

Satsang with Om Baba

(from Satsang on 28.11.2015, Rishikesh, India)

Contentment

All true yogic practices, they start from the Self. The Self, the Atman, is the first teacher. It is the first expounder. It is the source of yogic knowledge.

The true, genuine utterances, they start from the Self and they bring us to the Self. The Self is the source. The Self is the destination.

The Yamas and Niyamas that we are teaching on these days are also genuine yogic teachings – the foundations of Yoga, the first step of Yoga. Today, we are on the second Niyama, that is Shantosha, contentment.

Contentment is a natural quality of the Self. Discontentment is a natural quality of the ego. The ego can never be content. The Self is always content. It cannot be otherwise.

The ego always wants something more, a little bit more. No matter how much you give to it, it always wants that little bit more. And then you give to it a little bit more. And it's a difficult situation, because if you don't give to it what it asks, then it keeps on nagging you, it keeps on troubling you. It creates disturbance inside. It starts yelling and complaining and pinching you, and kicking you like a spoilt child, like a spoilt little prince. The nature of the ego is to always want something more, to never be satisfied.

In the same way as we said yesterday about the practice of purity, the nature of the body is to get dirty. If you leave it alone, it will not get clean. It will get more and more dirty. In the same way, the nature of the ego is to be discontent, to want something more and more and more. If you leave it by itself, without exposing it to the light of the Self, without disciplining it, the ego will always ask for something more.

Contentment means to be happy, to be in peace with what we have this very moment. It is the pure recognition that this moment is perfect, that it could not be better.

What we seek, that is, supreme happiness, supreme peace, can be found only in this moment. That means contentment.

The ego, on the other hand, is the voice inside that speaks and says “Just wait, you are still missing something. You should also have this little bit. You should also meet this person. You should make one more child. You should buy one more car. You should buy the newest iPhone. You should have more friends on Facebook, some more money in your business”. Always something more. And, when you have it – the ego promises – then, you will find peace. But it is a liar. The peace never comes. Under the rule of the ego, the peace never comes. The peace comes the moment the ego goes out.

The moment one says “OK, I have listened to you enough. I have helped you enough. Shut your mouth. I am happy with what I have this moment. It cannot possibly be better”.

This attitude – it is more than a quality; it is an attitude. It is a discipline, a practice – that nothing can possibly be better than what I have this moment; at this moment, the truth is perfect.

At this moment, life shines perfectly. Life shines brightly. “At this moment I have everything. There is nothing I can even imagine that I want more.”

This attitude is yoga, and it is not to be practised once and then you are free. This attitude needs constant practice. In the same way we wash the body constantly (we don't wash once and say “I'm OK for this lifetime. I washed.”), we have to wash everyday, twice, or even more. In the same way, contentment has to be practised constantly, because it is the nature of the mind and the ego to be discontent. It is very simply like this.

It is like when you do some of your yoga practices everyday, or when people brush their teeth everyday. Some people take a shower everyday, go to the bathroom everyday, take food everyday – the same way. Some things have to be practised constantly, everyday. The practice of contentment means that remembrance, that recognition that “now I have everything”.

The ego will then appear and tell you that only if you have this thing also then you will be so happy; your happiness would be enhanced so much, you will be the emperor of the world. “No, I don't need anything. This moment I have everything. My life is filled with the gifts of the Supreme. Tomorrow, it will be full again with the grace of the Supreme – I know this. The next day will be full of the grace, have no worries. Whatever the Supreme gives to me, that is perfect. I don't need to worry. I don't need to desire. I don't need to wish for something more than what I have.” That is contentment.

Perfection is not something that can be achieved. Perfection is something that can be recognised. That means contentment. To appreciate what you have now. To appreciate the gifts that you have. Not to focus on what you *don't* have or what you *could* have or what you *should* have. There are many things that we could have – infinite things – but this doesn't matter. What matters is what we have this moment and how we make the best out of it, how we value it and how we appreciate it.

