

Consumerist Culture

Comprehension I: Consumerist Culture

Question 1.

The writer refers to the catchy phrase, “shop till you drop” in an advertisement.

a. What is the meaning intended by the advertisers?

Answer:

The advertisers suggest that consumers should continue shopping until they are exhausted.

b. Why does the writer call this apt and ironic?

Answer:

The writer finds it apt and ironic because modern media encourages excessive consumption, which leads to a lifestyle driven by mindless buying.

c. Which word shows that the writer is condemning consumerism?

Answer:

The word "posh" reflects the writer's criticism of consumerism.

Question 2.

In the very first paragraph, the writer makes it clear that:

a. He supports shopping and shopping malls.

b. He is very critical of them.**

Answer:

b) He is very critical of them.

Question 3.

The writer puts Pepsi, Coca-Cola, and other 'artificially coloured, flavoured, and sweetened water' under absolutely unessential to human health and happiness.

a. Do you agree with his view?

Answer:

Yes.

b. List any five such articles/gadgets/food items which your family has been using at home and which are not essential for your health and happiness.

Answer:

Tin food, junk food, burgers, ice cream, and bakery products are not essential for health and happiness.

Question 4.

What is the success story of Pepsi and Coca-Cola?

Answer:

Pepsi and Coca-Cola are sold in the remotest corners of the world.

Question 5.

The second paragraph ends with "a seemingly never-ending list." What 'list' is the writer talking about?

Answer:

The writer is referring to the list of necessary goods.

Question 6.

a. What phrase does the writer use in paragraph 3 to refer to the advertisement?

Answer:

"Equally unprecedented in the world's history is the size of the machinery of persuasion that has been set up in order to generate demand for this profusion."

b. What does an advertisement aim to do?

Answer:

The aim of the advertisement is to generate profits.

Question 7.

In the writer's opinion, shopping has become

Answer:

More than a need.

Question 8.

What thrills the present-day Indian shoppers?

Answer:

The variety and choice thrill present-day Indian shoppers.

Question 9.

What was the 'dream come true' for the US-returned Indian?

Answer:

The US-returned Indian dreamt of having more than 83 different flavours of ice cream to choose from, like in America.

Question 10.

In the sentence, "And they take to it like ducks to water"
(paragraph 5):

a. Who do 'they' refer to?

Answer:

Upper-middle-class people.

b. What does 'it' refer to?

Answer:

'It' refers to the new market.

c. What does 'like ducks to water' mean?

Answer:

It means they have a natural affinity for marketing strategies.

Question 11.

Does the writer approve of the attitude of the Indians spoken of in paragraph 5?

Answer:

Yes.

Question 12.

a. What is the 'deep irony' referred to in paragraph 6?*

Answer:

The deep irony is that while private prosperity is growing, public resources are being depleted.

b. Substantiate your answer with an example from the paragraph.

Answer:

Consumers may have a wide variety of cars, but the roads are in poor condition.

Question 13.

a. What is the trend referred to in paragraph 6?

Answer:

The trend is to privatize even essential services to generate profit for companies.

b. Who does the trend benefit?

Answer:

The private sector benefits from this trend.

c. What is the impact of the trend on the poor?

Answer:

The poor are increasingly becoming consumers of expensive goods and services.

Question 14.

a. What are the advertisers and marketing professionals working hard at?

Answer:

They are working to make even remote rural communities into consumers of everything from cola drinks to shampoos.

b. How will it affect our villagers?

Answer:

Villagers will be seen as a vast market for commercial exploitation.

c. What impact will it have on our environment?

Answer:

The growing presence of plastic waste in rural areas is a warning of the environmental impact.

Question 15.

a. What kind of vision do the enthusiasts of the free market economy have for India?

Answer:

They envision India adopting a model similar to the United States, with widespread consumerism.

b. Would you like India to become another U.S.? Why? / Why not?

Answer:

No, because the excessive consumerism and resulting waste are not sustainable for our environment.

c. What negative impact will the free market economy have on our country?

Answer:

It will lead to overwhelming waste and environmental degradation.

Question 16.

Why does the writer say that the model of development based on consumerism is suicidal?

Answer:

The environmental cost of this development model will be catastrophic, making it a dangerous path for humanity.

Question 17.

What according to the writer is the only way to restore sanity?

Answer:

Local communities, cooperatives, civil societies, and democratic governments must reclaim autonomy and initiative for their development.

Question 18.

As one of the remedies to the mess we have created, the writer suggests a re-awakening. What does he want to reawaken?

Answer:

The writer calls for a reawakening of spiritual and wisdom traditions to guide us toward sustainable development.

Question 19.

Go back to the advertiser's catchy phrase, 'Shop till you drop' in the first paragraph.

a. What was the intended meaning of the advertisers?

Answer:

Consumers are encouraged to shop until they are exhausted.

b. How does the writer interpret its meaning in the last paragraph?

