

A User's Guide to Living

- Part 8 -

The Art of Gratitude



DAAJI continues his series on everyday living, introducing the seventh universal principle of the User's Guide, which is to let go of revenge, resentment and retaliation for any wrongs done and instead develop the art of gratitude, which includes both being grateful and giving thanks. This seventh principle allows us to transcend reactive, negative thinking when things don't go our way. As we evolve, it becomes a fantastic tool to help us accept and trust in life, whatever it brings, so that we can soar into higher and higher states of consciousness.

Within five elements are ten universal principles:

The Practice

- 1 Create a daily morning meditation practice scientifically
- 2 Fill your heart with love before starting meditation and before sleeping
- 3 Fix your goal and do not rest until you attain it

Behavior Being to Doing

- 6 Know everyone as one, treating them equally & harmoniously
- 7 Do not seek revenge for the wrongs done by others, instead always be grateful
- 8 Honor the resources you are given as sacred, with an attitude of purity, including food and money

Essential values

- 4 Live simply to be in tune with Nature
- 5 Be truthful & accept challenges as being for your betterment

Leadership

- 9 Become a role model by inspiring love and sacredness in others. Accept the richness of their diversity, while also accepting that we are all one

Continuous Improvement

- 10 Introspect daily before bedtime, so as to correct your faults and avoid making the same mistake twice

Principle 7:

**If you are feeling wronged by anyone, do not wish for revenge.
Instead, think this comes from God and be grateful.**

Are we wired for revenge?

Yes and no. Most of you will know of Roald Dahl's books for children, the tales from the Mahabharata, and Grimms Fairytales. They are beloved by children and adults alike around the world. And yet they are tales filled with sweet revenge, often based on moral judgment. The bad guys always get their just desserts in the end, but along the way, many people suffer because of revenge. Think of what happens to the greedy selfish children in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*! They are all punished in very twisted and fantastical ways. Only Charlie, who is generous and pure, is lauded.

A cursory glance at popular literature and media reveals that revenge is generally admired, glorified, and justified. In fact, revenge is a leading theme in most movies and fiction. In every Marvel film, good finally triumphs over evil, and there is always an element of retaliation in the final outcome. In fact, there is a fine line between revenge and the upholding of *dharma*, and it is all in the intention. Is retaliation done for the greater good, or is it done to get back at someone?

Stories of revenge are also aplenty in our fables, mythology and legends. Look at the scheming between the queen of the Greek gods, Hera, and her step-daughter, the goddess Aphrodite, for example. Or the story from the Mahabharata where Draupadi's brother, Dhrishtadyumna, takes revenge and beheads Drona – a simple insult leads to a loss



of life. That in turn creates a very bitter heart in Ashwathama, who wants to avenge the death of his father. Revenge leads to more vengeance, and so it multiplies. We also see how Bhishma invites his death as a result of the revengeful actions coming to him from previous lives, and how Shikhandi was born to destroy him. It goes on and on and on. How will these revengeful acts end?

Revenge has been an expression of our competitive interactions since time immemorial, and we can see its origins in the competitive instincts found in most animal populations. In ecology we see competition for food, for mates, and for territory. In humans, revenge is associated with that animalistic nature, with the lower three chakras in the human system, but it becomes more complicated when that instinctual programming is entangled with the emotions of the human heart. Psychologically, we feel threatened, just as an alpha male lion does in defending his position in the pride from a challenging male lion, but we also add the spice of competition to situations that are not life-threatening, to everyday affairs in the family, with friends and at work. And when we take revenge on the person we see as our opponent, we also have to deal with our own conscience!

Revenge is a way of life in most tribal cultures, showing up as blood feuds and clan wars. An unwillingness to seek revenge is usually seen as cowardice or weakness. Unfortunately, it is also at the base of behavior in the so-called developed civilizations. It is the philosophy of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,” and it forms most people’s understanding of the law of karma.