This capacity to appreciate what we have – that is yoga; that is called contentment. The capacity to appreciate and the capacity to be thankful for this. So, you could say that contentment as a word, as a term, is very much connected with gratefulness. Contentment and gratefulness, they go together.

The capacity, the quality, to appreciate what we have, what we are given, what we are offered constantly, the quality to be content in this – that's the quality of a truly spiritual person.

In the highest sense, this quality belongs to the Self, to the Atman. Or, it gradually belongs more and more to the person that gets connected to the Self, who recognises his identity with the Self, who recognises that he is not the body. “I am not the mind that constantly needs some more impressions and more fascination. I am that steady Self that shines perfectly.” As this identification develops, contentment grows also.

At the same time, as contentment grows as a practice, identification with the Self takes place.

I will repeat. Yesterday, we were speaking about purity, about the body that needs to be washed again and again and again. Some people may wonder what this has to do with yoga. We explained that yesterday that it is the basis of something very tangible and easy to understand. It is the basis of all yogic practice, because, in yoga, we need to wash again and again and again. First to wash the mind, the ego, wash our tendencies to transform them, uplift them. In the same way, contentment needs to be applied, to be put into practice again and again, because it's the nature of the ego to be discontent.

Naturally, there will appear this voice, “If only I could also have this, if only this person could be here, if only I could be in Thailand right now it would be so nice. If only I could be back home in the USA; it’s so beautiful, I miss it so much. If I could only see my mother, it would be so beautiful.” This voice appears as a rule in everybody. You cannot wipe it out, but you can remember this is a trick of the ego and that the antidote, the remedy for this is “No, I don’t need any of these things. This moment is perfect. This moment I have everything. In this moment, I am perfect. I am full. I am content. Tomorrow can give me nothing more than I already have. In this moment, I have everything.” That is yoga. That is the art of life. That is the art of happiness. Contentment is the gateway to happiness.

Discontentment is the gateway to a constant lack of happiness. A person who is discontent can never be happy. A person who is content is always happy, as a rule.

We have spoken of the siddhis, of the divine power that accompanies the Yamas and Niyamas. The siddhi for contentment is...guess what... Happiness!

There is a saying that a very powerful king, a very wealthy emperor, who can have any wish fulfilled immediately just by snapping his fingers, has not even a tenth of the happiness of the man that has no wishes or desires, even if he is a beggar. Do you follow this?

Contentment is the gateway to happiness, or is the gatekeeper to happiness, if you like. It means to appreciate what we have, to be grateful for it, to not ask for anything else, because we don’t need it. The nature of Life, the nature of the Atman, the nature of God, is to provide us with what we need the most. Not necessarily with what we *want*, but what we *need* the most. It’s constantly provided. Can we recognise this? Can we appreciate it? Can we say thank you for this?

Somebody may ask, “So, if a person is content, does that mean he stays all day on the sofa, blissed out?”. It might be so. Some saints are like this, they don’t do anything, and they are just blissed out. The majority of people, however, it is their nature to engage in action – not out of discontent, but out of joy. The source of action will not be a sense of discontentment; it will be a sense of overwhelming happiness or playfulness or joy. So they may do any action the whole day, any work, any art, but that action will have a very different quality. That action will have its source in joy, happiness and contentment. It will be a very different action.

A person who is content may sing a song out of joy. A person who is discontent may sing the same song out of the need for something. The song will be the same, but it will carry a completely different quality. The experience of the listener will be completely different. The same could be said of a painting, or of cooking, or of any action, whatsoever.

So, a deep sense of contentment does not impede action. On the contrary, it enhances the action. It brings a very good quality to the action. It brings a beauty.

All actions that we perform, they are coloured by the person that performs them. So, if the person that performs the action is a happy person, a peaceful person, then the action will carry that quality itself.

So, contentment does not necessarily mean that we sit back on the sofa, blissed out. It can be that – this is also beautiful – but it can be also that it is expressed in action.

