

# *Satsang with Om Baba*

## **Simplicity**

(Rishikesh - 18 Nov 15)

At the very moment we open our eyes, we see a variety, a multiplicity. Sometimes we get captivated by it. It is beautiful. We are captivated by variety. We spend our whole life being captivated by this variety. Again, it's a natural thing, since it's very beautiful. We spend our whole life even trying to improve this variety, to make it look even better, to enhance our experience of the variety.

Whatever we see around us, which is so infinite, so all-inclusive, so perfect somehow, we try to make it even better. But we hardly ever ask the question: who is looking?

Going from the one to the many – that is the journey to the Samsara, the journey into the illusion. Going from the many to the one – that is the journey towards the Truth. One very simple way to do this, very obvious, evident and simple way to do it, is called simplicity.

But what is simplicity? Simplicity means going from the many towards the few. From the few to the even fewer. And from the even fewer towards the one.

So, the fifth Yama that we shall speak about today, is called Aparigraha. Aparigraha can be interpreted in many different ways and usually is interpreted in many different ways. But the most accurate way, I believe, is called non-accumulation of wealth, non-accumulation of anything; in other words, simplicity.

So, as we said before, it is simply natural to try and accumulate more things, simply because things are beautiful. We like to have a little bit more of this...and that...and that.

It's just like when someone invites us for dinner and there is a nice buffet with many different things and all of them look beautiful; so we cannot resist taking a bit of this and a bit of that and a bit of that. And then we get full and we are aware that we are full but we cannot stop because there is the desert – so good-looking so we take a little bit of desert, take a little bit of fruit, a little bit of juice. And then what happens? We have stomach pain! Yes.

The same exact thing happens in our life: we want a little bit more, a little bit more than what we have. We are not happy. We want more friends, more girlfriends, more children, more success, more wealth, more fame, more recognition, more students, more gurus, more information. And the more we get, the more we become loaded, the more we become burdened; the more we get stomach pain and headache and back ache – all because of the 'more'.

In fact, we need very few, but we want very many. There are very few things we need to be fulfilled, to be perfect. But something inside us wants more and more and more and more. That tendency towards the more is one of the main sources of suffering. You can call it, if you like, greed.

Many people come here to India and one of the first observations that they make is that all the people are so poor here, that they suffer through poverty. That they suffer by having so little is a very common observation of Western people when they come to India or other countries like India.

Sometimes, Indian people go to the West – intelligent Indian people – and they see all this overwhelming prosperity. And they see all these poor Western people who are suffering so much because they have so much. They have much more than what they need. They are always stressed, constantly stressed about how to maintain all the things they have. They cannot have one moment of peace because they have to maintain so many things.

They have to also provide all sorts of things for their family, otherwise the family will not be happy. If you give to your family rice and dhal everyday, there will be a big problem. They will not like it. They will want the full buffet everyday with different kinds of cheese and bread.

If you will give to your family a simple car to drive, they will not be happy. They will see the neighbor has a BMW. “The wife of my neighbour, she has a Mercedes. Why do we have a small car?”

If you have a simple phone, a simple Nokia phone, you will be very much overlooked by people; you will be like ‘last week’s news’, because everyone has an iPhone.

Just take a simple example: if we eat food, if we take a medium-sized portion, not too much, not too little, that is very good for our health. If we take less than we need, that is also OK, because it will keep our consciousness sharp – it is good for our health. But if we take more than we need, that is when the toxins start to accumulate, when the fat starts to accumulate, when some food remains undigested inside of us because there was too much. Out of this undigested food, the toxins appear. And the toxins are the main source of all the diseases.

If we take too much food, we immediately feel pain. We will immediately regret it.

With food it’s very simple to understand. How about with people, with associations?

Some people live alone and are very happy. Some people live alone and ask for company – they are not happy being alone and ask for some company. That is beautiful and maybe we have one, two, three, four or five friends – a few good people is quite ok. But if it is more than that, then the trouble begins: how to keep all of them happy? Impossible!

You will sit for meditation and, all the time, you will think about what you should say to that person. If that person says something to you, what you should answer and what you should have said yesterday but you forgot to say, and what you will say to that person if you meet them tomorrow. Just observe it in meditation, it is like this, because of too many other people. It is not necessary – a few good people are sufficient. Just a few and good people.

And what about work? Now, in the whole of the West, in India also, in most of the world, people work from 8 in the morning to 10 at night. That case is kind of hopeless – there is no medicine for that actually. There is constant stress. Too much work.

We don't need so many things. We need few and basic things. And with a few basic things we are so much happier.

They say possessions possess us. When we have many things, we constantly have stress about how to maintain them. When we have many people, we constantly have stress about how to keep them happy. There is no space for silence. There is no space for introspection – something always pulls your attention outwards; the objects, the people, the world, the food, this and that.

So, we have many great saints that understood this. But we have one specific, shining example. It is a story I have told many times but I would like to tell it again. The archetype of the practice of simplicity is St Francis of Assisi. Most of you have heard of St Francis of Assisi.

