

## Compete Against Yourself

Commander VK Jaitly \*

Competition in life is inevitable. We have competition in all stages of life and in all walks of life. But the problem happens when we start competing in illogical and crazy ways. My neighbour bought a new car last month. So my wife and my children feel that our car is eight years old and a smaller one too. So we should also buy a new car that should be bigger too and a higher model preferably compared to what my neighbour has. This is called mad competition rush and is the result of all miseries in our life. And there is no end to this type of competition. Why should I compete against my neighbour? He is a big businessman and I am just a retired Indian Navy officer with a reasonably good pension. I will definitely change my car once it is about 10 years old and that too of the same level or just a shade higher model. I just can't afford what my neighbour has bought.

We all have our own limitations. By no means, I am advocating the path of renunciation. In fact, I am the votary of "High Living and High Thinking" instead of "Simple Living and High Thinking". But we all have our own strengths and weaknesses. We must understand them. So the best course of action is that we should compete against ourselves. If I was riding a bicycle to my office earlier, I can try to upgrade to a motor cycle, then to a small car and then a bigger one. This way, I can continue to aspire and achieve more and more. Similarly, if I was staying in a one room flat and that too on rent, I can always cherish to have a small

flat of my own. And once I have a two rooms flat, I can always compete against myself and strive to get a three bed rooms flat.

There is no point feeling miserable while looking at the gentleman staying in a neighbouring bungalow and driving to his office in a chauffeur driven car. Now does that mean, you can't even dream of having a bungalow and a chauffeur driven big car? The answer is 'Why not?' You have full right and in fact, I will say; you must dream, and dream big. The history of the world is full of 'Rags to Riches' stories of so many people who climbed great heights through their hard work, business acumen and so many other qualities; the list is too long. Now some of you may think of some people, who acquired riches and all the luxuries of life through sheer luck. Yes, here comes the Karma theory for our rescue for some explanation.

Dhirubhai Ambani's Reliance empire is a great 'Rags to Riches' story. I think the areas in which Dhirubhai ventured, there was hardly any competition. But he kept on competing against himself, against his own targets and kept on achieving greater and greater heights. He had the killing instinct to achieve his targets. His hard work and luck both worked for him. Then one fine day, the two brothers divided the business empire in two parts, probably equal ones after his death. Mukesh Ambani has gone to great heights even to challenge the global billionaires while Anil Ambani seems to be cruising through rough weathers. I think Anil Ambani was trying to compete with his brother

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and faltered on the way. Though it is too early to write off Anil Ambani.

Let me be very clear that I am not against competition. But let there be a healthy competition. For students, I tell them that if someone in your class is getting more marks than you and you have a strong desire to beat him, develop a sense of appreciation for him instead of feeling jealous of him. Try to find out his positive habits and traits, his way of concentrating on studies and how many hours he puts into studies etc. Does he read some other higher level of books in addition to the prescribed course books? In a nutshell, learn from him. Set a higher benchmark for yourself compared to what you achieved in the last exam. This way, keep raising your bar and possibility is that one day, you may go ahead of the guy, you wanted to beat.

When an athlete prepares himself for say 400 mts race at college level athletics meet. He beats everybody by running 400 mts in 55 seconds. He wins the Gold and is very happy but can he be selected at the National or even state level athletics? Probably not. So he starts preparing himself. He gets up early morning, builds up his stamina, makes himself tough and after working very hard, he is able to run the same 400 mts in 53 seconds after a couple of months of coaching. He competed against himself and broke his own record. He continues to compete against himself and after one year is able to run the same 400 mts in 50 seconds and is now selected for the National Coaching Center and is able to beat all other players who are slower than him. His first target is to reach the national record of about 45 plus seconds. During the competitive races, he obviously competes against other athletes, but in actual practice he is competing against himself every day.

People who compete against themselves are generally more successful than those who compete against others. Because being a winner means much more than crossing the finishing line first. Being a winner means giving everything you've got to beat your earlier record and winning a Gold or Silver is off course important. The competition with weak competitors becomes meaningless though you win the Gold despite achieving lower performance than your previous ones. Thus, you can be victorious without even winning the medal. The famous flying Sikh, Milkha Singh, was victorious in the Rome Olympics despite being at 4th place as he bettered his Indian record. It is said that the goal or the destination is important, no doubt, but it is the journey or the process that is equally important. And one must enjoy that too. Once you start competing against yourself in lieu of others, you start enjoying your life.



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