

Q. 3. Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions given at the end.

(20)

The majority of people have always lived simply, and most of humanity still struggles on a daily basis to eke out a meager existence under dire circumstances. Only in affluent industrialized countries do people have the luxury of more goods and services than they need to survive. On the basis of material wealth, North Americans and Europeans should be the happiest people on earth, but according to the 2012 Happy Planet Index (HPI), they are not. Surprisingly, what had begun as an experimental lifestyle evolved into a quiet revolution that spread the word through books such as Duane Elgin's best-selling *Voluntary Simplicity: Toward a Way of Life that is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich* (1981), as well as numerous magazines, alternative communities of the like-minded, and, later, Internet websites. Combined with a growing awareness of the environmental consequences of consumerism, the voluntary simplicity movement sought to reduce the consumption of goods and energy and to minimize one's personal impact on the environment. "Voluntary" denotes a free and conscious choice to make appropriate changes that will enrich life in a deeper, spiritual sense. "Simplicity" refers to the lack of clutter, that is, eliminating all those things, patterns, habits, and ideas that take control of our lives and distract us from our inner selves. However, this is not to be confused with poverty, which is involuntary, degrading, and debilitating. Neither does it mean that people must live on a farm or reject progress or technology, or do without what is necessary for their comfort and welfare. To practice voluntary simplicity, one must differentiate between what one wants (psychological desires) and what one needs (basic requirements of life), and seek a healthy balance that is compatible with both. In a consumer society where advertising bombards us with the message that without this, that, and the other product, we are unsuccessful, undesirable, and unimportant, being clear on what you really need and resisting what you don't can be an ongoing struggle. The beauty of voluntary simplicity is that it is a philosophy, and not a dogma. How one goes about it depends on individual character, cultural background, and climate. For this, three Rs (i.e., Reduce, Recycle & Reuse) represent the best way to get a handle on rampant consumerism. In economies driven by the quest for ever more, living with less is erroneously equated with poverty and social inferiority. By conserving energy, for instance, you are actually ensuring that more resources are available for future use. By making a frugal budget and sticking to it, you can eliminate unnecessary expenses. Recycling paper, metal, plastic, and glass and reusing building materials and old clothing keep materials in the loop and out of landfills. Pooling skills and resources through barter networks not only saves money, but sharing with others establishes bonds and fosters a sense of community. With the glut of cheap goods that are usually designed for obsolescence, quality products that last are becoming progressively harder to find. In the long run, a more expensive but durable and repairable item or even an older used item that is still in good condition is a better investment than a brand new piece of junk that will only break down and end up in the trash. Thus, at the heart of voluntary simplicity is the conscious realization that less is really more. Less consumption means more resources for future generations. Less activity that brings little satisfaction or reward is more time for yourself and your loved ones. Less stuff is more space to move around in. Less stress means more relaxation and better health. Less worry provides more enjoyment and more fulfillment in life.

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ENGLISH (PRECIS & COMPOSITION)

Questions:

(4 marks each)

1. How important is happiness to most people, and what is the relationship between material wealth and happiness?
2. How does the author characterize the concept of 'Voluntary Simplicity' as a movement and as a philosophy?
3. What impact is feared by the growing consumerism of modern society?
4. What influences make it difficult for people to reduce their consumption patterns?
5. What are the challenges and rewards of voluntary simplicity?

Q.3

(1)

Happiness is very important to most people because the humanity has always strived for it. In this quest, people lost themselves in consumerism. But they are again finding happiness in simplicity now. Material wealth is not proportional to happiness. This has been established by the Happy Planet Index (2021) that shows the per Europeans and North Americans as not being cheerful inspite of their material wealth.

(2)

The author characterizes "Voluntary Simplicity" as a movement that started with the aim of curtailing the unnecessary consumption of products and controlling its adverse effects on the ecosystem. This movement began as a new way of life. Gradually, it disseminated through books. At the heart of this movement is the philosophy that less is more. It is a lifelong endeavour.

(4)

~~Growing consumerism of modern society has many negative effects that are feared.~~ Advertisements can make ~~the~~ people feel that they are incomplete without certain products. In such modern societies stained by the incessant need of more, it becomes difficult to resist. Unfortunately, one who does not have support a lavish lifestyle is considered poor and looked down upon.

(5)

Challenges of "voluntary simplicity" include conservation of energy, managing oneself in a small budget, recycling and reusing most things. At the same time, dealing with the society that is not used to this lifestyle is another challenge. However, rewards of voluntary simplicity are numerous. These include more time and space for dear ones, greater sense of relaxation and calmer nerves.

(3)

Growing consumerism can make many negative impacts. For instance, quality products are difficult to find in a pile of useless but cheap products. It can have adverse effects on our environment such as reducing energy resources and wasting things by using them only once. It can also be burdensome for the breadwinners.