

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.

(4 marks each)

Questions:

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?

(10)

the following:

...aid him in his work

(1)

Most of the people believe that having extra products are the sign of happiness. However, a report published by Happy Index planet in 2012, showcase that although the Americans and Europeans possessed a huge amount of material wealth, yet they were unhappy. Hence, material wealth cannot bring happiness.

(2)

According to the author, voluntary simplicity as a movement refers to the mechanism in which an individual reduces his dependency on the consumption of goods and energy for the cause of a sustainable environment. Similarly, voluntary simplicity as a philosophy refers to the mechanism in which an individual takes rational choices for the seek of revolutionary change.

(3)

In modern society, an individual is feared to be called as a loser or to be called as a poverty stricken family. Hence, this fear compiles

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him to buy more products.

(4)

Different advertisements influence the thoughts of viewers that without buying this product, they are useless, unimportant, and unattractive. Hence, to avoid this social inferiority, the consumers keep on buying ^{new} products without changing their consumption patterns.

(5)

The challenges of voluntary simplicity are to find quality and disposable products in the modern society. While the rewards of voluntary simplicity start from the relaxation of mind and inner peace,