



## EGO

### How to become humble

Extract from 15/12/98 Satsang

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*Om Shri Paramatmane Namaha*

**Q:** How can one become more humble?

**A:** How to become humble? This must be a question asked by many people on the spiritual path. All Holy Scriptures and all great saints tell us that without becoming really humble one can have no peace, happiness or truth in life. Saints have told us also that, when real humility comes in our lives we face no more problems. All our problems will be solved. So how can this humility be attained? My simple answer is that true humility is not acquired. It just comes in one's life and it is not something that can be created. A time comes when humility arises in life and one becomes truly humble.

Mahatma Gandhi, one of the greatest men of twentieth century and in a way a great torch-bearer for mankind, said that humility is the net product of all virtues of human life and that it comes to all of us in the end. When we make effort to become humble, such humility is generally just for show. It is not genuine humility. This is true with many people you may meet in everyday life. Their behaviour makes them appear humble or we could say courteous. However, courtesy and humility are not the same. Courtesy is a well calculated pattern of behaviour towards those with whom one is dealing. If the situation changes a person who was very courteous, all of a sudden, may become very arrogant. However, a truly humble person never becomes arrogant.

True humility may sometimes arise in one's life. There are certain factors which can motivate a person to become humble. One such factor is the realisation of the transitory and temporary nature of life on Earth. One should keep pondering over the fact that our existence here is very temporary. What is the point of being arrogant? It is foolishness to be arrogant because nobody knows what can happen to anybody in the world in the next moment. Existence, as we understand it as ordinary human beings, is quite precarious at every moment.

What do we understand by our existence? Our ordinary understanding is to identify existence with the body: "I am so and so. This is my name. This is my body." But every one of us also knows that our bodies are definitely perishable. In fact, the body is in a continual process of decline towards disintegration and death. Whatever one's span of life, nobody can avoid everyday accidents that may happen. Every day, in every city many people die by accident, but it is the human tendency to make light of the fact that five, ten or twenty people died. One does not think of the possibility that one will die oneself. Others may have died but the thinker does not think he himself will die. This is the usual way of thinking. Any day, anyone of us can die! So what is the point of arrogance? What is the point of Ego? Death is certain, even if we do not die in an accident and have an ordinary span of life. Nobody can know what disease may strike one. The healthiest person can become skin and bones very quickly! Everything is progressing towards destruction on the physical plane, on the plane of our body, with which we associate our existence.

Scientists tell us that this Earth was created by separating from the Sun. The Earth cooled down over billions of years and eventually the life process started. This Earth itself had a birth and whatever has a birth must have a death as well. Someday the Earth has to be destroyed, and not only the Earth, but the Sun also is going to its death. After billions of years the Sun will also perish. However, even when the Earth and Sun are destined to perish, this tiny animal – a man or a woman on this planet of Earth – thinks of itself as being great.

Some people think they are great due to their wisdom. Some people think they are great due to their wealth. A person may think he is great because he is the director of an international company. Another person may think that she is omnipotent because she is the prime minister of a country. A person with a fine physique may think himself as number one in the world. The interesting point is that this idea of being number one is not restricted to one individual only but it is found in hundreds of people. They all have the same idea. This play of the Divine here is very interesting! In every sphere of life people think of themselves as being the number one. But definitely it is the pattern of nature that pride goes before a fall. One is humbled by the fall.

This element of humility happens naturally or by analysing and understanding that the nature of our existence here is transitory. There are many interesting examples in the history of mankind. In ancient times Alexander, the King of Macedonia, whom people called 'Alexander the Great' set out from his country to conquer the whole world. Alexander had heard stories about the great Greek philosopher Diogenes and was anxious to meet him. Diogenes was a real saint for whom all were equal whether they were a monarch or a beggar. Alexander sent his ministers to invite Diogenes to come to him but Diogenes refused, saying he had no time. A saint may have enough time but he may not wish to see somebody so he may use such an excuse. The ministers went back to the King and told him that the saint said he had no time. The story goes that Alexander asked, out of arrogance and anger, if they could not bring the saint forcibly against his wishes because he should obey the King. Alexander was advised against it, because somebody had already told Diogenes that it would be better to meet the most powerful King.

The saint must have laughed and said: "What can he do to me? The worst thing he can do is to kill me. But I have no fear of death because I am already dead. What can he do with a dead man?" What he meant was that he was dead at the level of desires. He had no desire even to physically live. What can you with such a man?

The story is that eventually Alexander went to where the saint was living. People advised Alexander to bow to him, and to be polite and humble. Even without feeling humble, it is better that there should be at least show of humbleness. It is said that when Alexander arrived the saint was lying on the ground sunbathing. Alexander approached, bowed to him and stood blocking out the sun from the saint. The saint did not get up, so Alexander started speaking: "I am proud of the fact that a saint of your stature is living in my country. What can I do for you?"

It is said that the saint replied: "Stop blocking out the sunlight." The King realised his mistake and stepped aside. The conversation went something like this: "My real purpose of coming here is that I intend to conquer the whole world and I have come for your blessing in this endeavour."

Diogenes: "For what reason you want to conquer the world?"

Alexander: "I would be the happiest man in the world."

Diogenes: “But I am already the happiest man without having to conquer anybody. Nobody can become happy by conquering others. The only people who can be happy are those who can conquer their lower selves.”

You can understand this now. The lower self is one's desires and passions. But all arrogant people never listen to the true advice. Alexander went on his mission but died without fulfilling his desire.