His story is not a new story. Neither is it a unique story; Buddha had the same story. Rama had the same story. Many great saints were born into royal families and they realised they were just wasting their time. They couldn't find happiness in all this prosperity. But St Francis is a perfect example, and we will talk about his story now.

So, St Francis was born into a very rich family in Assisi – a rich merchant family. And, somehow, by his nature, he was very much a party kind of guy. He very much loved to indulge in material beauty. He had many beautiful clothes made out of silk from France, the most excellent food and beautiful horses and he held regularly huge feasts and parties, to which he invited all his friends. All-night parties with the best music in Assisi and the best dancing.

He was trying, he was struggling to experience joy and happiness like all of us. But he was struggling in the wrong direction; he was struggling through the many. And if one party was not sufficiently entertaining, he would make it an even bigger party the next time: more music, louder music, more dancing, more beautiful ladies, nicer food.

Then, one day, he had a vision. He saw in his vision an extremely beautiful lady. Compared to her beauty, everything else faded out, so beautiful was she. When he came out of the vision, he couldn't stop thinking about her. He was thinking, "How can I meet her? Where can I find her?"

Slowly, all his enjoyments started to lose their meaning. They were losing their value. He couldn't find happiness anymore in the parties and beautiful clothes and food. He couldn't even take any food, he was just thinking, "How can I meet that lady?" He had started to have a taste of simplicity.

Then, one day, he saw that lady again in his vision and he asked, "Oh, merciful God, who is that lady? How can I meet her? What is her name?" And the voice answered him: "This lady shall be your wife and her name is 'Poverty'. And she will bring you to Me. She will bring you supreme and total Happiness."

St Francis not only heard the words, but he actually experienced the beauty of simplicity - in one flash it was revealed to him.

He understood what a fool he had been all those years, searching for joy in the wrong direction. He got a vision and experience of the purest, most intense, most beautiful joy.

And at that moment he realised. He went to the top floor of his house and he started throwing all his clothes and objects out of the window. And he was so happy that he threw out not only his own things, but his father's and mother's things, too. He could not contain his joy in giving up everything he had – even his own clothes. Everything. He walked away naked and he left and he started living in the forest by himself, just with a simple cloth, an old rag. And he had only this. No shoes, no socks, no blanket in the night – nothing! Just a simple, dirty cloth.

It was not possible to have fewer things than St Francis had. At the same time, it was not possible to experience more bliss than St Francis had.

He realised that in that state of simplicity and freedom, mental freedom from all cares, even the smallest thing of the creation would bring him such incomparable joy – even just the sun falling on his face – would fill him with delight; even the sound of the water flowing, even the sound of the birds, the sound of the wind passing through the leaves. The beauty of the trees and the flowers were putting him in a state of trance, and he would compose his most inspired poems about the beauty of creation.

Slowly, some people were attracted by his light – they could feel that somehow God was shining through him. They were attracted by his inexplicable joy, by his inexplicable bliss, because he had nothing, but his face was shining with light.

So people started to become attracted to him and his first disciples were all noblemen – they were very rich people, his old, rich friends who had thrown all those parties with him. These same people became his disciples and gave up everything they had; they were dressed in rags and shaved their heads in a strange way so they didn't look at all beautiful.

And they experienced something they hadn't expected at all: that, in this austerity, in this perfect simplicity, they felt more joyful than ever. They discovered the joy they had been trying to find for so many years. They were struggling to find this joy, but in the wrong direction. And they finally discovered it in simplicity, next to the presence of St Francis.

By living with just a few crumbs of bread, by enduring the cold and the wind, enduring the heat of the sun, having perfect faith that everything they needed would be provided – because they had nothing and would go out every day and beg; some days a few crumbs of bread, which they would share with each other. Yet, their joy was incomparable. They found the true treasure, the true gold. They found the true wealth.

So, St Francis, one of the greatest saints that we know in the West, a true embodiment of Jesus Christ and also the founder of perhaps the greatest monastic order in the West that we know of – the Franciscan monks; the most important of all the principles he dictated was simplicity. Don't have any possessions. Zero.

He didn't permit his original disciples even a small Bible so they could read the words of Jesus Christ, as it was also a burden. They didn't carry even that. Nothing.

So we can say that he was an archetype and if anyone would experiment or try to live a life similar to St Francis, I assure you he would have the same result.

My master, Maharaji – I know a few stories from his earliest years. He was traveling with only a very small briefcase. He had only one doti (Sannyasin's cloth). Inside the case he had only one small towel and maybe a change of underwear or something. And all the donations he collected were brought to the ashram to feed the people. But he only had one doti and it is the discipline of the Swami to have fresh clothes every day.

So Maharaji would wake up every morning at 4 o'clock, take a shower, wash his one cloth, put the towel around him like this and put out his cloth to dry. And when the cloth was ready, he would dress himself. He would do that in summer and winter. If the weather was rainy and the clothes couldn't dry, he would use the iron to dry them.

Many times, some of his disciples would say, "Maharaji, we cannot see you like this. We will give you one more doti". Maharaji would say "thank you" and take the cloth and go. And when he came back, again he had only one cloth. Again, they would buy him more clothing and he would go and come back with only one doti.

