

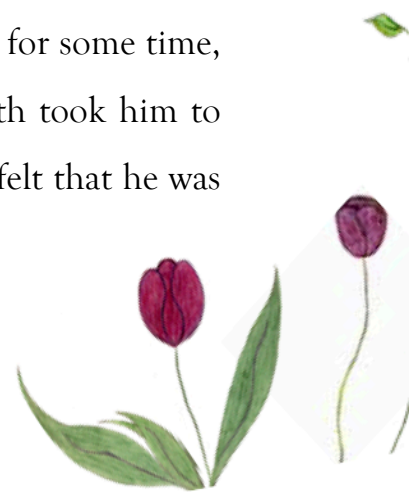


The Goal Paradox

Dear friends,

When we read the writings of Pujya Babuji Maharaj, we see that in so many instances, he entreats us to fix our goal from the very outset of our journey. He repeats this sentiment again and again in various ways. Nevertheless, we find that if in the heart there is a desire for any stage, including the highest one, the very presence of this desire will deviate us. In fact, it will prevent us from attaining anything at all. In the spiritual field, attainment is directly proportionate to the dissolution of the “I.” When there is craving for any spiritual stage or condition, it is the “I” that is behind that craving, and it is the presence of that very same “I” that bars our entry into the stage that we crave. Therefore, any goal automatically becomes the bar to its own achievement, whether it is the highest goal, or an intermediary one. This is the primary paradox of **spiritual life**, which must be solved in order for us to move on.

Let us begin by examining Babuji’s own approach to life. Did he have a goal? He writes that as a young boy, he would often observe his mother performing traditional *puja*. Around the age of six or seven, he asked her to teach it to him. She started adorning his forehead with *tilak* made from sandalwood paste, and he would feel happy that he had done his *puja* for the day. A few years later, he started feeling a thirst for truth, which led him to the *Bhagavad Gita*. Eventually, the family priest advised him to recite “*Rama Rama*,” which he did religiously for some time, but that did not satisfy his heart. One fine day, his thirst for truth took him to Lalaji Maharaj. At the very first glance, Babuji was captivated. He felt that he was at home.





Babuji never desired to be fulfilled by his Master in any way. He never sought spiritual advancement, nor did he wish for the love and affection of his guru, though he loved Lalaji with all his heart. Babuji's life was defined by one thing and one thing alone: total and single-pointed dedication to his Master. **His only focus was Lalaji, at whose feet he exemplified the state of absolute surrender, resulting in unfathomable progress without any precedent.**

Often it is misunderstood that merger is the highest possible attainment, but Babuji's life shows us otherwise. We see that there are attainments beyond merger, such as perfect identity with one's guru, and we also see that it is possible to go still further. No words can describe the states that come after total identity.

However, Babuji never craved the divine gifts that he received so plentifully. Though he never craved these blessings, his reverence for Lalaji was so total that he completely mastered every condition and stage that Lalaji bestowed upon him. **He valued his guru's efforts to such an extent that he could not allow them to go to waste. Therefore, he worked extremely hard upon himself.**

Did Lalaji ever request or instruct Babuji to adopt such an approach of dedication and surrender? Babuji's attitude toward his guru arose naturally from his own heart. Later, as a Master himself, Babuji's nature remained such that he could not request personal devotion, dedication, or surrender from anybody. Unfortunately, his abhyasis would often miss the true path as a result, but Babuji could not guide them in this respect. His hands were tied due to his impeccable etiquette and utter humility, which did not allow him to be direct on this point. Rather, he tended to define the goal using abstract and indirect terminology such as "the Centre," "realisation," or "complete oneness with God."

In one of his letters to an abhyasi, Babuji wrote about the importance of constant remembrance, how an abhyasi is supposed to remain in touch with his Master mentally, constantly. Perhaps because he was very shy, Babuji told the abhyasi, “think that I’m remembering you all the time.” Though psychologically it has a different spin, it serves the same purpose. He could never say anything like, “Take me as your goal.” How could he, when in his own heart, he did not even feel that he possessed existence? However, the wording of the Mission prayer is quite clear:

O Master, Thou art the real goal of human life.

We are yet but slaves of wishes, putting bar to our advancement.

Thou art the only God and power to bring us up to that stage.

These lines did not originate with Babuji, but were a dictation he received from Swami Vivekananda, which he transcribed and brought out under higher orders. Sometimes, people would ask Babuji who this Master is, who is mentioned in the prayer. Babuji’s prompt response was, “It is God who is the true Master.” But if the prayer is addressed to God, then why repeat the sentence, “Thou are the only God and power to bring us up to that stage”? This argument is worth pondering, and each one has to draw their own conclusion.