The idea that “revenge is sweet” has been challenged in several modern psychological studies, where it has been found that most people who act out of revenge end up regretting the act, which then leads to guilt and shame. There are others who don’t retaliate due to fear of reprisal. They harbor resentment in their heart that turns to bitterness and poisons them into slow retaliation, like we often see in Agatha Christie murder mysteries. Both these categories get consumed in the emotions of the anger spectrum. There is a third category of people who, when subjected to wrongdoing, feel sad, humiliated, and deprived of honor and dignity. This leads to feelings of shame,

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grief and depression. They feel victimized, and perpetually trapped in the emotions of the fear and self-pity spectrum.

Revenge is one of those behavioral patterns that can evoke the entire spectrum of negative emotions, creating a downward spiral of negative energy. It is this insight that led Babuji to develop Principle Seven, which he hoped would change us by transforming our underlying belief system. He shows us that we don’t need to be hardwired for revenge, but for that to happen we need to rise above competitive animalistic tendencies. And for that we need to awaken and master the higher chakras, starting with the heart chakra, taking us into more elevated levels of consciousness of generosity of heart, oneness and love for all. That progressive elevation is known as the spiritual journey, the *yatra*, and it is described in a series of articles, “[The March to Freedom.](#)”

Cultivating gratefulness: a more evolved response

Almost all philosophical and religious traditions encourage us to live in peace, to forgive those who hurt us, and to leave any retaliation to Nature. But how is that possible if we are functioning from the level of the lower chakras, according to animalistic instincts, relying on the principle of competition? Until the heart chakra is awakened and mastered, bringing with it the possibility of humanity, compassion, love, generosity, and humility, it will not be possible to let go of a revengeful character. We can dream all we like for peace, community and harmony, but we will remain stuck in our current scenario, where revenge is probably the single biggest reason for acts of violence in the world today.

The desire for revenge is triggered by anger that is caused by perceived wrongdoing. When we retaliate, we can be very direct and aggressive, or very subtle and underhand. People sometimes wait years for revenge! Revenge creates an endless cycle of tension that can sometimes span generations and lifetimes.

All of us, without exception, have probably reacted negatively when someone wrongs us. Similarly, when someone does something good to us we usually respond favorably. Positive leads to positive; negative leads to negative. When love responds to love, it is not called revenge, but that response is no less a contributor in forming veils and complexities than a revengeful negative response. Any sort of response, be it positive or negative, will create complexities in our heart that form impressions in the field of our consciousness. These impressions harden into deep knots of energy known as *samskaras*, and the vibrations of our *samskaras* attract similar vibrations toward us from outside, perpetuating the vicious cycle.



Sages and philosophers generally agree that whatever happens to us is the result of thoughts and actions. Rarely does anyone suffer beyond this principle. So how do we stop forming the seeds of these *samskaras*? The answer can be found in the realm of spirituality, which offers a very different approach. It gives us the tools to prevent the formation of newer *samskaras*, and to remove those that have accumulated in the past. In fact, once we become conscious of how to prevent and remove *samskaras*, we can become the architects of our own fate. We can respond from an altogether different level.

Until we have fully arrived at that level, however, the *samskaras* we have created by our past thoughts and actions remain impressed in the subtle body,

and are then washed off by undergoing their effects. This process is known as undergoing *bhog* or undergoing karma. Through vibrational resonance, our *samskaras* attract current circumstances and people toward us. They may cause us suffering, but at the same time they also remove the *samskaras* and associated mental complexities. So if we can perceive them as catalysts for our growth, we will naturally start to approach miseries with a grateful attitude. It's not that we have to enjoy them, but, in the words of David Steindl-Rast, "Even the worst things that have happened are life-giving. Out of catastrophe, you got where you are."

When *samskaras* accumulate, they make our condition heavier, which leads to negativity, depression and all manner of mental disturbances. Due to incessant thinking and activity, they add layers and layers of complexities and impurities. This is further reinforced by our delusion that we are the doers. As a rule, our soul wants to return to purity and simplicity, so it tries to relieve itself of these accumulated impurities and complexities. This triggers the process of *bhog*, with the resultant sufferings caused by others. Unfortunately, we misunderstand, and we react immaturely on account of ignorance.

