

Chapter – 1

The Pace for Living

R.C. Hutchinson

Agony of modern man

- The essay 'The Pace for Living' captures the agony of modern man.
- The fast pace hurts the normal rhythm.
- The fast pace puts undue pressure on men.
- The person who doesn't maintain the pace feels disabled.

The Corn Merchant as a representative of the agonised modern man

- The Irish Corn merchant fails to keep up with the fast pace of life.
- So out of despair, he says: 'there's an aeroplane that goes at 1000 miles an hour!'
- The corn merchant is an anxious man.
- He has many worries and grievances:
 - He felt his heart was weak..
 - His nephew was cheating him.
 - His wife was a spendthrift. She was wasting away his hard earned money.

Aeroplane as a symbol of fast life

- Aeroplane is used as a symbol of fast –paced life.

Advantages of fast-paced life

- Travelling has become fast:
 - We can dine in London and have lunch in New York the next day.

Disadvantages of fast-paced life

- People are always in a hurry.
- The chances of accidents have increased.
- We are devoid of real pleasure of travel as well as life.

Slow thinkers as misfit in the modern age

- Slow thinkers are those who cannot think of a clever come back (are cursed with 'l' esprit de l' escalier'). They do not understand even a joke quickly.
- They cannot keep up with today's fast pace of life.
- They fail in modern day intelligence tests.
- These are tests for the speed of one's mind.
- The author himself is a slow thinker:
 - The author once went to watch a movie along with his wife.
 - He could not follow the fast-paced scenes in the film.
 - He had to frequently ask his wife questions about the scenes in the film.

- He asked his wife whether the girl in the scene was the same that appeared at the beginning.

Questions

Now, on the basis of your understanding of this chapter try to answer the following questions:

1. Write a few sentences about the elderly corn-merchant.
2. 'They tell me there's an aeroplane now that goes at 1000 miles an hour. Now that's too fast.' What light does the remark of the corn-merchant throw on the fast life today?
3. What sort of excitement do we have today which our ancestors lacked? Is it an advantage or disadvantage?
4. Who are taken to be slow thinkers? How are the slow thinkers, handicapped today?
5. What enlightenment does the writer seek from his wife? What does it suggest about the plight of the modern man?
6. Summarise the central idea of this essay.