The prayer’s first line does not indicate what it means to take the Master as one’s goal. What can we conclude from this idea? Does it mean that we should try to merge with him? Should we strive to become identical with him? Such approaches would be a misunderstanding of the prayer’s meaning, and would again send us off-track. To seek merger or identity is too demanding a request.





Gifting such a state is the Master's business, rather than the disciple's. In that case, how could it ever be my goal? To nurture such an idea would only lead to a situation where I would attempt to manipulate my guru's sentiments in my favour—a true act of self-sabotage.

Furthermore, my desire for the state of merger would prevent my ever attaining it, as it would only strengthen the “I-ness” at the base of this desire. At the same time, we see that Babuji strongly recommended the cultivation of intense craving and longing for the goal. What kind of craving is he speaking about? There are different levels of craving. Craving of the lowest type will not bring us anywhere we want to go, no matter how intense it may be. For instance, the kind of craving that arises out of missing your beloved is quite different than a situation in which you merely crave gifts from your beloved. Just imagine if your beloved was focused on trying to get something out of you all the time!

The finer types of longing do not admit any craving for the physical presence of the Master. In a letter to one of his associates, Babuji writes, “Really speaking, the frame of the Master is not God, but behind is Divinity. So I submitted to that Divinity and not to the physical being.” But then he goes on to say, “If you invite into your view the whole frame of the Master, Divinity will lag behind.” Here, Babuji is not recommending that we seek the physical *darshan* of the Master, nor was that ever his own approach. ***Darshan only occurs at an inner level, and meditiveness is the only state in which a meeting with the Master can ever occur.***

In this spirit, Babuji adopted his own method of meditation, which Lalaji never prescribed to him (but which he silently admired). He automatically commenced meditation upon Lalaji's physical frame, with the idea that it was connected to the Ultimate. Babuji would later say that "it was for me alone." Again, his inclination was not to impose himself upon his abhyasis in any way. It was not in his nature to insert himself personally into anyone's life. Therefore, he could not be direct when it came to such matters. It would also have been useless for him to be direct, because unless a disciple can see the path for themselves, such guidance will likely be met with resistance, whereas if the disciple *can* see that truth, there is no need to say it. The most sacred knowledge is always like this. It must come from within, naturally. As the saying goes, no one can teach a monkey to climb. Only *abhyas*, or practice, can lead us to the correct approach in a natural way, without creating resistance. It does not create resistance because it comes from within us, rather than from any external source. Often, it does not even give us any knowledge with which we can disagree. Rather, it simply creates the right *bhava*, or attitude, in us. This happens due to our true *akhlaq*, or character, being progressively brought to light, which our attitude then reflects.

The methods given to us by Babuji—meditation, cleaning, and prayer—are unique ones. Though the whole world talks about meditation, almost all methods fall short of creating a true state of meditation. Some may derive satisfaction from meditating for hours together, days together, and months together. They may pride themselves on how long they can sit, how long they can fast, or how long they can remain in seclusion. However, the truly special meditative states, which are so indescribable, are beyond their access.





By receiving yogic transmission again and again, we are enabled to go into these states almost immediately. This is Babuji's gift to the world, of which we want to make people aware.

In the state of meditation, we become deeply withdrawn and centred within. We become so focused within ourselves that the resulting absorbency gets reflected in our day-to-day activities, provided we remain careful in maintaining this centeredness. Another term for this **constant centeredness** is "**constant remembrance**"— especially when there is gratitude to the one who gifted such a state of absorbency. In this gratitude, we simply melt away.

Now commences our resonance with the great Master. Meditation alone cannot create this. Without cleaning, the impressions and desires would remain in the heart and draw our focus outward, becoming an impenetrable membrane that would prevent us from diving within.

Most of us understand cleaning as a practice that removes *samskaras*, or impressions, but what is the result of this removal of *samskaras*? We are gifted with vacuity, arising out of the removal of *samskaras*, and start expressing lighter and lighter states as we design our new personality with a veil of nothingness. This newer state is the epitome of "more and more of less and less." The term "nothingness" can be better understood when we split it into two parts: *no-thingness*. There is no desire left for any *thing*. No *thing* can draw you out of your centred, meditative state. Of course, this will not cause us to abandon worthwhile worldly activities, which we will conduct in a better way.

Just as meditation without cleaning is insufficient, cleaning without meditation will have its own consequences. Without the absorbency created by meditation, the inner vacuum resulting from cleaning would only attract more and more things, meaning impressions which become seeds for future desires. Vacuity can only remain beneficial as long as absorbency is on the personality who is wearing the simple veil of no-thingness; on such a Master who has no more selfish intentions to fulfil at a personal level.

