

WHAT'S THE TROUBLE, MR TOILER?

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Intent of the Story

- ✓ *To realize the futility of our hankering for more and more material possessions in order to enjoy life. .*
- ✓ *To free us from the stranglehold of consumerism in our lives and from the fallacy that happiness is more in having than in being.*
- ✓ *To realize that a life of moderation and of being satisfied with what we have, is the path to contentment.*

THE STORY

Narrator:

Many, many years ago, there lived a very clever and hardworking man. His name was Mr. Toiler. Mr. Toiler was very proud of his strong and safe go-down... There, in his go-down, he had his heart... After all, there he kept all his wealth and possessions! His only ambition in life was to fill his go-down to the brim with grain, sugar, oil and all sorts of foodstuffs. For ever he kept muttering to himself:

Mr. Toiler:

I have to work very hard to fill my go-down... Only the day I'll see my go-down packed and overflowing, I'll feel happy and contented! Then only will I feel secure. Then only will I relax and enjoy myself for the rest of my life!

Narrator:

Impelled by a consuming passion to collect and hoard all sorts of grains and eatables, Mr. Toiler "toiled and moiled" from dawn to dusk. He was for ever on the move, always in a rush, never allowing himself a single minute to rest or to relax. After long days of hard labor he finally managed to see his go-down filled to the brim! Not one grain more could be pushed in! So full it was! Toiler felt great, on top of the world! In exultation he said:

Mr. Toiler:

What a lucky man I am! I did it! I did it! Indeed! Now, I have enough wealth to satisfy all my needs and wants for the rest of my life! Now, all that is left for me is to rest and enjoy life!

Narrator:

Next day, early morning, Mr. Toiler went to visit his go-down just to gloat over his great storehouse of wealth. He felt proud and happy with the thought of going over, time and again, the inventory of his "countless" goods, sacks, barrels, packages, boxes, casks, bags and what not! When he opened the door of the go-down Mr. Toiler's heart fell... He got the shock of his life!... His go-down was half empty!... He cried:

Mr. Toiler:

What has happened to my stocks? Have robbers come and stolen my goods? But how can that be? My go-down is very safe and strong. It is foolproof... Besides, the doors were securely locked. The latches and bolts have not been tampered with. Let me, right now make an inventory of my goods to find out if there is any theft.

Narrator: Toiler took a very minute count of his stored goods... He was non-plussed! Nothing at all, not a grain had disappeared! Everything was in perfect condition! In bewilderment he said:

Mr Toiler: It's funny, really funny! My stock is intact. Every box, sack, package, drum, container is here! Why does my go-down look half empty? Well, I guess, I'll have to carry on working very hard, slogging all over again to get my go-down filled to the brim... I will, I will!

Narrator: And with fresh resolve Mr. Toiler plunged again into a frenzy of activity, exerting every nerve to collect larger and larger stocks of grain and provisions to stuff into his go-down. Finally, he had made it for a second time! The go-down was bursting with foodstuffs of every description. Toiler beamed with joy and satisfaction. He said:

Mr. Toiler: What a lucky chap I am! I did it! Indeed, I did it! Now surely, I have enough to satisfy all my needs and wants for the rest of my life! Now what is left for me is to rest and enjoy life!

Narrator: Next day, when Mr. Toiler went to his go-down to peep into his store, he was shocked beyond words! Again, his go-down looked half empty! He again carefully and meticulously inventoried his goods. Nothing was missing. But, still the go-down looked half empty! He could not figure out what was happening.... Try as he did, he could not puzzle out the mystery. In despair he muttered:

Mr Toiler: Again... the same trouble! The stocks are all intact. Once, twice, three times I have counted the number of sacks, drums, packages, casks, containers and everything is found in order! What's happening? When will I see my go-down full to capacity? How can I rest and enjoy life if my go-down looks half empty! No, No, I have to see it full. Only then, will I be happy and contented! Only then, will I feel secure... Only then, will I rest and relax...

Narrator: Again Mr. Toiler went back to the task and threw himself into a frantic and futile struggle to stuff in his go-down to capacity!... He spent all his life acquiring more and more goods... piling up his hoard without respite... without sleep or rest... without the company of friends... denying himself even of the simplest joys of life., all in a vain attempt to fill his intractable go-down to the brim... He little realized that it was not his wealth that was diminishing but that his go-down was expanding, always leaving room for some more!

POINTS FOR REFLECTION

- The problem with Mr. Toiler was not with his goods - he had more than enough to live a life of leisure and happiness - but with his go-down which kept growing in proportion to the goods stored therein.
- The go-down represents the human heart, the storehouse of desire. The more we have, the more we want to have.
- Our greed grows in proportion to our wealth. Unless we control our greed, we shall never be satisfied!
- The more the wants we satisfy, the more the needs our insatiable desire creates for us.
- Mr. Toiler is a symbol of modern man obsessed with the thought of acquiring more and more goods to get more and more satisfaction out of life.
- This utopian myth of material happiness is daily and hourly nourished by the catchwords and slogans of our consumerist society: "produce more", "consume more", "Live life king-size", "Keep going while the rest have stopped."
- We are mesmerized by the illusion that one day we shall reach the pinnacle of happiness by acquiring a wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.
- When we savor the good things of life with a miser's greed, they become Dead Sea fruits on our lips.
- Whenever the "rat-race" reaches a point at which life becomes a sheer struggle to have more than the neighbor next door, frustration inevitably sets in.
- Shall we ever stop this life-and-death struggle to feed the insatiable monster of consumption and sit back to live human and satisfying lives?
- What's the real purpose of life: to have or to be? To own or to be happy?