

# STRAIN YOUR EARS AT THE DOGS' RACES

**On Being not on Having**  
**“Successful life” vs “successful living”.**  
**Jump out of the rat race.**

## Intent of the Story

- ✓ *This parable is a satire and a critique of our highly competitive society.*
- ✓ *True success in life is a qualitative affair, not a quantitative one.*
- ✓ *Human living, for a responsible person, is a matter of being and not of having.*
- ✓ *To realize the futility of modern living which programs us to run for ever to get more and more without ever giving us a chance of becoming more.*
- ✓ *To be aware that "success" as the world understands it is one thing and "successful living" is quite another.*
- ✓ *To take to heart the biblical warning that "a man's true life is not made up of the things he owes, no matter how rich he may be." (Lk 12/15).*
- ✓ *To caution the participants against running after power, prestige and wealth and to begin living and enjoying what they are..*

## THE STORY

**Narrator:** The race was over... Panting, their flaming tongues hanging frothily from their open mouths, bleary-eyed, hungry and exhausted, the hounds were led back to their kennels... They had run as fast as they could. They had chased that elusive hare a hundred times and more. For all their efforts they had not met with success... not so far, at any rate... If you strained your ears you could hear the hounds talking agitatedly among themselves from kennel to kennel.

**Hounds:** You know, this time I nearly made it. I really ran like mad... I came so close to the hare... I was sure I would get my teeth into her... Never mind, next time I'll try harder... I'm sure I'll succeed! Of course sooner or later, I shall succeed...

**Narrator:** And all the hounds in a chorus replied:

**Hounds:** Yes, yes, we have to run faster and faster... we have to work harder and harder.., we have to strain ourselves to the utmost... Then, only then... we shall succeed!

**Narrator:** Next day, before the races could begin, all the hounds kept exhorting one another to try harder, to run faster, to strain themselves more... When it was about time for the races to begin they were restless and impatient... Racing became their very life.., a part of themselves...

When the signal was given and their kennels opened..., they sprang forward with a mighty leap, mad with fury and a death-defying determination to be one up on the hare. They had to outdo her in the race; they had to succeed at any cost... But alas! In their consuming passion for success, they were blind to the fact that the hare was a mechanically controlled dummy. She eluded them once more! The faster they ran, the faster she ran...

Today's race ended again in disappointment and frustration. Again the hounds were led back to their kennels, more dead than alive... Again, for the hundredth time, they spoke among themselves repeating their old worn out clichés...

**Hounds:** We have to run faster... Yes, we have to work harder... Surely, we have to strain ourselves more... There has to be a way to win the race... Of course, we-shall make it... Nothing is going to stop us from success!

**Narrator:** But time and again their efforts and strivings ended in failure and disappointment. The whole of their lives became a wasteland... lured by the illusion of catching a dummy hare...

## II

**Narrator:** If you strained your ears you could hear also some of the patrons of the dogs' races conferring among themselves.

**Patrons:** I am sorry for these poor dogs! I have seen them running over and over again on the same tracks a hundred times trying to overtake the same damned hare!... They never made it, and they will never will! What dumb fools they are! After all, they are stupid beasts! Can't they see that the hare they are running after is just a dummy? In any case, what can you expect of them? Dumb beasts they are... they condemn themselves to perpetual frustration and disappointment.

## III

**Narrator:** If you strained your ears a third time you could hear some spectators in the stalls speaking among themselves in this fashion:

**Person (1):** You know, this time I nearly made it. To tell the truth, I slogged like mad to get that big contract which would have brought me so much money... I came very close to getting it... But at the last moment, it slipped from my hands... Never mind, next time, I'll try harder... I am sure I'll succeed!

**Person (2):** To be frank with you, I have killed myself trying to make a success of my career. By dint of hard work I have become the top surgeon of a prestigious medical college... If only I try harder, I am sure I'll get the post of Surgeon General... I have only

to strain myself a l more and it will be great...I' ll see myself on the top! Then I'll be happy and contented...

**Person (3):** Last time, I nearly succeeded in getting myself elected from my constituency... I tried so very hard... I ran like mad all over the constituency to get votes, more votes, and still more votes... I nearly made it! In the coming elections I need run faster all over again... I know it's just a matter of exerting myself to the utmost limit... Of course, I'll make it. I am sure I'll succeed!