When Nature reacts and punishes someone, nobody calls it a revengeful act, because Nature has no mind. But when a person takes the matter into their own hands, then it becomes revengeful, because the heart and mind are combined in the action. When we understand the concept of *bhog*, we no longer need to distinguish between sufferings inflicted by Nature and those inflicted by people. Both types of sufferings can neutralize our *samskaras* and facilitate their release. Our transgressors are doing us a favor. It is just that we are not able to see this apparent paradox on account of our ignorance. **If we retaliate, it is like attacking a doctor who is removing a thorn from our foot – it causes pain**

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while it is being pulled out, but it brings necessary relief and we feel better. We will evolve in so many ways when we start to trust the process and see our transgressors as helpers. Then we will feel grateful in the moment and at peace within.

We will be able to move to the next level, where we accept our so-called enemies, and that means listening to them. That is a huge step forward. Together, we will be able to look at the challenges and issues, and not at the person. This is the very basis of teamwork, of community, and of overcoming prejudice, at the individual and the global level.

The new paradigm: embodying Principle Seven

Through this Principle Seven, Babuji has changed the locus of responsibility from God to us, and changed the mindset from victimization to enablement. When sufferings come our way, if we can pause and realize that our own vibrational blueprint has attracted them, and they are ultimately for our good, we will feel grateful to the people who caused the suffering and offer thanks.

So what are the core teachings of this principle, and how do we put them into action to transform our lives?

First of all, we need to understand how *samskaras* are formed. *Samskaras* are impressions that lead to habitual tendencies, karmic impulses and subconscious habits and tendencies. We are all familiar with this concept, but there are some nuances involved in the formation of *samskaras* and the role that they play in the process of *bhag*.

Babuji writes, “When we do something by applying our head and heart, we form impressions.” This means that thought alone does not create an impression. We need to add emotions to the mix. To use the analogy of the ocean, when the water in the ocean comes into contact with a strong wind, storm, or a seismic event, a substantial amount of energy is transferred to the water and large waves are formed. Similarly, when our thoughts get entangled with passing emotions, turbulence is created in the field of consciousness, and this turbulence results in an impression being created in the psyche which is also stored as a memory with a specific emotional signature or vibration.

Impressions become stronger when we continue creating stories around them and trying to make meaning out of our experiences. We tend to

label them and give them names. As they build up, they become toxic, becoming heavier in our consciousness – a form of impurity which has its own specific vibration.

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Transforming our belief system: the art of gratitude

This idea that our emotions create vibrations in our field of consciousness, which send out vibrational signals to the universe, attracting specific situations and people, has profound implications. It is the basis of the law of attraction.

So, what happens when we receive a stimulus from the universe based on the vibrational signals that we transmit? Let us say someone makes a gesture at us. If we think that we have been insulted or treated unjustly, that very thought can rouse the emotion of anger. It is our interpretation of the stimulus that leads to the emotion, and these interpretations come from our belief system. The gateways of our belief system are our labeling of “like,” “dislike,” “good,” “bad” etc. In short, it is our belief systems that mold our experiences. Our experiences, in turn, reinforce our belief systems.

With Principle Seven we are changing that belief system to: We are the ones who create the circumstances for wrongdoings. We are responsible. There is a lesson to be learned. Other people are helping us learn that lesson. We can feel grateful for the opportunity, and give thanks that we are evolving.

How do we apply this in our lives? By letting go of the desire to get even. A revengeful act is nothing but wanting to get even with someone. When you understand this, it is the beginning of wisdom. Try to settle down with a peaceful heart and resolve, “I forgive that person, I have a big enough heart.” When we do this, we will free our heart. So, in essence, impressions cannot thrive in a compassionate and grateful heart.

But this will be very difficult until the heart chakra is in full blossom and all the points within it are purified and awakened. So the first step is to

embark on an inner journey through Heartfulness practices, which also remove the layers of *samskaras* through the process of Cleaning. Only then can we get to first base and respond from a place of generosity.

Then we will feel so much peace. We will see Grace descend. We will feel expansion in our consciousness. Greater wisdom will engulf us. We will feel as if we have understood something wonderful in life.

