

LIFE AND ITS IRONY: A STUDY ON SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S SHORT STORY "THE ANT AND THE GRASSHOPPER"

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Abstract:

Hard work gives a lot of experience, skill, and builds a path to success. But sometimes luck plays a critical role instead of hard but very rare. The fight between luck and hard work cannot be limited to reaching the goal but to survive even after success. In Modern times, the respect and value is given as per the economic position of the people but not bases on the values that the people follow. Society does not care for means of success. Somerset Maugham's short story "The Ant and the Grasshopper" presents the darker side of life which discloses the drastic changes that take place in the minds of people regarding life. However, the fable 'industry is rewarded and giddiness is punished' will not work out in this imperfect world. There is a strict correlation between luck and success where a series of lucky events were responsible for incredible success ever if the individual hard work is less. The story stands for such an example in the life of George and Tom with its irony.

Keywords: Experience, Irony, Hard work, Luck, success, Skill.

Introduction

Generally, there is a notion that hundred percent hard work definitely gives success but it may be sooner or later. There were no particular parameters to measure the formula of success. It is evidently proved in many cases that the hard work followed by smart work with a little luck naturally prepares one to reach their success. Life is with full of miracles as Shakespeare said in his drama "As You Like It";

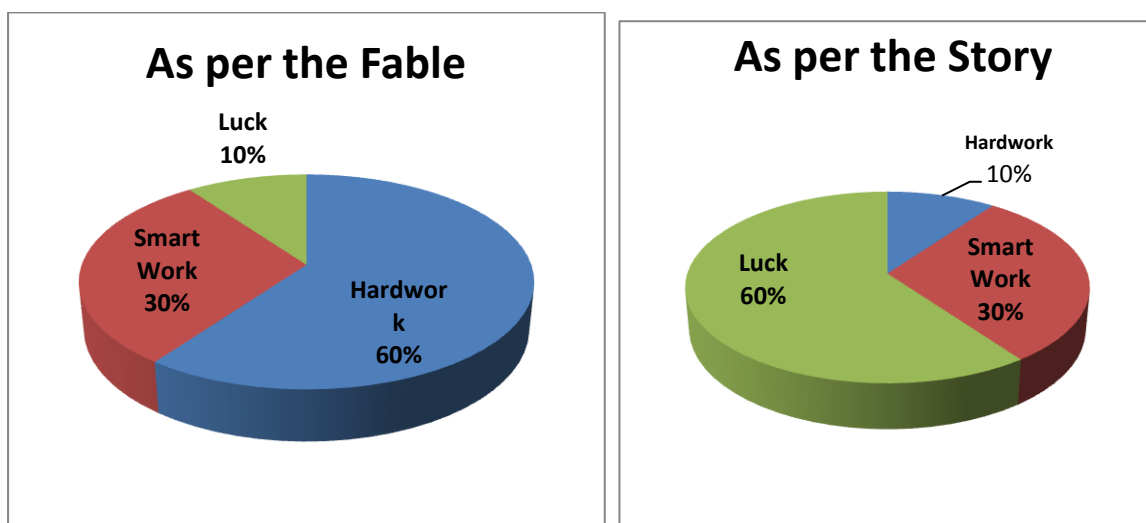
All the world's a stage,
all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances, (Jaques: Act II Scene vii 139-141)

Nobody knows what happens in the next second. With in the short span of time, king may become slave and a slave becomes king. The traditional fables, anecdotes and many other quotes from the Holy Scriptures proclaim that the hard work itself is a passport to success. But the story is generally reverse of the traditional fables in the present context. Hard work is needed along with a small amount of a smart work. In addition to this, there needs the luck to reach the goal. Luck plays a key role in any kind of work, some may not believe it but the miracles may lift man from what he designed of and lead to what he never imagined.