Contentment as a practice, as a remembrance, is like a tribute to the Truth of our Being, because our True Being is perfectly content by nature – it is the very archetype of contentment, fulfilment and happiness. So it is an attitude through which we honour the Truth of our Being. It is a discipline that itself connects us with our True Being.

It's a practice that helps us remember who we are. It is a remedy against the disease of the ego. It is a remedy against the disease of all suffering.

Simply remember: "In this moment I have everything. I am showered with blessings. In this moment I am so blessed. In this moment I am here, present, vibrating with life, shining with pure Awareness. The whole of Life is open to me. Infinite possibilities. I find myself in this wonderful playground. In this moment, I am supremely blessed."

The practice of contentment is something very practical. Even today, just watch; be aware of your mind, of your voice inside. How many times will it say to you, "If only we could have this. If only we could be there. If only we could meet that person. If only we could have this object, how happy we would be"? How many times just today? So, it's a very practical discipline. "No, this moment is perfect. I don't need anything more."

Even if you're sick in the body, don't wait for happiness to come after you recover. Don't wait for this. Don't lose a moment. The happiness is there. Don't wait for something to happen so you can have a taste of happiness. It will never come. Don't expect something to happen.

In this moment, you have everything; we have everything. In this moment, we renounce the suffering that comes out of these expectations, desires, and worries. "I renounce this. I don't need them anymore. I'm happy with what I have. I'm happy with what is somehow offered to me – with what is constantly offered to me – and I am content."

Question: "Might a person who is contented in his True Being work in selfless action for the betterment of society?"

Certainly. Playfully. Not out of discontent. There is a very fine balance between the two and, sometimes, spiritual people find themselves on the edge of a razor, where there is a natural compassion towards the suffering of others; at the same time, there is a recognition of perfection. Both of them can exist simultaneously. It's possible. But if you fall on one side, you might forget the perfection of your Being. If you give too much energy and focus to the perfect imperfections of the world, you might forget your perfect nature.

Yet again, this is also part of the perfection. Some spiritual people are more engaged in activism. That's OK. Some spiritual people they are more reclusive.

St Francis, he was very well known for inspiring his students to go out and preach. They would all go out with one piece of cloth and they would not accept donations. They would constantly offer selfless service. St Francis was inspiring them to do this.

So, many people were doing this. But, there were a few people who said no, who would go to the cave and meditate all day in seclusion. So, a disciple of St Francis came to him and said that there were some people who were lazy and sitting inside the cave and doing nothing, just praying. St Francis said, "By doing what you are doing, the preaching and all the service, you are saving many souls. But these people in the cave, by their prayer and love, they save thousands and millions more souls than you save." That's what St Francis said, and this is also what I believe.

So, it is a fine balance. In my opinion, the more developed spiritual souls would choose this path – the path of helping others through uplifting themselves. Through purifying themselves even more through seclusion, meditation, japa and other practices. Through this path, they will transform the whole of the universe. They don't need to transform one, two, three, four or five people. They transform the whole universe simultaneously.

The spiritual people who are engaged in activism, this is also helpful. You can say these two approaches complement each other. Both of them are part of the perfection.

Question: You mentioned that even a person that suffers should cultivate contentment at that moment. But for me, when I look at that person, it makes me discontented.

I understand. One of the main reasons why a person is suffering is that he is discontented. The spiritual people and the saints, they might be very sick, very seriously sick, and yet they might be fully happy. So tell me one reason why a person is suffering; because he doesn't have something he would like to have. Maybe it is an object, maybe another person; maybe it is recognition from others, something, anything. In other words, it is because he is discontent. Many times, this accumulates; discontentment grows, like cancer. It becomes like cancer of the body and of the mind. Psychological cancer. And then we see these people who are suffering.

A person who is constantly content, who practices contentment, who grows contentment, that person is happy, he is not suffering. He cannot possibly be suffering.

As to the question of whether he will suffer by the suffering of others, the answer is yes and no. The suffering of the compassionate man is a very different suffering. It's a blissful suffering. I cannot explain it.