Before thinking about taking revenge, pause a little. During such moments, analyze how your mind became revengeful and how to avoid it. What are the steps? Generally you are feeling hurt. Someone or something creates a situation where your integrity is compromised, your personality is questioned, or your intentions are questioned. Others have a right to question, so let them question. Why are you getting perturbed? Your generosity of heart will prevent you from reacting.

Otherwise, depending upon the person who is accusing you, three scenarios may arise. If the person who is accusing you is very strong, like your boss, you will not take immediate revenge. You may wait quietly: “I will do something one day!” With that hidden agenda, you are keeping poison in your heart for a very long time. When your boss becomes slightly weaker, you will raise your hood and bite. If the person who is accusing you is weak, before he even finishes his sentence you may want to finish him off. Then there is a third scenario, where you feel self-pity and become miserable, a victim to the circumstance. That can also lead to revenge of a different type, through emotional distancing and manipulation.

I would like you to ponder over a fourth scenario: Pause, wait, and forget the whole thing after learning whatever lessons you can from it. Not only can you learn lessons, but see if the other person

can also learn something so that you become friends. That will be a noble outcome.

Wise people do things differently. Instead of focusing on others, they focus on themselves, and see where they have gone wrong. What is the cause of this rebuke or abuse or criticism? They try to analyze their own actions and come to a fair conclusion. We have to think: Is it worth losing my temper? What are the chances of a peaceful resolution? Are there any chances of bridging the differences?

Revenge is simply a reaction, and it perpetuates. If you are revengeful for the wrongs done by others, you are not wise and the person who has wronged you is no wiser. Then there is a fight between two unwise ones. You both become bitter and hurtful and angry.

Revenge is simply a reaction, and it perpetuates. If you are revengeful for the wrongs done by others, you are not wise and the person who has wronged you is no wiser. Then there is a fight between two unwise ones. You both become bitter and hurtful and angry. Taking revenge on your dear ones sounds paradoxical, but it remains a painful fact of life. Your health suffers, the family suffers, and you start gauging how much revenge to take. Can you assess the rules of revenge? What is the dose of revenge or retaliation to be given? Can anyone judge?

There is a quote from the great Chinese philosopher Confucius: “Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves.” Another great philosopher said, “Forestall or delay vengeance until wisdom can assert itself.”

A person taking revenge tends to become the one they want to destroy.

Do you have the heart to let go and forgive? Have you counted the cost of revenge – the price you will have to pay in terms of *samskaras*? In taking revenge, you will always focus on the other rather than on yourself. If you are a person of conscience, you will become aware of yourself: “Why must I react? Why must I be revengeful?” “How to resolve this so that I can grow further?” Cement the relationship for the sake of God. An act of revenge or retaliation will never allow for a peaceful closure.

Also, are we fooling ourselves by taking revenge in the name of justice?

To let go of ill-feelings gives us tremendous freedom. Letting go must be effortless and natural. It is not a weakness. By not letting go, we fight with the rest of the godly kingdom, and then we separate ourselves. This separation adds another veil.

Let us look at others with a sympathetic heart. Maybe there is a justification for their actions. Maybe we are wrong. Maybe we deserve the punishment. So let us pray, “May God forgive me.”

I also recommend a technique given by Babuji’s Guru, Lalaji, to improve relationships with others:

Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Imagine the form of the person in front of you.

Have the thought that, “This person is my friend and well-wisher.”

Think that all negative thoughts the person has about you are going, and thoughts related to your welfare have been infused in them instead.

Whenever you have the opportunity to go near the person, gently and subtly pay attention very indirectly to their face, without staring.

When you breathe out, have the thought that particles of your love and affection are entering their heart.

When you breathe in, have the thought that you are pulling all the negative thoughts they have about you from their heart and throwing them aside.

Initially this task may seem difficult and you may feel resistance, but if you are courageous it will become easy as you practice it.

When you take time out to pause, you will appreciate life’s gifts. So meditate, be grateful, give thanks for life itself, and you will discover that this attitude changes everything.

