“By offering an ideological critique of the western civilization in its modern phase, Gandhiji was effectively contesting the moral legitimacy of the Raj that rested on a stated assumption of the superiority of the west.” Comment.

One of the major arguments of the British against awarding independence to India was that of poor cultural practices and lack of scientific temper among Indians to effectively govern and take care of themselves.

The freedom fighters greatly recognised and criticised this argument and actively sought to counter the notion by promoting Indian culture and reforming the society.

Rabindranath Tagore’s Santiniketan and emphasis on Indian culture, Bal Gangadhar Tilak’s promotion of Ganesh Chaturthi and Maratha Shivaji Festival, Reliance on Indian modules goods, etc reflect this behaviour.
Gandhi’s Role:

(i) Gandhi actively promoted self-reliance and village-based clustered way of living dependent on one another. His Ashrams at Dandi, Sabarmati, Phoenix farm in Africa, etc. greatly stressed upon self-reliance.

(ii) Gandhi promoted Khadi and encouraged village industries to counter western imports.

(iii) On a cultural level Gandhi perceived Indian Intellectualism and Spiritualism as a far greater method of living than the Western Materialism.

(iv) Promotion of Bhajans, encouraging and eliminating discrimination of scheduled castes, etc. aimed at unification of Indians.

Mahatma Gandhi greatly advocated in making the British Argument to be a myth and seeked to demonstrate unity and self-reliance.