There might be other versions of this story and the words may not have been exactly as I have described. However, the purpose of telling you this story was not to have a piece of scholarly historical research into the truthfulness of such stories: “Did it happen? When did it happen? How and what were the exact words?” This was not a question of scholarship but of spirituality. What is the difference? Scholars deal with details and facts but we deal with the essential truth. We learn lessons from such stories.

Napoleon also wanted to conquer the whole world. In the end he died on a small island with nobody but monkeys for company! I can remember in my own life-time that Hitler wanted to conquer the whole world. I remember it well what happened in the course of the Second World War. We were children of course, but we used to hear every day that Hitler was coming in the night! We did not know what was to happen. It is said that the poor fellow committed suicide in the end.

Even though the fate of all arrogant people in the world turns out to be bad, yet very few people learn from these examples. Therefore, it is very important to realise the transitory and temporary nature of our existence. Why should one be Egoistic? There is no purpose in it. This notion of existence being temporary will definitely give a shock to Ego.

Another helpful point to be considered is that nobody should think that they are in any way superior to others. A person may have excellent qualities but there will be others with the same qualities. There is one more idea for you to ponder over. No human being in the world can be completely independent. Everybody needs help from somebody else in life. A man may be a Prime Minister but he needs other ministers to run the affairs of state or a wife to run his home. No one can claim to live by their own efforts alone or on the basis of their own strength. However active, healthy, intelligent and resourceful one is one depends on others in innumerable ways. Cooking for oneself, sewing one's own clothes, making one's shoes, building one's house, travelling to the office - no one can undertake these activities without some help from others. Every one of us is greatly indebted to other human beings. The truth is that there is no reason to have a sense of superiority.

To tell you the truth, it often occurs to me that I feel a sort of obligation to everybody in the world. For example, the people who built this house might have been poor people but without them the house would not have been built. It is on account of them that we have a place for these talks and meditations. Take another example: Nobody can pay off the debts that one owes to one's parents. All of us, when we were babies, wetted ourselves in the night and it was our mother who changed our nappies, so that we would be comfortable, without caring for her own comfort. Where is the place for arrogance? When we analyse our very pattern of life like this we have to come to the conclusion that our life depends on co-operation with others. Without such co-operation life cannot go on. This notion must generate humility in us.

These ideas should help to reduce our sense of superiority, arrogance and Egoism. However, the real humility comes quite late in one's development. Whatever we learn by thinking is good but it does not stay for long. When a different situation arises we become arrogant again. It is after experiencing Divine grace in the heart that true humility is born.

Then one comes to the realisation that no person deserves any credit. All credit is due to the Lord who exists everywhere and also in our hearts. All credit in every respect goes to Him. After realising His greatness, infinite power, beauty, splendour and might, then this arrogant human head must definitely bow down.

In recent times some very important developments have happened in the field of science. These developments are leading in the emergence of humility. During the past two hundred years due to developments in science human beings have become very arrogant. They thought that they have discovered so much that a day would come when they would know the answer to everything. But in recent times new discoveries have been made in the field of science such that scientists have concluded that our universe is limitless. There is no end to unsolved questions. Whatever discoveries we may have made more remains unknown than known. This is particularly true in the field of astrophysics and quantum mechanics. It is accepted that what we have discovered is a very small part of that which remains to be discovered.

Previously the theory was that perhaps we would know everything about the universe. These days there is one scientific principle that helps scientists to become humble. It is the principle of uncertainty. Previously it was thought that science was certain and that things could be predicted accurately, particularly in the field of physics. Some problems arose when the study of subatomic world started. When they were studying the nature of particles like electrons, and neutrons, after the splitting of the atom, they were faced by a problem how to describe the electron either as stationary or as moving. Finally it was established that, in theory, it is both at the same time. This does not appeal to the ordinary mind which wants it to be either one or the other. In spite of this, scientists have concluded that it is both things at the same time. They do not know the pattern of behaviour of the smallest particles, which scientist say exist, but have not observed in reality.

Take another example, when we test the temperature of water by thermometer, some of the heat of the water is taken up by the actual thermometer (the instrument) before it shows the temperature of the water by the rising mercury. So, the exact temperature of the water is uncertain. It is a problem. Some say it is unavoidable and that this minute loss of temperature is not measurable. Well if it unavoidable where is the certainty? What is the exact measure?

The examples I have given is a small part of certain developments that are coming in the field of science. A book was given to me last year which explains how modern science and spirituality are coming together. A number of scholars are writing on this subject these days. These are some of the factors that are compelling human beings to be less arrogant and to bow their heads: "Oh, God is great and even greater than science."

The last point I want to make in this connection is that these are all intellectual inquiries. The important question is: "When does life become really meaningful?" It becomes meaningful only when there is Love in it. Life is only successful when the fragrance of Love spreads in all directions. Love and arrogance do not go together. Love and Ego cannot exist together. The greater the Ego the less there is of Love. Love implies that: "I am for you, my existence is for you. I am nothing you are everything." Ego implies that: "You are nothing I am everything. You are for me." Ego and Love are enemies. Those who become free of the disease of egoism and arrogance are very fortunate. They alone are fortunate whom God has enabled to rid themselves of the illusion of being something special which is there from birth! The idea that one is special may continue till death. It is only when the real grace of God dawns and this illusion of specialness is expelled from the mind that one becomes thankful to all in the world. Real Love emerges from within. This Love not only gives unimaginable peace, harmony and happiness to the individual in whose life it emerges but it spreads out so that many people bathe in its fragrance.

FROM SATSANGS OF GURUDEV SHRI OJASWI SHARMA

Thank you for your questions and thanks to God for inspiring me as His instrument to express some of these ideas.

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