**Person (4):** I have told my children hundred and one times, that they acquit themselves better in their studies... How can they expect to compete with their classmates if they do not exert themselves more?... Success, after all, is just a matter of working harder and harder... It is only by straining themselves to the utmost and outdoing all their competitors that they will be able to succeed 100% in life!...

**Narrator:** *I wonder, my dear friends, what the hounds would say were to overhear what the people in the stalls were talking!*

### **Ideas and Applications of the Parable**

- Our economy, our educational system, our recreational patterns, even our religious practices are all tainted with the cult of "success"
- Our culture has identified "success" with the marketplace epithets: ***more, bigger, faster, and highest!***
- From birth to death we are told: "In order to succeed you have to have more, acquire more, enjoy more, know more, climb higher, outdo all others, reach the top!"
- We are set for an endless race with accelerating pace, without a definite goal in sight... It's the running that matters!
- Success will for ever elude us because we are running after an illusion, a shadow, a mirage...
- From start to finish we are condemned to failure and to a perpetual frustration.
- We are in no way better off than those "dumb hounds" running after an illusory hare!
- We have been conditioned to believe that success means wealth, power, popularity, applause, status, getting on to the top of the heap, outstripping our rivals, mowing down our opponents.
- The "success" philosophy implies one endless chase for the satisfaction of material wants at the cost of impoverishing the quality of life.
- Not a bit! Success lies in contentment, acceptance, patience, availability, trust, peace, joy and hope in a definitive future.
- Our idea of success makes it impossible for all of us to reach it! Theoretically, only one person can reach the very top. In this way, all the rest will feel like failures.
- Furthermore, even following that model of success, no one will ever be completely successful since none can hit the top in all areas of life.
- For instance, may the richest man, may lack in knowledge, in art or in science or good health, or be a total failure in his family life... He too, will feel frustrated!...

- Unfortunately, today many people die without having lived! The whole of their lives has been a waste, a running after a mirage, a slow living death!...
- Some one rightly said that: "Most people live lives of quiet desperation!"
- When shall we stop hankering for more and start enjoying what we have?
- When shall we stop "possessing" and begin "being"?
- Success is not a matter of trying harder and harder, of straining every nerve to carve a bigger and bigger niche in life. By doing that we kill peace and joy and banish truly successful living for good.
- Man is not made for only for work, for brutish and feverish activity without end.
- Work is a means, not end to happy living. Work and activity are there at the behest of man and for his enjoyment.
- Our "highly successful" world has for too long, sacrificed his live and all he is at the altar of the "moloch of success"!
- It is time for us to worship the "true God" who is a God of peace, serenity, quiet, fruition and joy!
- From now on not long more, let us live more,. Let us run less and enjoy more!

### **New Testament Texts in keeping with the Ideas of the Parable**

Mt 5/1-11	The Beatitudes. True satisfaction and fruition.
Mt 6/ 19-21	Riches in heaven. Strive after them.
Mt 6/24-34	God and possessions. Do not fret overmuch.
Mt 23/1-12	Do not try to be superior to others. Do not ask for titles: Master, Father, Leader.
Mk 9/33-37	Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?
Mk 10/ 17-27	Rich young man. He wasn't free. He was a slave of his wealth.
Mk 10/28-31	How to get your 100 per cent.
Mk 10/35-45	James and John wanted to be more than the other disciples.
Mk 12/38-40	Jesus warns his hearers against the Teachers of the Law. The latter wanted to be considered better than the rest of men.
Lk 4/1-13	Jesus is tempted by the devil to have pleasures, wealth and power.
Lk 11/43	Threats to the Pharisees. They wanted to have the best places
Lk 12/13-21	The rich fool. The worth of man is not in what the has, but on what he is.
Lk 14/7-11	First will be last... last first.
Lk 15/1-3	The Pharisees objected to Jesus entertaining sinners and outcasts. They thought themselves to be more honorable.
Jn 13/1-17	Washing of the feet. True greatness. Greatest success!
Jas 4/1-6	Friendship with the world.
Jas 5/1-3	Warnings to the rich.