

"Indian Civilization & Culture"

classmate

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- M. K. Gandhi

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Degree-III (English Honu)
Paper- (VII)
Unit- 2 (IX)
Topic- "Indian Civilization
& Culture"
Lecture- 02 (two)

Modern civilization or Western civilization believes in material progress. It is not suited to a country like India which has its roots in spirituality. Modern civilization according to Gandhi, "is the worship of the material, it is the worship of the brute in us - it is unadulterated materialism and modern civilization is nothing if it does not think at every step of the triumph of material civilisation"

Civilization, according to the author, consists in the deliberate and voluntary restriction of wants and not in its multiplication. The salient feature of modern civilization is its tendency to go in for an indefinite multiplicity of human wants. It makes our desires insatiable and this insatiableness arises from want of living faith in a future state and therefore also in Divinity. Indian civilization, on the other hand, enjoins us to exercise restrictions on our wants and desires. This restraint arises from a belief in a future state and the existence of a Divine Power. This explains why all other ancient civilizations

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in the world perished and Indian civilisation survived. To quote Gandhi, Our civilization, our culture, our swaraj depend not upon multiplying our wants - self indulgence, but upon restricting wants - self denial."

A certain degree of material comfort, Gandhi holds, is necessary but above a certain level it becomes a hindrance instead of help. Gandhi concludes the essay with this warning -

"Therefore, the ideal of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfying them seems to be a delusion and a snare. The satisfaction of one's physical needs, even the intellectual needs of one's narrow self, must meet at a certain point - a dead stop, before it degenerate into physical and intellectual voluptuousness."

The essay, thus, not only brings out the good features of Indian civilisation but also reveals to us the ways to conduct ourselves properly so as to acquire real happiness. At a time, when we are busy celebrating the 150 the anniversary of the father of Nation the essay becomes all the more relevant. We must stick to Gandhian ideals of a wifful restriction of our desires if we want to save ourselves and our age-old civilisation.