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Recruitment

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The Crisis of Character

In our life and society we are faced with crises of multifarious types. Sometimes it is an energy crisis, another time it is food crisis. The economic crisis also stalks the land in season and out of season. The latest crisis is the trouble created by the coronavirus pandemic which has devoured lakhs of people all over our planet.

There may be other crises as well, but the most important of all crises is the crisis of character which has so permeated our society in the modern times and with such an intensity that we are compelled to think whether our society will at all be able to overcome it. Not that crisis of character is a wholly new thing to the present times, but that it was never so grave ever before. It did exist in every period in the past but only in a moderate degree; but now it has crossed all limits and has become practically unmanageable.

The modern crisis of character is expressing itself in various ways. In our craze for novelty we have got cut off from our past; utter modernity has subordinated the traditional; and everything that informed and inspired and sustained our lives in the past is being abandoned. The higher values of life that nourished and nurtured our moral being and gave us strength are ridiculed and dubbed as signs of backwardness. Morality which was the mainstay of all that we did is being sacrificed at the altar of pragmatism and modernism. Materialism has overpowered us and the springs of spirituality are getting dried up systematically and surely. This materialism has made us utterly individualistic and mercenary. We fail to see the same spark of divinity that runs through all life. William Wordsworth rightly bemoans this condition of ours in these words :

*"The World is too much with us, late
and soon
Getting and spending we lay waste our
powers
Little we see in Nature that is ours
We have given our hearts away a sordid
boon."*

Due to these tendencies our sensitivity and sensibility stand so petrified that Nature no more holds charm for us.

"The meanest flower that blows can give thoughts that lie too deep for tears". This is no more the case now. The pursuit of wealth has occupied all our time and attention and energy and "we have no time to stand and stare" at the beautiful objects of Nature which alone could give us permanent peace and tranquility.

The present crisis of character has also resulted in the loosening of hold of social and family relationships. We can easily succumb to petty temptations even if it is potentially detrimental to the interest of the society. The old bonds of affinity and sympathy and attachment which marked our family relations in the past are steadily but certainly getting weakened. Things have reached such an unhealthy pass that we would be ready to sacrifice individuals connected with us even by blood if we could materially benefit from it. The sufferings even of our nearest relations fall flat on our insensitive soul; only self-interest would goad us into action. When such is the ease, can we have any genuine love for our neighbours and other human beings. We have become so selfish and individualistic that we don't care to know about the problems and sufferings even of our next door neighbours. Even amidst the burgeoning humanity we find ourselves lonely. Mathew Arnold put the same so succinctly in the following words.