

Modernity

Modernity is a Question not of Time but of Outlook

Modernity does not mean contemporariness of certain ideas, or ideals. Even the contemporary ideas may be old enough to be considered modern, their inspiration can be traced back to ideas of the past. Naturally they become quite old in their spirit. If an idea emerges out of the present circumstances even then it is not modern. In fact modernity lies in the spirit of that ideal, and means the prevailing social adjustments and also the social and political conditions available at that time. If a particular idea fits in that frame work it is modern otherwise it is not. Of course, this quotation involved all types of progress and the revival of the past.

If a person is modern in spirit he can anticipate modernity. Time changes and with the change of time the ideas also become outdated. This means as far as time is concerned modernity is somewhat short-lived but the spirit of it prevails for a longer period and so it persists till the people are able to achieve the zenith of modernity. Gandhiji's idea of moral force may be suitable for the future generations that is when people become civilised. So he was in line with the course of progress and that is what we mean by modernity.

If we distinguish the word, 'modern' from 'ancient' we find the modern is an improvement over the ancient as far as the development of the society is concerned. The progress must be in line with the latest development of the society. The outlook of people must conform to those ideals otherwise there will be no progress in the society. If the human beings just conform to the old customs and traditions they will never be able to bring about changes, which determine the growth of a nation. Customs do not signify the passage of time rather they show that how the movement of the time stops at one or the other period. Similarly, if we follow the old concepts and the old ideas we cannot change our outlook. The result is that all of our actions will be directed and controlled by our old thinking. So the spirit of the individual determines the course of events.

The word 'modern' has two different meanings; it may mean contemporary in time; it may mean contemporary in spirit. We generally call a thing, an idea, a fashion modern in relation to its old version. But if we probe the problem a bit deeply and exhaustively we will find that it is our outlook which determines modernity. The outlook of man, varies with every generation. The accepted idea

might have been given long ago but nobody bothers about its history. On the other hand the idea is understood or at least realised as modern. Out of two ideas suppose one of them had been given much earlier than the other and is accepted at present and will be called modern while the other will become obsolete and forgotten.

Ideals of human beings fundamentally remain the same; the Jews thought that aim of man should be to do the Will of God, the Greeks thought that it should be to achieve the excellence of human nature. After two thousand years we have not gone beyond these ideals. The deeper human problems remain the same; human beings change their clothes but not their nature. No doubt with the advancement we have applied science, technology, new techniques in politics and economics, human nature changes all too little. With the passage of time these ideals do not change, what changes, is our understanding, our conception and our outlook. With the increase of understanding we improved our approach to find better results. Consequently, the inferences are accepted by the present age and are called modern.

The acceptance of ideas, to a great extent, depends upon the fact that how much do they solve the problems of modern complex world. The most fitted solution is widely accepted and considered to be modern. Another consideration is the maximum utility of an idea for a great number of people. As man is becoming more intellectual, advanced progressive, his problems are also increasing in the same proportion. His desire for new inventions and passion for new ideas are increasing rapidly. When he finds a particular idea to be unsatisfactory he forgets it and it becomes obsolete within no time. Time carries, not much weight in determining the importance of an idea.

With the advancement of science, the outlook of man has undergone a drastic change. He has no reverence for the old customs and traditions. The importance attached to a particular idea because of its adoption for a long time counts no more in accepting it as a belief. Rather the one which is in harmony with the outlook is considered modern.