So they would say to him, "Maharaji, we are not so rich. We cannot buy you clothing every time. Please keep the second set". Maharaji would say, "Where I am going, there are people that don't have even one cloth. How can I have two?"

He was living in this way for about 15 years and yet giving Satsangs and offering service and lessons. He would collect by himself, all the donations necessary to sustain the ashram of maybe 200 people. He would sustain by himself all these people and he had nothing.

Later, when I met him, he would take only two spoonfuls of food a day. He did not need anymore. He said, "This is all I need". He would feed 200 people in the ashram. Much food, as many chapattis as they wanted, and dhal, rice, sweets sometimes. For himself? Two spoons of food a day.

Some people will ask if the saint – because many saints are like this – is a sort of masochist. Does the saint like to create pain for himself?

The saint is a master of joy. He is a master of bliss. He has discovered the way to bliss. He does not need to speak about it. His very life is a teaching to the bliss.



He never said to anybody, “Take two spoonfuls of food” or “Take less food”. He never said that. He was always offering to people. But, through his own example, he was always teaching people. He said if you want to find bliss, embrace simplicity.

Many people came to him. He had a simple, old chair. If you go to his room, it is still there. They would say, “Oh Maharaji, you are a Baba! You need to have a beautiful chair where you can sit and be like a king.” And he would say, “I don’t need anything like this. It is you that want me to sit in that ‘royal’ seat. I don’t want this. I want a simple chair. Very simple.”

Many people would come and offer to him blankets, beautiful blankets. And he would say, “Thank you very much” and take it and give it immediately to another person.

Simplicity, sharing. We don’t abide in one body. We abide in all bodies. That’s why Jesus Christ said, “If you have two, give the one to the one who doesn’t have”. You are not only inside this body. You are also inside every body. The other person doesn’t have a blanket; why do you have five? The other person doesn’t have a pair of shoes; why do you have 20 pairs of shoes?

These extra things, they become a burden – a heavy burden, a powerful burden. They become obstacles to meditation. They become subconscious heaviness.

Do not accumulate more and more. Free yourself from that. It only distracts your attention from the Truth of your Being. The Truth of our Being is the absolute culmination of simplicity. It is the most simple of the simple – that’s why it becomes so difficult. It’s so simple. It’s constantly there. It’s the most pure and the most beautiful, but our attention is constantly on something else.

We need only a few things – very, very few. The rest we can share, otherwise they become a burden; they will become toxins.

If we have more than what we need, it will become toxins. If you share it, it will become nectar. The same thing, the same object that, somehow, we don't even need it, we don't even use it, the same object, keeping it becomes poison, but sharing it becomes nectar.

With whom do we share? We share with our own Self. It is our own Self that exists in all other bodies. That is why we experience such great joy when we share; we experience the joy of our own Self in the other body.

Remember the mantra I told you: "There is no other". Nobody "other" exists. It is a very great joy to share. It is a great burden to accumulate. That is the reason why this essential discipline exists, non-accumulation of wealth, or simplicity, because it is very necessary for us to go deeper into meditation, to go deeper into spirituality.

Furthermore, one more thing: the very idea that this is mine, even that this body is mine, the very idea that this is mine is illusion – this is a false idea, this is a lie. It's only a concept. Somebody told us, "Listen, this is yours, and this is mine". So you have learnt like this. We have been programmed like this, to have the idea of 'mine'. There is nothing that can belong to the Atman. To the Self, nothing belongs. The Self is free from belongings. It is free from possessions.

There is a beautiful bhajan; it is in Hindi, so I will just give the essence in English:

"The whole of the universe abides inside of You,  
yet You don't even have a pillow to put your head upon."

Lord Shiva, our perfect Self has no possessions. He has no shoes. He has no clothes – that's why they say he goes naked.

He has no possessions, no horse, no cart, no iPhone, nothing. Yet, the whole of the universe abides inside him. The whole of the universe depends on him.

How will we ever be free from the idea that we are the body, which is the main source of suffering. How will we ever be free from this idea if we keep considering things as belonging to our body? Because if I say, “I am not the body” then automatically all the things connected with the body cannot belong to me.

The Atman has no qualities and it has no possessions. It possesses nothing; it is free. It is the source of all creation, the sustainer of all creation, but it's not the owner of the creation. It does not own anything; it prefers to be like St Francis; it prefers to be like Jesus Christ.

Now, I will finish with a ‘divine power’. We said that every discipline has a siddhi – one divine power.

What is the siddhi for non-accumulation of wealth, the siddhi of simplicity? The sages tell us that one who perfects himself in simplicity will come to know the meaning of life. I think St Francis came to know the meaning of life better than anyone else.

Sometimes some people, some students ask me, “What is the meaning of life?” It's a common question. We can try to speak about it intellectually, but my suggestion is to practise simplicity and you will come to know it by yourself. Be happy with a few – you need just a few. Share the many that you have – you don't need them. That will help you to come to know your Self inside all forms. That will help you to come to know the meaning of life, to come to know what Life itself is, what is the essence of Life.

Going from the one towards the many is falling into the dream. Going from the many towards the one is the journey to the Truth.

*- Om Shanti Shanti Shanti -*