

# RECLAIM YOURSELF

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## 6. SIMPLIFY YOURSELF

### SIMPLIFY YOUR LIFE

How can I simplify 'my' life when 'my life' does not exist? Life is *everything that exists*, ourselves included. This everything or all is one homogeneous whole and abstractions cannot and do not exist. We can go along with 'my car' and 'my house' (even though these are questionable) as you can produce a title for the car or a deed for the house as tangible property—but how do you show this 'my life'?

The only thing 'my' about 'my life' is myself but we don't want to say we need to simplify ourselves, as the obvious question may be—what is wrong? It is more convenient to talk about our life as though it is like cluttered furniture in the home and you are going to rearrange it in some way and get rid of a few things in order to reduce the clutter.

Housecleaning can do something about the external but all the external comes from a cluttered mind, and if the *seeds of clutter* are not dealt with and resolved once and for all—it is only a matter of time before the outer clutter manifests again. This is why we have spring cleaning every year—so we can continue to clean up and downsize externally—never dealing with the root cause.

### CLUTTER IS THE UNWANTED

Since there is no 'my life', clutter or the unwanted cannot occupy it but can only be present in our own selves. How does the unwanted present itself in us if it is really unwanted? If you do not want something—that should be the end of it and there should never be a need to get rid of it at any stage. Here again we must go to the root of the problem—why does the unwanted reside in me?

Our lives are complex because we are complex. We are many things in many environments and since different things are deemed essential in different settings—it becomes hard to know what is really unwanted and therefore clutter happens. We become collectors—and collection is not security but bondage. You can only collect the past; and if you are very busy in the past, how will you embrace the present which alone has possibilities for change?

The first step is to have a clearly defined goal or focus in life; and here, we cannot be vague in that we want a good life or to be happy, etc.—these are part of the clutter! Focus here is not a tangible end or a vague ‘go with the flow’ idea. Yoga gives us the most practical focus:

1. Pain, sorrow or stress that has come can and should be rid of.
2. Pain, sorrow or stress that has not come should be avoided.

These are most practical to focus on as they can apply to every relationship and situation as we evolve through the journey of life. Clutter being unnecessary and contributory to stress can therefore be acknowledged as unwanted and gotten rid off or avoided.

Focus does little unless it is backed up by zeal and enthusiasm—I must want to be free and to stay free of the unwanted in every form—of clutter. I can find many ways to be and stay clean if I really want to do so but the wanting has to be whole-souled—mostly this does not happen and this is why most resolves do not work. The problem is not that we do not really want the direction of new resolves, but careful looking within will reveal that we are attached to the opposite ways or to unproductive habit. We are not willing to let go by paying a deaf ear to habit and constantly embracing the ever fresh present which is bursting with possibilities.

There is no suppression here but rather, full awareness as habit is seen as objects—formations from the past like meteors that are there because of the gravitational pull of habit. The past is just waiting to fade into the pages of history if we will stop holding onto it. We hold onto it because we do not have clear focus in the present which alone can chart a bright new future. Mostly, we go with the flow—another day, another dollar.

When there is clear focus, one can easily recognize the rise and subsequent fall of habit just like the natural phenomena of waves in the ocean. A whole-souled embrace of the new is an effective way to empty the past. If we want to be free of clutter, we must embrace the way of simplicity.

### SIMPLICITY IS THE ESSENTIAL

Having clear focus in life immediately surfaces all that is contrary, unnecessary, unwanted. To the degree that you empower focus, you will be empowered to maintain it—because that which you nourish, nourishes you. The most practical wisdom of yoga of being and staying whole *if embraced* will throw light on the ways to avoid division, which is not only the source of suffering but suffering itself.

The Upanishads tell us that where there is ‘other’—there is fear. This ‘other’ includes all and everything, suggesting that being, staying and living as one and one with everything is a sure way to avoid conflict.

One of the meanings of 'essential' is the necessary. Since life, ourselves included, is in the constant process of change, what is needed is relative to our journey; and collection of any sort is seen as a hindrance to being in step with life. Life dances to the tune of change and if we get in step, we may not have the need to rid the unwanted as we discover what is needed for the moment and happily let go of the unnecessary, not being rejection or riddance, but by using what is needed.

