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To Be or Not To Be - Act Now

*"To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them..."*

- Hamlet 3/1

In the famous Shakespearean play Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark has been brilliantly portrayed as an intelligent youth, torn between 'action' and 'contemplation'. The inaction on his part leads to darkening of the tragedy resulting into death of principal characters. The spectators are overcome with grief as catharsis sweeps them off their feet, but the message is clear - you have to pay dearly for indecision and inaction. In fact, the world famous soliloquy quoted above, presents the very dilemma of youth even in the present times.

This contrast can also be seen in the Indian context, wherein at the battlefield of Kurukshetra, Arjuna is vexed by this hard choice between 'action' and 'renunciation'. The brave warrior in him tries to withdraw from the battlefield taking refuge of confused logic. Here Lord Krishna his mentor, counsels him wisely to do his duty in a detached manner, unmindful of the fruits of the action - '*Nishkam Karma Yoga*'. The advice given at the battlefield has been immortalized in '*Song Celestial*' - **Bhagwad Gita**. It is said that the 800 verses recited by Lord Krishna spurred Arjuna into action and he uttered the final words "*Karisye vacanam tava*" (*I shall act according to thy word*). Then he pounced on the enemy and led the victory over evil.

One may wonder whether action merely involves a push ahead. Here again, there are innumerable instances in human struggle where critical importance is attached to movement and dynamism rather than direction. In the Second World War, when Field Marshal Montgomery ordered thousands of kilometer withdrawal of Allied troops in North Africa in 1942, there was great criticism of his action. But after withdrawing 2,500 kilometer due east he fought pitched battle at El-Alemine and defeated the German army.

As in war, so in peace, dynamism and flexibility coupled with action, alone leads to success in life. As in war so in business, the emphasis is on strategic action to achieve chosen goals. The Japanese system of *Hoshin Kanri* where 'planning' is followed by 'doing' i.e. actual implementation, it is again followed by 'reviewing' leading to revised 'planning and doing'. This strategy has helped Japan rule the commercial world for the last four decades.

In today's context, the Youth is often subjected to innumerable doses of advice. While the parents and the teachers implore him to do his duty, his friends and buddies may

distract him. Whether it is choosing a sport, a dress or an evening out, one is confronted with multiple choices. The matter becomes serious when it comes to selection of careers – whether to join the armed forces or to take refuge behind a desk? Whether to be an engineer or doctor or black coated lawyer and prosecute the rest? These and many more doubts chase the youth.

Every New Year brings with it hopes and aspirations, and we all hope and pray for a brighter, happier and livelier tomorrow. We often take oaths and New Year resolutions to excel and go beyond the ordinary. But as the months and seasons pass we tend to drift, often losing sight of the ultimate goal. There are reasons and excuses followed by more excuses, but the task is unfinished and often beyond reach. A conflict of this nature may lead to confusion and despondency, causing great harm to the youth leading to inaction.

But one must remember that decisive actions and dogged follow-up of goals alone can ensure success in personal and professional life. History is full of individuals who have surmounted innumerable obstacles to achieve results. There are many who have lived by the dictum - “If it is difficult I will do it tomorrow – if it is impossible I will do it now”. The never-say-die spirit has helped humanity to survive and it will continue to spur the youth to achieve the impossible.

As Lord Avebury has summed it in his famous work, ‘Use of Life’,
“Life is short, Art is long, Opportunity fleeting, Experiment uncertain, and Judgement difficult.”

Act now – or it may be a tad too late!