The culmination of this vacuity, or state of nothingness, is the total absence of 'I,' where you no longer exist for your own sake. That is *saranagati*. The closest thing to such a beautiful state of *saranagati* is surrender. To a beginner in the field of spirituality, the term surrender often causes anxiety, since we associate it with defeat. *Saranagati* is not defeat. **The feeling that I am under the protection of my very dear mother brings only joy. Such is the condition a *bhakta* enjoys upon reaching the state of *saranagati*.**

Babuji proclaimed, “To die before you die is the way to freedom.” It is nothing to fear. You have not lost anything. In fact, you have received the greatest blessing for a *bhakta*, which is the guru’s own heart, beyond which there is nothing worth having. Now, both guru and disciple remain in remembrance of one other. The disciple has taken *saranagati* at the feet of the guru. At the same time, the guru has taken *saranagati* at the feet of his disciple. It is mutual.

Saranagati must be true. It must be your *akhlaq*—your real character, your very essence. If it is artificial, then you may find the Master running away from you, because your “*saranagati*” has ulterior motives. Whether you are chasing liberation or admittance to the central region, it may be better not to approach the guru at all than to go with such desires, unless you are approaching him with prayers for their removal.





Of course, the guru does not wish to deprive us of liberation or of the central region. Rather, he wants us to soar to even greater heights than he has managed to achieve. **Yet, all that is good comes from the purity of this relationship, which we should maintain at the cost of any other goal.**

Babuji was often compelled by peoples' wishes for attainments. With great ingenuity, he placed a number of people in the central region, who would not have reached there through the normal course. Sadly, the results were impermanent. They could not remain there for long, as they were unable to resonate with the unique subtlety of that dimension. As a result, they fell. When people who were known to have reached the central region started slipping, they brought a bad name to His Highness and to the path. Will Nature forgive such individuals? During Babuji's times, those who practiced and served *unconditionally* were a rarity. In his diaries, we find instances where Lalaji remarks upon this:

18th August 1944:

Revered Lalaji: "It is human etiquette to consider oneself as a devotee and Him as the object of devotion. People forget this status, and treat God as an instrument to serve their ends. This is also applicable in the case of deities and guru."

23rd August 1944:

Revered Lalaji: "Few are those who will be inclined to you, and will have no selfish purpose."

To practice while harbouring motives for material gains or spiritual progress may be acceptable in the very beginning, but we should take pains to divest ourselves of all such ideas at the very earliest and become true *abhyasis*. *Abhyas* simply means practice.

It is, however, different from *sadhana*, which is to practice with a specific aim in mind, such as liberation, or any other condition or *sadhya* [accomplishment] or *dhyey* [goal], that the *sadhaka* wishes to achieve. *Abhyas*, as opposed to *sadhana*, is open-ended. In the spirit of *nishkam karma* [desireless action], we surrender the results of our practice to the Master's enlightened judgement. Therefore, it is the state of *saranagati* that defines us as abhyasis. The *Gita*'s eternal principle of *karma* thus applies in the spiritual realm as well. Without *saranagati*, we are only *sadhakas*, and the attainment of any state or condition becomes tenuous.

One beautiful aspect of Sahaj Marg is that when I have nothing in my mind or heart to ask for, the resulting vacuum automatically attracts grace. Then he descends and takes us further. The more desireless we become, the more he helps us. Though we have heard again and again that liberation is assured when we transcend the *pancha bhutas* [five elements] and cross the *pind pradesh*, liberation is not simply a matter of crossing those five *chakras*. It is, rather, a matter of becoming vacuumized at each of those chakras. As the chakras become more and more refined through cleaning and through a proper lifestyle, egolessness and contentment must prevail—even while we are on the very first chakra. Can we afford to wait until we reach the ninth or tenth chakra before starting to sublimate our egofulness? That would be like going to a gym and suddenly attempting to lift 100 kilos when you've never lifted a weight before in your life. We need to build up incrementally, as much as possible each time. This means that we must start creating this vacuity from our very first day as abhyasis. Egolessness is what truly defines a good condition, no matter what stage of your *yatra* you are on. **A good condition is that in which you are simply receptive and not imposing yourself in any way.** It is to be a mere witness, in which we allow His will to take form without any interference from our side.





There is a beautiful story concerning Radhaji and Lord Krishna. Radha is jealous of Lord Krishna's flute, which he keeps at his lips. One day she tries to break the flute. Lord Krishna says, "Why don't you have a look inside this flute and tell me what there is to be jealous about?" Radha looks inside and says, "There is **no-thing** in this flute!" The Lord smiles and tells her that it is for this very reason—the emptiness in this flute—that the melodious music flows. Had there been even a hair inside, it would have twisted the music. Its melody would have been destroyed.

