

THE STILTS

Intent of the story:

- ✓ *Inferiority complex*
- ✓ *To be ourselves, not what society expects us to be*
- ✓ *The props and mechanisms we use to feel and appear superior to others.*
- ✓ *The harmful consequences of status symbols*

The Story

He was a disgruntled and frustrated man. Quite often he muttered to himself: “I am tired of being just like any other of these puny men around me! I want to be more, higher and superior to all.

In his ambition he made for himself a pair of very high stilts. Once he stood on them, he appeared to be taller than anyone else. He excelled head above shoulders from all his fellow men. On his stilts, he said to himself: “Now, for once, I am taller than the others and I can look down upon them. I do not belong any more to these faceless and damned crowds who just crawl on the ground! I am superior to them all!”

As he was standing on his stilts, one day a beggar approached him and looking up to him asked for alms. Alms! in surprise our man replied. “Who do you think you are, little man, to speak to me? I am not one of the crowds. Oh, no! I am too great to spare time for the likes of you”! Then turning aside, he said to God: “Oh God, I thank you for not making me like this beggar, so low, so mean, so nothing!”

Another time, when a passerby asked him for time, with contempt he snorted: “Time? What for? I do not care for time any more like you mortals do!” Again, turning aside he whispered to God. ‘I thank you God that I managed to escape the drab life of these common folks”

Later on, while walking along the road, full of self, puff up and looking heavenwards, some passerby, kindly, warned him: “Sir, look out, the road has been dug, and there is a ditch there. You may stumble and fall” Full of conceit, He said to himself: “Who is that puny man to warn me? Danger he said? I know better than them all”. And, he went ahead without looking. Then, all of a sudden, headlong he fell into the ditch.

Wounded, aching, soiled and humiliated he could not help himself out of the ditch. Finally, he was compelled to accept the help of those ordinary and puny people whom he had despised for so long, to stand back on his feet.

(Inspired on the script of a Spanish Audiovisual: “Zancos”

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do we not all of us quite often, try **to be more** than others or **rather to appear to be more**? What does this tell of us ourselves?
2. Do any of the following problems mentioned below; explain that compulsion we have to appear superior to others? Reflect on them.
 - Poor self-image.
 - Self- rejection.
 - Ignorance of our worth.
 - Feeling rejected by society.
 - Jealousy.
 - Lack of self-esteem
 - Feeling crashed by excessive demands placed on us from society and family.
 - Irrational Expectations and Assumptions.
3. What sort of **‘stilts’** we and others use to look greater and bigger than our neighbors? Kindly, name as many of them as you can find.
4. What do we mean by **‘status symbols’**? Mention some of them. Are they not sort of stilts? Why?
5. In our efforts **to look more** than what we are, do we really become more; or rather we become smaller and impoverish ourselves? Why? How?
6. In our striving to be more educated, more influential, wealthier, etc. what are we having in mind? At our personal interests only, or also at the interests of others and society?

SOME THOUGHTS FOR AN INPUT.

- All of us have an inclination to show off and to impress others. We crave to be ‘one-up’- in relation to our neighbors and colleagues. We do not seem to be happy being what we are, **or rather what we think we are.**
- The worse part of it is that actually speaking **we really do not want to be more, or to grow more, but just we want to feel greater than others and to look superior to others.** This explains why we emotionally do not grow nor are we interested to help others grow.
- We are not making efforts to find out our real worth on which we can stand, instead **we prop ourselves with external supports** like money, status symbols, titles, degrees, cheap beauty gimmicks, jewelry, expensive gadgets etc. all of them are nothing but **‘stilts’ on which we walk through life.**
- They make us appear and even make us feel superior to others when in reality we are not. **Sooner or later, our ‘stilts’, our pretences may fail us and put us** to shame and lead us to frustration and self-rejection..

- We live in a depersonalized society made of a mass of anonymous individuals. Everything is 'stereotyped'. Each one of us becomes just a **'number' - not a person** in a world of statistics. This makes us feel worthless.
- Yet, each one of us long to be different from others, **to be ourselves** to have a name, to have a face, to be recognized as a person, **to be someone, not just something or a number.**
- The real problem lies in that society looks only at the surface, at the appearances, it cannot appreciate the real value of persons as persons. Our innate instinct and longing for personhood, for uniqueness crucial for self -actualization is suppressed.
- Society and the advertising world has brained-washed us to believe that what counts in today's world **is not to be, but to have,** not to be great , but to appear greater than others.
- Thus our world, our culture produces "**stilted " personalities** walking through life with their feet up in the air of make belief, rather than having their feet planted firmly on the ground of reality.
- **Most of us spend our lives acting,** pretending, using deceit-mechanisms - stilts" to keep up our make beliefs alive. We do not realize that by **playing superior to others** we do not only stunt our growth but also the growth of others. We live in a world of make believe.
- **How Can We Jump Out of the Rut. Tell us the way**