What many saints do when they see the suffering of someone else is they say: "There is something wrong with me. Somehow I am also responsible for the suffering of the other person. I must increase my practice. I must increase my tapasya. I must increase my prayers, my japa, my austerities, because I am also responsible for the suffering of the other person." This is how saints think.

However, when the Self is realised, all this is somehow on the surface. It's a play; it's something playful. Even tapasya becomes something playful. And helping the world to be free from suffering is something playful. Deep inside, there's a very solid, unmovable contentment that everything is perfect. There is a very powerful thankfulness: "Thank you, thank you, Paramatma for Your love that You shower all over the world. Perhaps people cannot see Your love, cannot appreciate Your love, but *I* can. That's why I thank You. I can see Your love being showered to all beings, even to those that cry and complain – Your love is the same to them as well. What can I ask for, Paramatma, You give everything to us constantly. You cannot possibly give more. What can I ask from You? I simply thank You. Thank You."

That recognition – that is contentment, and it is the gateway to happiness.

Question: "I'm thinking about suppressed groups. I feel discontentment."

There is always some difficulty coming from the outside. Maybe it is a group like minorities you are talking about. Maybe some people have poverty. Maybe some people have too much money – they also have discontent. Maybe some people have problems with their health. Maybe some people don't have a husband or wife. Some other people have a husband or wife but don't have children. They feel discontent. Some people have two children but feel discontent – they want three. Some people have many and good children but feel discontent – they don't have grandchildren. It never stops. So it can stop only now by simply being grateful for what we have now.

Question: "You obviously spend periods of your life in both of those states that St Francis talked about, both away from the world in a "cave" by yourself and now with us helping people. In which state do you find it easier to practise that contentment? One would assume that in a cave it is somehow easier, but is it?"

No, it's not easier.

Yesterday, somebody asked this question: if somebody somehow through yoga and practice has purified their intellect and ego a little, what drives this person into action? Why would he not just stay in the cave and be happy? And the answer was that it is destiny. Destiny, as well as a sense of playfulness, drives the person into action.

Certain people will feel very natural being by themselves; they will feel natural, content and fulfilled in this. Other people will feel content when they are surrounded by a few people. Other people will feel content when they are surrounded by thousands of people. I don't know how they do it but they feel very content. Or the same person, at different periods in his life, sometimes feels a need for seclusion and at other times feels the need for action.

Many times we see this with spiritual people, when they spend some time in seclusion and then go into action, then back into seclusion and again into action. The secret is to have contentment wherever you are, being in a "cave" or in some very basic accommodation. Or being in a palace, or being somewhere in between. Be happy with that. This is the secret to happiness. To appreciate what you have – that which life has somehow given to you – to be grateful for this.

When you are in the "cave" you are grateful for the silence, for you have so much energy and time to do whatever you want to do. You have so much energy and time to use for your self-development – to perfect yourself in meditation, yoga, to study the scriptures. There are so many things – it's so precious. And then you come to the people and you are surprised when you see yourself in so many different forms and you are so grateful for that. You are so grateful for the gift of loving interaction, for the gift of sharing, for the gift of love.

It's important in the practice of contentment not to be dependent on conditions. That's very important. On *any* condition. Don't have the excuse of "Oh, I will wait for this to happen and *then* I will be content". Don't do this, it will never happen. It will never happen. It is a bad habit to wait for something to happen. Be content now. Be grateful now.

Many ladies will say, "I just need to have a husband. I cannot be happy without one. I need to have a husband". Then, somehow, a husband comes and the same lady will say, "I just wish I was free of him". It's the same with everything else in our life.

Whatever you truly need, life will certainly give. Have no worry about it. Have no doubt. Have no suspicion. Life will certainly give it to you. Not *when* you want it, but when it *should* happen, life will give it to you. Until then, do the best you can with what you have now, because it's already perfect.

Question: "I've heard a saying to live the life you love and you will love the life you live."

Beautiful! I would change it a little bit: "*Love the life you live and you will live the life you love!*" That is the essence of contentment.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti!