

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION INSTITUTE OF CULTURE  
UNESCO-Approved Course in Advanced Understanding for Human Unity  
Lecture Abstract

THE 'GOOD LIFE' AND CONSCIOUS CONSUMING

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Environmental pollution and the subsequent alarming rises of global temperatures and sea levels and other related crises increasingly pose a threat to the survival of the human race. The planetary crisis of crises has been linked with the lifestyle popularly termed the “good life,” connoting a life of abundant material prosperity.

While material prosperity is certainly good, human beings have taken for granted that the “good life” stands for a life of unlimited material possession and accumulation. This assumption has led people to over-consume as well as to consume carelessly. The pattern of excessive and careless consumption has led to scarcities of the planet’s resources, extinction of living species, and excessive pollution and waste.

The phenomenon of excessive and careless consuming is based on the false perception that we live in a world consisting mainly of me-myself-and-I. The ego-focused mindset gives little or no thought to others and the planet as a whole.

Affecting all of us as physical beings who need to consume in order to survive on this planet, consumerism is not a neutral phenomenon we can simply take or leave. Consumerism influences the thoughts and behavior of all of us. In turn, we affect the larger society, as human-caused global warming and climate change negatively testify. Our individual welfare is linked to the welfare of everyone.

What are the personal, social, and environmental-ecological costs  
of consuming beyond reasonable want or need?

Is the existing lifestyle of the rich and developed societies  
necessarily happy and hence desirable?

To what extent is India taking over the Western “good life” as well as its problems?  
What patterns of consumption are socially responsible, non-destructive, and sustainable?

What is the most effective means to bring about conscious consuming  
and positive social transformation?

What is a truly good life?

While addressing the above questions, the lecture will touch on such points as:

Globalized Consumerism  
Rethinking the ‘Good Life’  
The True Abundance  
Lifestyle and Sustainability  
Personal and Global Transformation  
Conscious and Ethical Patterns of Consuming  
Planetary Citizenship  
The Do-good Good Life