

What If Joy Didn't Need a Reason?

Ram Dass once said,

“My Guru, Maharaj-ji, once told me, ‘Enjoy everything!’ These days I try to simply love everything that comes my way, whether animate or inanimate, pleasant or painful.”

The scene is almost too simple to believe.

Ram Dass is sitting on the floor of a small temple in the foothills of the Himalayas. Maharaj-ji is wrapped in a plaid blanket on a wooden bed, feeding people fruit, laughing at things no one else finds funny.

There is no lecture. No ceremony. No preparation for what comes next.

Maharaj-ji looks at him and says, “Enjoy everything!”

That’s it. Two words and an exclamation point. No context. No footnotes. No conditions.

Ram Dass spent years unpacking those two words. Because at first they sound like something you’d find on a coffee mug. But if you let them land in the body instead of the mind, they start to feel less like advice and more like a dare.

When was the last time you let yourself enjoy something without immediately qualifying it?

Not the careful, measured enjoyment that comes with a footnote. Not the kind where you catch yourself smiling and then think, But what about...?

The kind where you actually let the moment land.

The coffee that's the right temperature. The dog that looks at you like you invented the sun.

The five minutes between tasks where nothing is required of you and the light is doing something beautiful on the wall.

Most of us have trained ourselves out of this.

We've learned that joy needs justification. That pleasure requires earning. That if things feel good, something is probably about to go wrong.

So we hold back. We hedge. We enjoy things at about sixty percent, just in case.

Maharaj-ji didn't say enjoy the good parts.

He said enjoy everything.

Which sounds impossible. And maybe it is, as a permanent state. But as a practice, as a dare, as a way of leaning into life instead of bracing against it, something in it is worth trying.

Because enjoyment, at its root, is not about pleasure. It's about presence.

You can't enjoy something you're not actually with. You can't enjoy what you're already narrating, evaluating, or preparing to lose.

Enjoyment asks you to drop the commentary and just be in the thing. The cold air on your face. The texture of bread. The sound of someone laughing in the next room for reasons you don't know.

These are not spiritual achievements. They're Tuesday.

But if you meet them without the usual armor, without the reflexive yes, but, they become something else.

They become aliveness.

Ram Dass spent decades practicing this. Not bypassing the pain. Loving it too. Finding in every experience, even the hard ones, something worth meeting fully.

That's a lifetime practice. But you can start smaller than that.

You can start with the next ten seconds.

Notice something that's pleasant right now. It doesn't have to be extraordinary. A sound. A color. The weight of your body in the chair.

And instead of filing it under fine, let it actually register.

Let yourself enjoy it. Without the footnote. Without the hedge.

Just for a breath.

That's not naivety. That's courage.

Because the world will give you plenty of reasons to tighten. It always does.

But Maharaj-ji's dare is still standing, two words and an exclamation point, waiting for you to take it:

Enjoy everything.

Even this.

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