The harm is not in having things but the idea of possessiveness that possesses us in return. Whatever you have, has you! Hoarding stems from fear and insecurity and fear cannot blaze a bright future—confidence can. Confidence comes from doing our best with what we have in the present. Confidence is not a bullish arrogance but wisdom in action while one does their very best—come what may. Confidence frees you to do with all your heart what must be done. Thought of result gives birth to fear, and any action stemming from fear can only be mediocre at best.

Simplicity is the best way to bring order to one's life. The essential is what is needed at the moment and this promotes the wisdom in not collecting. When we do not collect or hold on, there is less to maintain and protect and this releases huge stores of energy for what is really needed.

One is the simplest number. Can we be one within our own selves? Can we be one or non-different with others? And, can we be one or the same person in different environments? This does not mean we respond exactly the same to all and in different conditions as that is rather unwise, but that we do not become different for change. Being stays the same and does not lose itself in becoming—can we do this?

## 1. YOURSELF

Being one in ourselves is unity in feeling, thought, communication and action. In inner unity, we are not different people within ourselves. We think what we really feel or correct the feeling; we communicate what we feel and think and avoid hypocrisy, and we do what we think and communicate and reduce the unessential in order to eliminate being different in and within ourselves.

Having tears or differences in our own personality requires much thinking to make sure we have our act together as we interact with others and a host of other unnecessary mental jugglery. Feelings lead to thoughts and to words and action rather quickly. Being one internally is not a license to speak our mind or do our will but to consider the impact of our words and actions on others and on the environment at the same time.

If what we are about to say or do can degrade the situation that already exists, it is better to keep quiet—things are already better without our meddling. Inner harmony blends into outer harmony smoothly.

## 2. RELATIONSHIPS

Though we have different relationships, it is the same person that is relating. Do I have to be different in order to relate to different people or to relate appropriately? Is it necessary for me to become different?

If we become different with different relationships, we lose inner simplicity and become complex. This requires constant mind-work to make sure we are what we feel is in our best interests with different people at different times—an artificial best foot forward.

Proportionality is appropriateness or doing what is best in each moment of relating without disassociating ourselves from the unity of things. This requires a great deal of attention as no action is seen as individual action and the total impact is carefully considered.

In relating with others, we get to see ourselves—the rise of habit or the old and have an opportunity to act anew and evolve. Others too have this very same opportunity and we must realize that we are constantly learning at the expense of others. In the same way, others learn at our expense and when you realize that we are both learning at each other's expense, virtues like liberality and forgiveness become essential for mutual growth. We are each other's classroom and training aid and therefore care is needed to make sure our inner journey does not cost others but contributes positively.

Simplicity in relationships is maturity and stewardship where one's own self is not the important factor. Discovery and transformation may be at the cost of oneself as there is often a price for growth. Someone has to give when bearing cost, but bearing cost in relating is not a loss but a gain, because what we gain is tolerance and understanding. Through being simple or mature in relating, we evolve faster and become simpler.

## 3. ENVIRONMENTS

Just as we can *be* different in relating to different people (here, being is becoming), we can also *be* different in different environments and this can complicate our lives unnecessarily. We have already seen that it is not useful to become different as we relate to different people, it is also not useful in functioning in different environments.

It is again the same person who goes to work, comes home and does this or that. Do I need to become different to function healthily in these diverse environments? I may feel, think, speak and act on different themes, but do I need to become different?

Here again, having clear focus in life becomes the central guiding principle that prevents our becoming different in diverse environments. I do not need to get lost in the rat-race to be able to work well. I do not need to become intolerant to be religious or spiritual.

## CONCLUSION

Simplifying our lives is a futile exercise that has little to no real value. What is of value is to see every moment as a golden opportunity to simplify ourselves. Simplicity is not weakness or gullibility—it is purity in one's life. The simple is the essential. Staying with the essentials allows one to tide over all differences and grow—to discover the underlying unity. We travel through life's journey lightly by being simple. Yoga is a return to our natural state of unity with all. Simplify!

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