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Since childhood we have been told about effort as a duty, hard work as an obligation, hard work as a result oriented investment. We are told: “Work hard so that you can have dividends later on.” Happiness is the key to success, correct, but does happiness excludes hard work? If happiness excludes hard work then all those who work hard surely must be very sad. Can’t we work hard happily? Can’t hard work emerge out of joy? Can’t one say: “I’m so happy that I am working very hard.” Or must we work hard only with a long face and say that “I am so frustrated, that I am slogging.”

Our hard work is just labour, labour done to get results. The results that we want, never really satisfy us. The proof is, that we want more. At no point do we stop and say that we have had enough. And because we want more, we have to put in more labor. So, in all our life we are just a laborer.

But we have worked hard only when you were afraid and sad, right? Somebody comes and pulls you up: “Exams are coming, you will fail” and then you start working hard. So what is our engine? Sadness. The more sad we are, the harder we work. Is that not so? The more afraid we are, the harder we work.

Don’t let this become a habit, don’t let this be known that you can be made to work hard through pressure or frustration or sadness or fear. Otherwise you are giving the world a handle over you. Remember, your best is expressed when you are joyful, when you are fearless. Do not get into the habit of working under pressure.

Be happy and run hard. How does that sound? Like somebody who jogs for pleasure.

Do you know what is the central problem that drives us to work hard? The central problem is that we have been made to feel small about ourselves. All your work emerges from demoralization! You have been made to feel dissatisfied about yourself since a very long time.

Family, society, education, religion all these have continuously told you that there is something missing in you, that there is something wrong about you and you must work hard to make up for it. You are not good enough as you are. You have been made to feel small, petty, inadequate. You have been told that if you want to become something, if you want to gain any bit of worthiness, then ‘do’ something, work hard for it.

All the diseases of life, all your unease, all your gossip, all your restlessness arise from this deep-rooted conditioning that there is something wrong and missing in you. Kindly get rid of that notion. You are wonderful, perfect, beautiful. With all your inadequacies, you are still very beautiful. With all the layers of conditioning that you have, you are still wonderful.

A diamond may fall in the mud, but does that reduces its price? You are very, very valuable. But those who do not know their own diamond nature, they make everybody feel small. In fact, there are only two kinds of people in the world. One who feel small, the other who feel complete and dance.

The ones who keep feeling small about themselves, their only purpose in life is to make others feel small. The one who is afraid will necessarily spread fear around him. Have you not seen such people? Exams are approaching and she is shivering. So what does she do? She calls up five others. And what does she do to those five? Does she give them courage?

What does she do? The one who feels small, ends up making everybody feel small. Beware of such people. They might be very close to you, yet be extremely cautious of them.

How to know if someone is operating from a sense of completeness? Always keep a track, How do you feel when you are with a person? Do you start feeling more and more inadequate, or do you gain a certain relaxation? That ‘presence’ will tell you.

Work hard out of a sense of completeness. And never allow others to make you feel small or incomplete. Be very particular about the company you keep; for nothing changes you better and faster than the right company.

The writer is Acharya Prashant, spritual teacher and author

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