

UNDERSTANDING CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION AND CONSUMERISM

SABIHA MAZID

RESEARCH SCHOLAR, JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI.

ABSTRACT:

Consumption is a process concerned with the acquisition and use of goods and services. Economists are generally interested in only one form of acquisition; that which involves the transfer of money in exchange of ownership of, or access to, commodities. However, the remit for sociological investigation in terms of topics even as general as consumption needs to be wider. Consumption is not merely a mechanical act but comprises of a set of practices that permit people to express self-identity, to mark attachment to social groups, to accumulate resources, to exhibit social distinction and so on, has to be illuminated. Hence, the 'social' aspect of consumption needs a sociological understanding and for that a plain neo-classical economic view is not sufficient. This paper will focus upon one such 'social' aspect of consumption-connections between consumption and social status as propounded by the term Conspicuous Consumption. Also, the attempt would be to draw possible similarities between the concept of 'conspicuous consumption' and the contemporary trend of consumerism. In doing so, it is deemed worthwhile to examine the dichotomies that enshrine between the current trends of a market driven consumerist society and the Indian logic of Sarvodaya propounded by the 'father of nation'.

KEY WORDS: Consumption, Conspicuous Consumption, Consumerism, Sarvodaya.

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