**GP Flipside: Positive and Negative Effects of Modern Culture**

**Synopsis**:

1. Meaning of Modern Culture
2. Show how our modern culture will affect us positively or negatively from the individual, economics, social and political aspects of our life.
3. **Meaning of Modern Culture**

The culture of a society encompasses the core values of the community, the way the people in society think, behave and conduct their ways. We can observe these characteristics or features of the culture by observing how we play our music, communicate with each other, eat our food, conduct our rituals, display our norms, demonstrate our thinking and impose our rituals.

Culture is a slippery concept and it is evolutionary as we grow and our society develops. Just like ancient culture, the modern culture is influenced by the environment and characterized in its unique way. Our modern era is greatly influenced by technological advancement which give rise to globalization that has affected us economically, socially and politically and this in turn, shaped the modern culture.

Culture – cuisine, fashion, values, rituals and norms, behaviours, language, music and arts

1. Impact of Modern Culture
   1. Personal Impact

We change as our society modernizes and indoctrinates with new values and shape our behaviour. Positively, we are now shaped by modern values like efficiency, innovation and creativity which inspires us to discover more about our world and develop new technologies. We have this sense of human determinism to make forward our lives and inspires a need to learn more and be educated. Modern culture has indoctrinated our attitude for improvement and make betterment of ourselves as we need to be informed, skilled and cultured to be the modern people.

We can observe how our society makes improvement in education in this modern era as world illiterate population has decreased from 87.95% in 1800 to 14.7% in 2014 due to our focus on progress (source: Our World in Data). From the same source, nearly all modernised and developed countries have attained 80% to 100% literacy rate.

However, we are intoxicated by modern values as our indulgence in comfort and convenience brought about by modern culture has shaped us to become narcissistic, hedonistic and materialistic. As we swarmed ourselves in materialism, we seek for instant gratification and physiological needs, ignoring our needs to be enlightened and enriched. We become trivialized, and self-centred, neglecting what is significant as we seek for the short-term and tangible material gains.

According to psychologist Jean Twenge at San Diego State University, California, she has found that, among a 2009 cohort, almost two-thirds of undergraduates were more narcissistic than the cohort average from 1982. Twenge believes that the rise in narcissism has its roots in cultural changes, especially the increased focus on individualism through the last few decades, a result of modernized values.

* 1. Social Impact

Our society has become fast-paced and more connected due to technological advancement as we are linked by social media and communication platform. Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram and other media communication platforms have made our world smaller as we can chat vocally and via video. We can maintain relationship with our loves as we are able to communicate instantly and lively and it also expands our social circles as social media connects people with similar interests and beliefs in the social community. This has brought a new form of interaction and connection which builds and nurtures a cross-border, cross-culture and dimensional community.

Through Facebook groups, we can find interest groups for a huge range of interest like hobbies, business and spiritual that will build a community for the individuals to participate. According to The Strait Times, the proportion of marriages between a Singaporean and a non-citizen spouse rose from 32.8 per cent to 38.7 per cent during the 1998-2008 period. This is another social development of modernisation which is brought about by globalization.

Nonetheless, modernized way of social development has its pitfalls. Individuals are losing their capabilities to interact on face contact, choosing to converse on social communication platform, reducing their capacity to interact with others to build relationship. In Japan, the rise of hikikomori -- a term the Japanese Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry uses to define those who haven't left their homes or interacted with others for at least six months. This is evidently a reflection of youths who have lost their social skills due to modernization as they week entertainments from the entertainment technology.

“We do think that there is a psychological aspect to this condition -- that it stems from depression and anxiety - but there are also cultural and societal influences at play," Takahiro Kato, a neuropsychiatrist professor at Kyushu University, told CNN.

* 1. **Political Impact**

Modernization has also bought many reforms to our world as embrace new political ideologies and we change our ways of thinking as we are now more accommodative of new ideas. Since World War II, the world has ceased colonization, experienced cold war, rise of liberalism and demise of conservatism and rise of religious political ideologies. We have seen the rise of feminism and LBGT and many social causes become the mainstream agenda. Political and social integration and mobility of the people have led to many exchanges of ideas that will influence the perceptions of the people. By virtue of the injection of new ideas, we educated, enriched and enlightened and grow to become a world which is receptive to racial and cultural diversity.

The recent election victory in Malaysia by Pakatan Harapan reflects how voters are receptive to new political development as the rights of the individuals can be become a source of political power. In Singapore, the Pink Dot movement is now more vocal to project the concerns and interests of LBGT.

However, modernization has also brought about clashes of culture between modernization and traditions. While the traditionalists recognize the significance of traditional values like the roles of woman and the religious values, modernists are approaching the world with more contempt of the inappropriateness of these values. Modern way of living has been seen as a disgrace and is despised by the traditionalists and this infringement on their ways of life bring political conflicts that gives rise to radical political like Al Qaeda and ISIS which will take extreme, radical and violent terrorist acts to forward their agendas

* 1. **Economic Impact**

As our modernized and move towards a more consumerist culture, the commercial opportunities surface for MNCs as countries become globalized and consumer market becomes a standardized world market. Consumer market enlarges and become more standardized with a common modern culture under the name of consumerism. We see how the world progresses from underdevelopment as we make improvement in education, relieve us from poverty and reduce our sufferings.

Since World War II, the recovery of the western societies has brought hope to the world that modernisation will be the key towards our global problems. To help it carry out its mandate, the UN established a number of specialised agencies, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA). Most of these were established around the end of the Second World War, for example, the ILO and UNESCO in 1944, WHO in 1946, and IAEA in 1957 to infuse modernisation and induce development and growth.

However, the focus on modernization has also failed mankind as we went on rampant course of growth and development that give rise to other subtle effects. Our concern for material comforts and convenience brought about problems of environmental degradation as the adoption of technology with little consideration of the detriments and the inducement of wants rather than need will fuel up the apocalyptic threats that will lead to our demise. Modernisation has instilled in us a sense of false beliefs that we are invincible and infallible that we become to assertive.

Our modernisation has brought 7.7 million tonnes of solid waste in 2017 as stated by NEA proves how perilous the issue of environmental degradation will affect us. As long we are overwhelmed by this consumerist culture, our future will be gloomy and threatening.

To what extent has modern society undermined the youths?