

Rays of the One Light

Week 29

Self-Effort, Too, Is Needed

Truth is one and eternal. Realize oneness with it in your deathless Self, within.

The following commentary is based on the teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda.

These past weeks we discussed the need for balancing self-effort with receptivity to divine grace. Both are important in the spiritual life. Passive dependence on grace hasn't the magnetism to attract grace. Boastful self-confidence, however, which closes itself off from the higher, divine power is shallow, brittle, and—given life's many uncertainties—susceptible to ultimate failure.

There is a story in the Bible that illustrates the need to put forth personal effort so as to draw magnetically on the divine power. The story occurs in the Gospel of St. Luke, Chapter 8:

But as he went, the crowds nearly suffocated him. Among them was a woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years and who had derived no benefit from anybody's treatment. She came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his cloak. As a result, her hemorrhage stopped immediately.

"Who was it who touched me?" Jesus asked.

When everybody denied it, Peter remonstrated,

"Master, the crowds are all round, pressing you on every side!"

But Jesus said, "Somebody touched me. I felt power going out from me."

When the woman realized that she had not escaped notice, she came forward trembling and fell at his feet, and admitted before everyone why she had touched him, adding that she had been instantaneously cured.

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“Daughter,” Jesus said, “It is by your faith that you have been healed. Go in peace.”

Self-confidence and self-effort are necessary, as the ignition of a car is necessary to the motor. Of what use the ignition, however, if the motor itself will not work? Wise is he who recognizes the real power in the universe, and guides his life by that supreme power. As it says in the Bhagavad Gita, the ninth Chapter:

To those who meditate on Me as their Very Own, ever united to Me by incessant worship, I make good their deficiencies, and render permanent their gains.

Thus, through holy scripture, God has spoken to mankind.

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