' is increasingly used to describe changes since the Second World War, there are some who argue that modernity persists, and others who see its demise as having occurred much earlier.

When modernity is explained in terms of history, it is said that the world first experienced renaissance, and then, enlightenment and thereafter modernity and postmodernity. As a matter of fact, there is much disagreement on the precise dates of the beginning and end of modernity. There appears to be general consensus on its meaning and social formations.

In a broader way, modernity is associated with the following:

1. Industrialization and urbanization.
2. Development.
3. Democracy.
4. Capitalism.
5. Superiority of power
6. Free market.
7. Optimism.
8. The search for absolute knowledge in science, technology, society and politics.
9. The idea that gaining knowledge of the true self was the only foundation for all other knowledge.
10. Rationality.

A discussion of modernity in social sciences is considered to be fashionable today. India witnessed modernity during the British rule. Before this we had feudalism of ancient and medieval periods. Our country has suffered enough at the hands of feudal rulers and colonial exploitation.

Though modernity has been introduced in this country soon after the downfall of Mughal Empire, we got democracy despite having industrialization and urbanization after the attainment of independence and the promulgation of constitution. It is reasonable to ask the question: how are we so much interested in the theory and processes of modernity?

It is certain that the European countries experienced modernity in the aftermath of enlightenment, and India after the operation of constitution.

Culture is the social behavior and norms found in human societies. Culture is a central concept in anthropology, encompassing the range of phenomena that are transmitted through social learning in human societies.

Some aspects of human behavior, social practices such as culture, expressive forms such as art, music, dance, ritual, and religion, and technologies such as tool usage, cooking, shelter, and clothing are said to be cultural universals, found in all human societies. The concept of material culture covers the physical expressions of culture, such as technology, architecture and art, whereas the immaterial aspects of culture such as principles of social organization (including practices of political organization and social institutions), mythology, philosophy, literature (both written and oral), and science comprise the intangible cultural heritage of a society.[1]

In the humanities, one sense of culture as an attribute of the individual has been the degree to which they have cultivated a particular level of sophistication in the arts, sciences, education, or manners.

The level of cultural sophistication has also sometimes been seen to distinguish civilizations from less complex societies. Such hierarchical perspectives on culture are also found in class-based distinctions between a high culture of the social elite and a low culture, popular culture, or folk culture of the lower classes, distinguished by the stratified access to cultural capital. In common parlance, culture is often used to refer specifically to the symbolic markers used by ethnic groups to distinguish themselves visibly from each other such as body modification, clothing or jewelry. Mass culture refers to the mass-produced and mass mediated forms of consumer culture that emerged in the 20th century. Some schools of philosophy, such as Marxism and critical theory, have argued that culture is often used politically as a tool of the elites to manipulate the lower classes and create a false consciousness, and such perspectives are common in the discipline of cultural studies. In the wider social sciences, the theoretical perspective of cultural materialism holds that human symbolic culture arises from the material conditions of human life, as humans create the conditions for physical survival, and that the basis of culture is found in evolved biological dispositions.

When used as a count noun, "a culture" is the set of customs, traditions, and values of a society or community, such as an ethnic group or nation. Culture is the set of knowledge acquired over time

Modernity refers to the contemporary behavior or way of doing things. It is fresh, new and modern.

Tradition and Modernity both prevail side-by-side in India. Indian culture is a blend of tradition values and the modern spirit.

Modernity is not altogether new in India. It is more than a hundred years old and has during this period been making steady headway.

The Hindu tradition itself is not homogeneous, as many of its spokesmen and critics often seem to assume. It is true that some of the Hindu traditions are inherently incompatible with the modern spirit. In ancient India, particularly during the period of Rig Vedic Society, the Indian society was free from most of the inhibitions of later Hinduism.

The old age tradition that is still dominant in Hindu society, though some of the harmful traditions are no longer prominent today such as:

- Sati is prohibited,
- Indian widows are remarrying,
- Child marriages are on the wand,
- Caste system in India is being increasingly secularized,
- Dowry system is declining,
- Girl are taking active participation in education and profession

But the supreme values of old Indian tradition are still relevant in Modern Indian Society, such as

- Simplicity and non- possession of material goods,
- Respect for the status and authority that go with power.

The supreme value of life is, of course, Moksha, the release from the bonds of karma and the cycle of births. All the other values and the attitudes that Hinduism commends have to be in harmony with this.

This Modern Indian society cannot completely break itself from the old traditions. No society can do that, nor is it necessary for India. Her past is remarkably rich and varied, capable of providing a starting point for modernity. Indian Tradition offers numerous instances of the spirit of free and critical inquiry of the highest intellectual order, determination to pursue truth regardless of where it leads a positive and secular approach to life and a tradition of abstract thought necessary for the growth of modern knowledge.

