



# SLOW AND STEADY

'SLOW LIVING' IS ABOUT

MAKING HUMAN VALUES

AND SIMPLICITY THE

CENTRAL TENET OF LIVING

by **Faraaz Tanveer**

masochistic lack of love for others. Where bonding is replaced by 'connections' and socialising by 'networking'. In our race to 'get a-head', we have somewhere forgotten to 'keep a heart'.

It is in the midst of such an environment that a movement took root in Italy in the late '80s. It was called the Slow Food movement. This movement established that people should eat and drink slowly, with enough time to taste their food and spend time with family and friends, without rushing. Slow Food is against its counterpart: the spirit of Fast Food and what it stands for as a lifestyle. Slow Food became the basis for a bigger movement called Slow Living.

The Slow Living movement questions the sense of 'hurry' and 'craziness' generated by globalisation, fuelled by the desire of 'having in quantity' versus 'having with quality'. This no-rush attitude does not represent doing less. It means working and doing things with greater quality and perfection, with attention to detail and less stress. It means re-establishing family values, friends, and leisure time. Taking the present and concrete 'now', versus the undefined and anonymous 'then'. It means making essential human values and simplicity the central tenets of

*"The trouble with the rat race is that even if you win, you're still a rat!"*

Lily Tomlin

Success and achievement have become the central values of our world today. Hard work and focus are the new buzzwords. If you slow down and decide to take a breather, you will be run over, they warn us. Therefore, we run, demented lemmings hurrying to our own end, in a frenzied rush for more, and then some.

This race does not have a finish line. The carrot dangles forever, teasing us with fleeting glimpses of the ultimate mirage: Happiness. Rush – from home, to train, to office, to lunch, to work, to tea, to work, to train, to dinner, to bed, to work, to insanity! The race for fitting in never ends. This sadistic self-torture then finds expression in



Photo: Mary

Dropping time consciousness

living. Many of us live our lives running behind time, but we only reach it when we die of a heart attack or in a car accident rushing to be on time. Others are so anxious of living the future that they forget to live the present, which is the

only time that truly exists. The Slow Living movement has found many offshoots in recent times, with Slow travel, Slow work, Slow learning, and even Slow cities becoming the new buzzwords. Also, Slow Living is being increasingly linked with environmental protection movements, as the principles of Slow Living provide a sustainable model for the same.

We in India have been living the 'slow lifestyle' for years, without even knowing it! Our traditional modes of living and working and of eating and travelling and our emphasis on family values all present an ideal the west has just come to recognise. It is ironic that now that the west has taken up the Slow Living ideal in a big way, we in India seem to be moving away from it. Then, maybe it is not that surprising after all. Progress is cyclical in nature. Now that the west has reached a saturation point in terms of consumerism, they are naturally turning towards more sustainable modes of living. They have been there and done that. We, on the other hand, are just arriving. Maybe we will have to go through our own teething process before we learn our lesson. However, if we can combine our economic growth with sustainable principles of Slow Living, we would be knocking at the door of an opportunity that has never been there before in history. To build the principles of sustainable development within the fabric of one's growing economy will leave us with a system that is robust and self-sustaining.

Must we repeat all the mistakes ourselves to learn from them? Only time will tell.

At the workplace, it stands for a less coercive work environment, a happier, lighter and more productive workplace where people enjoy doing what they know best how to do. It's time to stop and think on how companies need to develop serious quality with no-rush that will increase productivity and the quality of products and services, without losing the essence of spirit. Countries like Sweden have successfully implemented these principles in their corporate culture, with outstanding results. In the Swedish multinational Volvo, for example, any project takes two years to be finalised, even if the idea is simple and brilliant. It is a rule. Volvo, Escania, Ericsson, Electrolux, and Nokia are some of Sweden's renowned companies that are world leaders in their respective fields. The French, even though they work 35 hours per week, are more productive than the Americans or British. The Germans have established 28.8-hour workweeks and have seen productivity driven up by 20 per cent. This slow attitude has brought forth the attention of the pupils of the fast and the "do it now!" philosophy.

On a personal level, Slow Living is living life on one's own terms, as against the terms set up by society, culture, neighbours, or television. It means learning to slow down and eat dinner together – to have friends sit at a table and break bread together – to sit in the living room and recline, and to enjoy it without guilt – to chew softer, sip slower, and listen longer – to stand in the front yard and have a conversation with the neighbours – to water the grass and smell the flowers – to turn off the television and pick up a book – to read next to each other in bed – to live deeply with family as best friends, sharing dreams, fears and lives on a regular basis – to love, pray, think and practice.

John Lennon said, "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans." ☺

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