William Somerset Maugham in his story "The Ant and the Grasshopper" presents two Interesting characters i.e. Tom Ramsay and George Ramsay, comparing them to the ancient fable. The writer suggests an indirect story which parallel to the most popular fable ant and grasshopper. In the traditional fable, Ant collects food in summer thinking that winter must be spent comfortably because it is hard to collect food in winter. Grasshopper wastes her time in singing, dancing and doing any work in summer. During winter, it went to Ant to beg some food. Ant refused to offer food. If grasshopper would have done some work during the

summer, the catastrophe of scarcity of food might have not happened. In parallel to it, Maugham's story, The Ramsay was perfectly respectable people. George was the elder brother and his younger brother named Tom. Tom is compared with grasshopper and George with Ant. George is very responsible, dutiful, respectable, hardworking and tensed for the future where tom is presented as relaxed and luxurious, who spends the time with the beautiful ladies visiting expensive restaurant without caring the future. Fortunately, Tom gets an opportunity to get married to wealthy lady and should not have to take tensions about future but George always indulged in the work to make his father better. At last, the old woman dies and the properties related to the women are now belonging to Tom. The author explains about the role of luck in human life.

A Comparative Analysis of Luck played in Fable and in the Ant and Grasshopper



The Ant and Grasshopper which is devised to bring home to the young the useful lesson that in an imperfect world industry is rewarded and giddiness punished. In this admirable fable, the Ant spends a laborious summer gathering its winter store, while the Grasshopper sits on the grass singing to sun. Winter comes and Ant is comfortably provided for it, but the Grasshopper has an empty ladder. He goes to the Ant and begs for little food. Then Ant refuses to give the food. Grasshopper dies due to lack of food. The Ramsay were perfectly respectable people. George Ramsay and Tom Ramsay are two brothers. George Ramsay was elder brother and his younger brother is Tom Ramsay. There was every reason to suppose that Tom Ramsay would have a useful and honourable carrier. But he was like the grasshopper who wasted his life in idle, worthless, dissolute pursuits. His elder brother George Ramsay on contrary was like the Ant, prudent, industrious. He was looking forward to retiring on a small income and leading a peaceful retired life. But one day, without warning, he announced that he didn't like to work and wasn't suitable for marriage. He wanted to enjoy himself. He refused to listen to anybody who gave him good counsel. He left his office and wife. With the little money, he had spent two years happily in various capitals of Europe. Rumours of his doings reached his relation from time to time and they were profoundly shocked. He certainly had a very good time. They shook their heads and asked

“what would happen when his money was spent?” they soon found out he borrowed. He was very good at making friends and his friends found it difficult to refuse money when he asked for it.

Tom would often borrow money from his elder brother George for his luxuries. Once or twice when Tom promised to mend his ways, George gave him considerable money so that he might make a fresh start. Instead of mending his ways, Tom bought a motor car and some jewellery with that money. When George felt his brother to be incorrigible, Tom started blackmailing him. Tom took up a job in the bar or started driving taxi. George has to oblige his brother with a couple of hundred pounds merely to save honour of family. Once Tom nearly went to a prison. He showed himself having cheated a man called Cronshaw, others scoundrel with whom Tom was in league. Cronshaw threatened to take the matter to the court if his money was not returned by Tom. But George could not allow his only brother to prison. George came to know that Tom and Cronshaw had gone off together to Montecarlo the Montax they cashed the cheque. For twenty years, Tom raced and gambled, philandered with the prettiest girl, dances ate in most expansive restaurant and dressed handsomely.

Tom Ramsay know everyone and everyone knows Tom. Poor George, only a year elder than his scrape grace brother, looked 60. He had never taken more than fortnights' holiday in year for a quarter of century. He was in his office every morning at 9:30 and never left it till 6. He was honest and had a good wife, to whom he never been unfaithfully even in thoughts, and four daughters to whom he was the best of fathers. He made a point of saving third of his income and his plan was to retire at 55 and little house in a country where he proposed to cultivate his garden and play golf. His life was blameless. He was glad he was growing old because Tom was growing old too. He rubbed his hands and sad that it was all very well when Tom was young and good looking, But he's a only year younger than I am in four years Tom will be fifty and Tom won't find life so easy then. He would have thirty thousand pounds by the time; it was fifty for twenty-five years. Thus his fortune is doubled with a kind of luck.

Conclusion:

This story is reverse of the moral of traditional fable. Generally what everyone says is that hard work only the way to reach our goal and itself leads to success in many incidents. But according Maugham's short story hard work alone is not enough but it is needed with a small amount or ideas of a smart work. And this work may or may not lead to success all the time. “Luck “plays a key role in any kind of work.

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