

The background of the image is a dark blue and purple night sky filled with numerous white stars of varying sizes. In the foreground, there is a dark silhouette of a forest of evergreen trees. The overall aesthetic is serene and celestial.

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

NOVEMBER'19 (21 to 27 Nov)

Consumption is not the problem; consumerism is the problem

First, no informed person would argue that we should stop spending money or that we must stop consuming. Using consumerism to stimulate the economy is like fixing a cracked mirror with a hammer. Consumerism is compulsory, vapid, pernicious, impulsive, unfocused, misguided. Worst of all, it is seductive: consumerism's shiny facade promises more than it can possibly deliver, because love, happiness, contentment, and satisfaction are all internal feelings that cannot be and the truth is that once our basic needs are met, the acquisition of trinkets does little for our lifelong well-being. Yes, trade is an important part of any society. Circumventing consumerism, however, doesn't imply that minimalists sidestep commerce. Rather, minimalism is predicated on intentionality, which means we spend our money more deliberately. Minimalists invest in experiences over possessions. Travel, indie concerts, vacations, Community Theater, etc.: we can all spend money without acquiring new material things.

There are numerous factors that contribute to the overconsumption so prevalent in almost every wealthy society in our world today. There are personal, heart issues that give rise to overconsumption: greed, jealousy, lack of empathy, desire to impress, pride, compensating for personal shortcomings, our propensity to look for happiness in the things we possess, and general unawareness of the damaging effects of overconsumption. But beyond that, there are also societal issues at play. Our economy, to a large degree, is based on overconsumption and the need for people of every social class to spend more than they have. Disappointing retail figures and sluggish consumer confidence are always reported as doomsday scenarios.

While Minimalists buy new possessions carefully. To do so we must ask better questions, like, Will this thing add value to my life?

Minimalists support local businesses. Local, indie shops tend to be less motivated by profit. Sure, they need to make money to keep the lights on, and there's nothing wrong with that, but earning a buck usually isn't the primary concern of the local bookstore, restaurateur, or bike shop. They are in business because they are passionate about their product or service, and they want

to share that passion with their patrons. Passion begets greater quality and better service, which makes the money they earn well deserved.

Economic development today is beset with the twin problems of ecological imbalance and atomization of the individual through the development of megalopolises and patterns of living. There is a sense of deprivation and loss of identity, a pervasive pessimism, and cynicism. Tribal's view intelligence as only one aspect of life which must be integrated with emotion and intuition, on the one hand, and action, on the other. This has relevance for the new production systems, new technological processes being introduced into the tribal world. Numerous studies by educationists and psychologists have revealed that when a new production process or technology is taught to a tribal which he may not be able to comprehend its theoretical underpinnings or process but is often able to master the process more quickly than others. In India the tribals are among some of the best workers when it comes to laying high-tension lines, steel production, and in numerous other ancillary industries. They may lack sophisticated formal education but their capacity to imbibe a new process and operate a new system is enviable. Significant political and economic changes are

taking place in India's tribal world. Just a few decades ago, the tribal way of life was considered simply romantic, and was labelled anti-science, anti-national and anti-development. But now, a very significant section relooks at the tribal worldview as a possible alternative to the consumerist one.

Ultimately, minimalists aren't interested in "stimulating" the economy. Stimulation is ephemeral. We'd rather improve our economy's long-term health by making better individual decisions about consumption, getting involved in our community, and supporting local businesses who care. If more people do this, we'll build a stronger economy, one that's predicated on personal responsibility and community interaction, not a false sense of urgency and the mindless stockpiling of junk we never needed in the first place.

For reference:-

- <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/p/anache/less-is-more-why-affluent-indians-are-going-minimalist/articleshow/66101820.cms?from=mdr>
- <https://www.becomingminimalist.com/minimalist-economy/>
- <https://journals.openedition.org/sapiens/227>

Additional Readings:-

- <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/blogs/et-editorials/banks-rbi-you-have-to-check-fraud/>
- <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/blogs/et-editorials/the-rise-of-the-empowered-artiste/>
- <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/blogs/et-editorials/coal-mining-to-turn-commercial-finally/>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/nov/19/the-guardian-view-on-the-tv-election-debate-political-theatre-needs-a-new-script>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/nov/18/the-guardian-view-on-hong-kong-a-city-on-the-brink>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/nov/12/the-guardian-view-on-the-floods-global-heating-and-british-soaking>

Suggested Refresher Book:-

Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less
Book by Greg McKeown (Author)