India needs to modernize herself but she does not have to seek inspiration solely from a culture which is not a part of her own tradition. She can partly get it from her past and establish continuity with it. Indigenous symbols and myths are available, which can make the transition to modernity less traumatic than if would otherwise be.

The rich tradition and culture of India past can provide a bridge for the masses between the present and the future. Except for a handful, Indian intellectuals does not extend beyond the narrow sphere of their own professional work. For example, when an educated person (for instance a doctor, a lawyers) fall ill, they not only call in qualified doctor but also perform puja to appease the gods, take talisman and consult holy men. Indians, particularly Hindus, actually keep two opposing sets of habit patterns.

Social reforms such as, abolition of un-touchability, the dowry system is in full motion. But if a departure from tradition or custom, such as women taking up employment, holds promise of easily visualizable benefits, their response, even in the countryside, is more encouraging than metropolitan intellectuals are likely to imagine. Whenever an imaginative leadership and enough facilities to inspire confidence have been available in recent times, people in the rural areas have shown commendable willingness to adopt new ideas and practices. Those who have watched the attitude of the agricultural community in western Maharashtra to programmes of work in the fields of education, agriculture and even family planning would be inclined to believe that the lack of leadership and facilities, not irrational attachment to tradition, is the real problem that advocates of modernity have to solve.

Indian Society continue to live in two worlds, the traditional and the modern, at the same time. What seems to have happened with most of us is that we have accepted modernity in our professional work, but we continue to be traditional in our values and attitudes unless personal gain is involved.

Consequently, the Western liberal institutions—universities, for example, or the press-introduced in India, still function largely in an authoritarian way.

Modernity has a wider connotation than modernization. The latter refers to civilization and mainly implies a high level of literacy and urbanization with vertical and geographical mobility, a high per capita income and a sophisticated economy that has gone beyond the take-off stage. Modernity, on the other hand, connotes a certain type of culture whose quality is determined by rationality, the liberal spirit in its broadest sense, plurality of opinion and centers of decision making, autonomy in the various fields of experience, secular ethics, and respect for the private world of the individual.

We need to identifying and preserve the precious elements of Indian culture such as Music, dance, handicrafts, and the like. One may also seek to preserve a great deal of the color and variety in certain aspects of Indian life such as food, dress, and festivals. However, this is not enough. It is also necessary to identify the elements that must go if the spirit of modernity is not to be crushed under their weight.

This implies an inquiry into the structure and working of each of our major institutions such as family, school, the university, etc. and an insistent demand for their reform from the standpoint of modernization of India. Indian universities and colleges may be become a vital centers of a modern Indian culture. The can play an active role in the blending the old Indian traditions in the Modern society for its benefit.

### **Transforming modernity**

Modernity is a term of art used in the humanities and social sciences to designate both a historical period (the modern era), as well as the ensemble of particular socio-cultural norms, attitudes and practices that arose in post-medieval Europe and have developed since, in various ways and at various times, around the ...

The remarkable economic emergence of Asia in recent decades has transformed many impoverished and largely agriculturally based societies into the most dynamic region of the contemporary world. Asia's burgeoning aspirational middle classes, rapid urbanisation, the expansion of participatory democracy and the shift from command economies to de-regulated markets have had profound effects on people's everyday lives and the diverse cultural practices that have long shaped local livelihoods and community expectations. This course offers an introduction into anthropological approaches to the study of culture, modernity and globalisation in Asia. Relevant themes that have attracted anthropological interest include changing traditions and popular culture, adaptive custom and cosmopolitanism, migration and citizenship, identity politics and social movements as well as distinctive and emergent forms of governance in both collective and self-cultivating forms of expression. Drawing on a rich corpus of social theory and ethnographic research from anthropologists past and present, the course will provide students with conceptual and analytical tools to appreciate adaptive cultural practices in comparative terms, to review and appreciate the key anthropological debates and influential works in the study of modernity, and to introduce students to ethnographic approaches for researching and writing on modernity and contemporary ethnographies of global connection.

We are living in a modern society today. At least, we prefer to believe that we are! We shun anything non-modern or so called orthodox. We would like to stay in touch with the contemporary rather than the traditional, be it home furniture or our way of thinking or our way of dressing or the way we perceive spirituality. If we are modern, we practice Yoga or meditation or at least claim to do so but reject any traditional custom or ritual, which does not fit in with our accepted definition of modernity.

In this essay, let us explore what exactly is modernity and how does it affect our way of thinking. Does modernity achieve what it sets out to do? And how do Hindu culture and traditions fit into this. Where does Hindu tradition stop and modern values begin? The main argument presented here is that the so-called modern values were already imbibed in the Hindu culture.

So in this way modernity and culture are dependent on each other but we people decide how to accept modernity and its impact on our society.

### **References**

- 1) [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)
- 2) [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)