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Q8

Contentment is natural wealth; luxury is artificial poverty.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · Essay · 125 marks · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Philosophical and ethical quotes

Core demand of the question

- **Socrates:** contentment as wealth; luxury as a poverty we manufacture
- **Stake:** enough vs more; santosh vs display
- **Political economy of comparison, environment, inequality. Counter:** contentment must not bless injustice

Revision summary

Guidance only.

Wedding-comparison anecdote.

Socrates + Gandhi on need vs greed.

- **Body:** mind, dowry, ecology, welfare floor.
- **Counter:** do not spiritualise hunger. Close on floor plus less theatre.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

A man counts three steel plates after a wedding and feels poor because the neighbour hired a chandelier. Nothing left the house except peace. **Socrates:** "Contentment is natural wealth; luxury is artificial poverty." The poverty is made of comparison, not of empty tins.

Heading map**Unpack**

- **Contentment** = enough, attention, unbought dignity (santosh, **Gandhi's** trusteeship).
- **Luxury** = not comfort; the treadmill of display.
- **Artificial poverty** = a lack invented by advertising, caste honour, GDP-as-self.

Quote to earn: **Socrates** (as traditionally given). **Gandhi** - "earth has enough for everyone's need, not for everyone's greed" (often so cited). **Schumacher** - small is beautiful. **Buddha** - tanha.

Person

- **Mental health:** FOMO, debt for a wedding, a phone as status.
- **Stoic cousin:** Epictetus - some things are not ours.

Society

- **Wedding and dowry inflation:** luxury as social tax.
- **Fact peg:** household debt and consumption surveys - aspiration can outrun income; use cautiously, no fake decimals.

Economy and ecology

- Luxury emissions vs a decent floor for all (housing, protein, Ujjwala as need).
- **Fact peg:** India still carries undernutrition alongside luxury housing - two worlds, one republic.
- **Circular economy, repair, public parks:** wealth that is not luxury.

State

- Welfare is not anti-contentment; it is a floor so contentment is possible.
- Conspicuous official spending is artificial poverty of the public purse.

Counter

- **Do not preach contentment to the landless. Ambedkar:** a hungry man is not "simple". Luxury of the few can be the theft of the many. The quote rebukes greed, not justice.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** raise the floor, lower the theatre. Contentment is a civic skill; luxury as identity is a tax on the soul and the planet. Expand each heading; this is not the full essay.

Facts & figures

Socrates

Contentment as natural wealth; luxury as a poverty we invent by comparison.

Gandhi

Need versus greed - use as an ethic of enough, not as anti-development.

Nutrition vs luxury

Undernutrition and obesity/lifestyle disease can coexist - two poverties, one of them artificial.

Public goods

Parks, libraries, clean air: wealth that is not luxury because it is shared.

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