If we become as empty as Lord Krishna's flute, imagine how melodious our lives will become. Total emptiness is the prerequisite of service and devotion. The flute does not decide the music. It cannot complain that it would rather play a different raga. It is the master who decides the music. It is he that decides which kind of service is required from his instrument.

Can an instrument ever really serve? No flute can play itself. It can offer nothing apart from its *availability*, which is its *receptivity to being played*. This availability takes various forms. It does not mean that we do nothing and only wait for the guru to personally come and instruct us. Instead, it means that we remain open, empty, and receptive to the subtle inspirations that descend into our hearts. These are our instructions, which may occasionally come via the guru, personally. At other times, hints and signs appear around us. Mostly, they emerge from within. In all cases, it is the heart that recognizes the Master's signature in these signs, hints, and inspirations, whether they come from within or without. Our only job is to create a state of nothingness within ourselves. After that, whether he utilizes us or not is his business. Whether he carries us further or not is his business. To my heart, the highest goal is for the Master to be happy with me. That is the end of everything.

The Master does not need to know your name, your face, or even your condition in order to be happy with you. If he did, then this system would not be an efficient one. You may travel from Manhattan to Brooklyn to give sittings one day, and automatically, his grace and transmission start to descend. He may not consciously know that you are doing good work in that moment. The thought of you may not cross his mind. Yet, he is happy with you and the change in your condition is the proof of it. Anonymity does not only imply that we do not show off to our peers. To a greater extent, it means that we have no need to show off to Master. We have no wish to impress him. **To be contented with anonymity is a sign of faith which comes when we have nothing to prove for the sake of gaining his approbation or reward.**

The paradox of the goal is both highlighted and resolved in our Mission prayer, depending on our understanding of and attitude toward this prayer. The prayer contains infinities, but one way of looking at it is that in one stroke, these first two lines show us what our goal is, but also that it is our very wish for that goal that puts bar to our advancement, or to the achievement of that goal:

O Master, Thou art the real goal of human life.

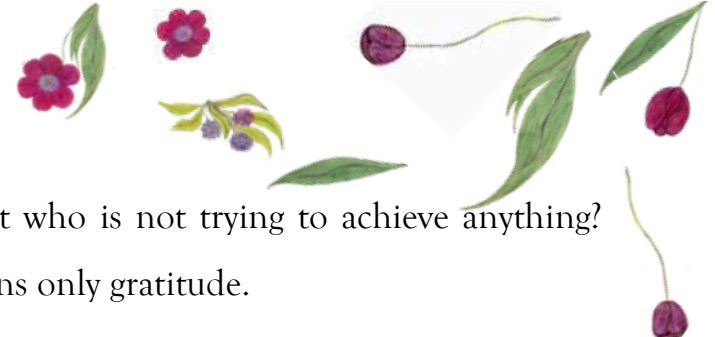
We are yet but slaves of wishes, putting bar to our advancement.

Now faced with a paradox, the third line rescues us:

Thou art the only God and power to bring us up to That stage.

What does this line mean? Perhaps it tells us to forget about achievement, because there is only one main player in this game.





Of what use is a goal to a grateful heart who is not trying to achieve anything? Accepting this in our hearts, there remains only gratitude.

In summary, when we join this system of meditation, at times accidentally or we start with different aims, or sometimes no aim at all. As we meditate more and more, we start falling in love with the various states that we come across. We start enjoying them and appreciating them and begin craving for higher states. After some point, this also bids farewell. Most of us start moving in the higher realms without conscious awareness, oblivious to what is happening. Ultimately, like a water drop falling in the ocean, where there is no drop left to claim “I have become the ocean,” an abhyasi finally arrives **Home**—a home without any walls. The paradox is transcended.

When we describe a water drop falling in the ocean, we are able to provide an explanation of merger, but the stages lying ahead related to identity are very difficult to convey. No seeker can ably describe such a state of identity; that defies logic. Only the guru will have to say such a thing. On **22nd July, 1944**, **Revered Lalaji** dictated, “If Ram Chandra's nerves and veins were to be opened up, and the one who performs the operation has eyes endowed with vision, he will find my whole power manifest in him.” Let us offer our prayer to the Great Master that we may soon arrive at such a stage in our lives.

With love and respect,

Kamlesh Patel

Kanha Shantivanam, 30 April 2019

On the occasion of 120th birth anniversary of Pujya Shri Ram Chandra ji of Shahjahanpur.