Answer:

The writer interprets it as a reminder that consumers should focus on what is essential for a meaningful life, not mindless consumption.

c. Now explain why the writer calls this apt and ironic.

Answer:

The writer finds it apt and ironic because relentless shopping leads only to unnecessary possessions that fail to provide true satisfaction.

Question 20.

Do you like this article? Why? Why not?

Answer:

Yes, the article raises awareness about the consequences of consumerism, advocating for a simpler, more sustainable lifestyle focused on dignity and essential needs.

B. Close Study: Consumerist Culture

Read the following extracts carefully. Discuss in pairs and then write the answers to the questions given below:

Question 1.

It is to actualize this vision that 'millions of our youth are rushing to get their MBA degrees.'

a) What is the vision referred to here?

Answer:

The vision referred to here is the idea of achieving a more advanced, Western-style development.

b) When the vision is actualized, what will India be referred to as?

Answer:

Once the vision is actualized, India will be referred to as a developed country.

c) Is the writer critical of or admiring our youth who are rushing to get their MBA degrees?

Answer:

The writer is critical of our youth who are rushing to get their MBA degrees.

Question 2.

It is not a wise thing to hand over to businessmen the task of ruling the world as we have just done today.

a) Why shouldn't businessmen be given the task of ruling the world?

Answer:

Businessmen shouldn't be given the task of ruling the world because they lack the wisdom and the will to consider the welfare of all humanity, let alone the health of the planet.

b) What are they mainly trained for?

Answer:

They are mainly trained to maximize profits for the corporations that employ them.

c) According to the writer, what is the way to restore sanity?

Answer:

According to the writer, the way to restore sanity is for local communities and societies to regain control over their own development, which they previously handed over to global business corporations.

Comprehension II: Consumerist Culture

Question 1.

Man today is an unstoppable buying machine. Elucidate with examples.

Answer:

The market for consumer goods has expanded significantly, and large amounts of money are spent on advertising these goods. Shopping has evolved into more than just a necessity. India, which was once largely unaffected by consumerism, now has shopping malls even in smaller towns.

The writer draws attention to our own spending habits, urging readers to reflect on why they shop and what they are buying. Are they meeting their basic needs, or are they indulging in unnecessary purchases? Advertisers and big corporations are to blame for creating an enticing market that turns consumers into "unstoppable buying machines."

" An example of this is the purchase of flavoured drinks that have no nutritional value but are heavily marketed.

Question 2.

Write a short note on the views expressed by the writer on the tragic comedy of 'development'. Why does he call it a tragic comedy?

Answer:

The writer describes the modern pursuit of development as a tragic comedy because it reflects a self-destructive obsession with consumerism. People are lured by aggressive advertising, becoming "buying machines," and desiring an endless variety of choices in consumables. They even aim to emulate Western lifestyles, desiring things like two cars per garage and large amounts of waste.

Development, in its true sense, should reflect overall progress. However, modern consumerism leads to selective development: while consumers have plenty of options in their personal lives, the public infrastructure remains underdeveloped. Roads are in poor condition, and public spaces like parks are neglected. This disparity between personal and public development is why the writer calls it a "tragic comedy."

Question 3.

Do you personally share the concerns raised by the writer here? If 'yes', what individual initiative can you take?

Answer:

Yes, I share the concerns raised by the writer. Consumerism has reached a level where it is mindless and self-destructive. We do not need to blindly imitate the West, and choice alone is not the most important aspect of any product. More important considerations include eco-friendliness, biodegradability, and personal necessity.

While benefiting from advances in science and technology, we should not blindly adopt all Western practices. Having a wide variety of consumables is not necessarily a positive thing if it only increases consumer confusion and leads to unnecessary waste.

Instead, we should prioritize products that align with personal needs and contribute positively to the environment. As an individual, I can make more thoughtful choices about what I purchase, considering the long-term impact on the planet and my own well-being.

Consumerist Culture Summary



The author laments the modern trend among Indians to adopt the Western concept of "shop till you drop," living in the present and consuming more and more without considering the future. He presents compelling facts and figures to highlight how this obsession with shopping and consumerism has been artificially cultivated by multinational corporations (MNCs), whose primary goal is maximizing profits at any cost.

This consumerist culture originated in the United States, where individuals have become slaves to materialism and, worse, take pride in this lifestyle. The author argues that such consumerism only serves to widen the gap between the rich and the poor, with the disadvantaged losing access to resources that should rightfully belong to them. While global organizations advocate for a "free market economy," the reality is far from free—it is a strategic manipulation of the economy to serve the profit and expansion needs of large corporations by creating artificial demands.

The author warns that we, in developing nations, must be cautious about who controls our economy. He calls for a reawakening of the spiritual and wisdom traditions that have long been a part of our culture. He stresses the importance of learning to say "enough" once our basic material needs are met and turning towards the "commodities" of the spirit—such as the arts, culture, and community life—to lead a more meaningful and sustainable life.