

Throwaway Society

1) Introduction

- The throw-away society is a human society strongly influenced by consumerism.
- The term describes a critical view of over consumption and excessive production of short-lived or disposable items.
- Society has evolved into a remarkable waste producing machine. Whether its food, housing, energy or consumer products

2) Factors leading to Throwaway Society

- Developing nation like India, a mobile phone that is more than two years old is considered obsolete and, increasingly, consumers prefer to just buy a new device rather than repair a broken screen or a malfunctioning motherboard.
- Apparel companies sell far larger amounts of new clothes than they recycle old ones, and have struggled to convince consumers to bring old clothes to the store.
- Human activities largely driven by our society's demand for having more than we need, resulting in the highest ever annual global waste generation on record
- Affordability for tech items has increased considerably leading to frequent buying rather than repairing and reusing.
- Repairing has become a thing of the past; it's more convenient and less expensive to simply upgrade
- Competition is pushing big corporations behind electrical goods manufacturing to outdo one another in the name of profits and market share.

3) Benefits

- Industrial production leading to higher growth in the economy.
- More goods and services available to the people.
- Better living standards and more comfort to the people.
- Creates more job opportunities

4) Effect of Throwaway culture on Indian Society

- Material wealth will play a deciding factor to judge whether the society is developed or not.
- Personal relationship gets affected as people are busy earning to maintain their standard of living.
- Change in the lifestyle as society lean towards material comfort rather than focussing on simplicity.
- Class discrimination as those who aren't able to afford are considered uneven.
- The desire to buy new products leads to reduced savings and increased vulnerability to economic crisis
- enormous pressure on Parents to meet expectations of kids & youth, who keep demanding latest gadgets

5) Effect of Throwaway culture on Environment

- Pollution due to inappropriate disposal and increased wastage.
- Environmental Degradation due to over exploitation of resources
- India is the 5th largest producer of e-waste and e-waste is better known for poisonous toxins and contamination of water which leads to many health problems.
- Excessive use of plastics and paper have direct impact on degrading the environment with areas ranging from the oceans and cutting of trees

- Soil contamination due to leaching of toxic metals from discarded E-waste
- Landfills outside our cities continue to grow and the pressure on scarce natural resources intensifies.
- But for all the convenience and savings it might have afforded, plastic is surely costing the planet more, in the form of pollution and wildlife devastation from non-biodegradable waste.

6) Examples

- Sweden, for example, is considering tax breaks on repairs of clothes, bicycles, refrigerators and washing machines, hoping that this will encourage consumers to fix their things instead of throwing them away.
- In US, a similar shift towards repairing, instead of discarding, old goods, is gaining momentum.
- Patagonia, which sells high-end outdoors clothing, now guarantees that it will repair any of its products for free over their lifetime.
- India imports large quantities of used clothing from the US, some of which is resold while the rest is pulped and recycled to make blankets, doormats, prayer rugs and pillow stuffing.

7) Solution

- Ethical consumerism where consumers make ethically informed consumption choices
- lower tax on repair services
- Offer income-tax deductions to consumers who repair their white goods at home.
- Moving towards a more sustainable consumption-production strategy.
- Growing awareness of the high environmental costs of cheap and disposable fashion.
- Companies must be encouraged to shift focus from selling more to selling good—in terms of high-quality products that are made better, last longer and don't leave behind a long and dirty carbon footprint.
- Effort to move from a linear economy, wherein resource-intensive goods end up in landfills after a one-time use, to a circular economy, wherein products and processes are designed for reuse, refurbishment or even remanufacturing.
- separate food collections for composting or making biogas, renewable energy and fertiliser
- Effective implementation of E-waste management rules.
- Making it mandatory for manufacturers of electrical appliances to provide at least a two-year warranty on their products.
- They also have to ensure that parts be made available for repairs after the stipulated guaranteed period.

8) Way Forward

- Making it mandatory to print the tag Reduce – Reuse – Recycle – Repair on all the non-durable products.
- Segregation of waste at source to minimise the impact of effect on environment by following the process of collect, sort and burn which is mastered by Panaji in GOA.
- tax breaks on repairing goods and levying a new tax on harmful chemicals on white products like Sweden
- Minimise the consumption of short lived products and encourage spending money on long durable items.
- Awareness among people about the ill effects of dumping waste.
- Industries need to be encouraged to produce products that do not leave any carbon footprint.
- Change in the mind set of the people to maximise the usage and reuse before buying a new one.

- Stronger signals are needed to encourage businesses to take action on ending the throwaway society.
- Giving consumers the information they need to overcome this vicious cycle of buying and replacing products.

