

Gratitude is the Right Attitude

She was holding my letter in her hands sobbing silently. I don't know how many times she would have read that letter and with how many people she would have shared the same. About a couple of years before she passed away, I wrote a letter to my mother thanking her profusely for all that she had done to me. I almost took her granted till the time I was made to realise about her immense contribution to my life, in the process of acknowledging gratitude to someone close to you, in a *Siddh Samadhi* Yoga camp. It is then that I realised how much I loved her and how much she reciprocated. I could see a sense of satisfaction in her eyes having spent her entire life for the well being of her children. She carried my letter with her wherever she went till she passed away.

In retrospect, whenever I remember this incident, I thank my Lord for giving me inspiration to share my innermost feelings with

my mother while she was still alive. How many of us are fortunate to have this signal honour? Aren't we taking people for granted for favours that they do to us or for their contributions to our lives, in one way or the other?

It is our sacred duty to acknowledge contributions of people to our lives. Our dependence on others from cradle to grave should instill in us an attitude of gratitude. It is said that 'a thankful heart is not only the greatest virtue, but the parent of all other virtues.' This attribute alone will put us on a higher pedestal. We would experience a sense of fulfillment from the joy and satisfaction that we receive from the other person (opposite) for making him feel so good. Remember, people do not love us for what we are, but for how we make them feel good.

Gratitude is a cornerstone in the process of manifesting. The more intensely gratefulness is felt; the faster the physical reality corresponds.

Has it not been said "give the world the best and the best will come to you". In that sense, the world is none other than a

mirror image of what we are and how we do react and relate to the world outside. Let us not forget that, as birds of the same feather will flock together, a person laden with the emotion of gratitude would draw and bind kindred souls.

But then how do we develop the Attitude of Gratitude?

It's tempting to think gratitude comes from holding possessions i.e. having what we want. We see ourselves giving thanks if we had money, a loving family, and maybe a house on the beach. But, we see ungrateful, unhappy people with all these things, and of course poor people full of gratitude for whatever little they have. So where does this feeling come from? How does one develop it?

Well, one can list a number of attributes that will make one feel gratified. However, the following three attributes would certainly lead one towards development of this powerful positive emotional laden attitude: -

i) Yearning to Pray

(Being content with what you have)

**“I was in the blue that I had no shoes,
Until up the street I saw a man who had no feet.”**

Mahatma Gandhi said “There is enough in this world for everyone’s need but not for everyone’s greed”. When I moved in to a spacious three bed room apartment from a single room-kitchen in a *chawl* my joy knew no bounds. However, my joy soon turned into remorse, when my eyes fell on the terrace flat in my building which I could not afford to buy. It took days for me to overcome this feeling, until one day I realized how lucky I am to own such a good house in a city where almost half of its population live in inadequate accommodation. After a day’s hard-work and a long train journey when I am on my way to home I see lot of people waiting for the bus/auto to go to their distant homes, whereas I simply

walk down to my home. When I reflect on this, I thank my Lord profusely for being so kind to me.

Recently, I missed a beautiful office space for reasons not made known and I felt miserable. I literally rued my fate felt aggrieved, notwithstanding the fact that I do own a spacious office premises in an upcoming business district. I would have per force sold this premises (to buy the one which I missed) which today fetches me good rent and helps ease my financial burden.

So, there is no end to mental miseries, if we do not develop the right kind of attitude. It is here that we need to develop unflinching faith in His righteousness. Once we are convinced that God brings people into deep waters, not to drown them, but to cleanse them our complaints against God would vanish. In MILT we say, "Count your blessings, not your troubles". So, whenever I am (put) in difficulty, I think that the situation could have been worse

but thank God, I am saved. Just because we cannot see the totality of the phenomena, we cannot sit in judgment over His ways of working. Doubts arise from lack of faith. As Aporesh puts it, "There is nothing wrong in the world. There is no injustice in this world. Everything is in its right order. Once we are tuned to Him, we will find nothing wrong. Yes, troubles and tribulations come, but they are all for our good. When we are tuned, we know that. As Swami Chinmayananda put it, "God sends us trials, not to impair us but to improve us."

Once we develop faith in His righteousness, our prayers become thanksgiving. We develop a sense of gratitude for the things that He has given us and thank Him equally for all those things he deprived us in the best of our own interest.

ii) **Yearning to Serve**

(Desire to serve)

To serve is the nature of the Divine. The Snehalaya Movement in India is a self cleansing process for Miltonians. To quote Aporesh: "By running a Snehalaya, we are not obliging children, but they are obliging us by providing an opportunity to serve". I remember when we visited people, door to door, for collecting old news papers, during the News Paper Collection Drive, our ego and false sense of pride melted away. We had all sorts of experiences- some people shut their doors on our faces, some welcomed us and donated generously, whereas some abused us for spoiling their Sunday sleep and so on. But, at the end of the day's hard work, we all experienced a sense of fulfillment and joy in working for a noble cause. In 2008, when I visited the Missionnaires of Charities in Kolkata, I saw the terminally ill being lovingly nursed by the volunteers. My heart was filled with compassion for

those millions who suffer silently and with gratitude for those who nurse and care for them tirelessly. The more we serve, the more humble we become, because it expels our ego and generate a sense of fulfillment.

Service to people in distress makes us realise how fortunate we are to have all the good things in the world and that leads to development of gratitude towards Almighty for being so kind and considerate to us.

iii) Yearning to Thank

(Yearning to appreciate/praise)

For flowers that bloom about our feet;

For tender grass, so fresh, so sweet;

For song of bird, and hum of bee;

For all things fair we hear or see,

Father in heaven, we thank Thee!

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Americans celebrate the fourth Thursday of November each year as Thanks Giving Day. People on this day take time to thank God for his constant grace and for all the material possessions man enjoys. For many, Thanksgiving is also the time to thank their near and dear and being grateful for their kindness. However, a person of a pure heart and positive mind practises Thanks giving every day. Gratitude shifts our focus from what is lacking in our life to the abundance that is already present. In addition, behavioural and psychological research has shown that surprising life improvements can stem from the practice of gratitude. Giving thanks makes us happier and more resilient, it strengthens relationships, it improves health, and it reduces stress. It teaches us to live our life in full and also abundantly.

Am I self made man?

Gratitude is not below your dignity; rather it shows your nobility.

Many a time, we hear that "I am a self made man". This sentence is nothing but reflection of one's ego. The normal human tendency is to take things and people for granted. We are prone to overestimate our accomplishments without giving credit to others. So many people contribute to our growth and in being what we are today. All of us are debtors, not just to the Giver of life, but to countless individuals who have helped us along the way: parents who gave us love and protection, teachers who helped us gain knowledge, friends who offered sympathy and encouragement in times of need. But, the debt is seldom acknowledged. We may be grateful, but gratitude like love is of no use unless and until expressed.

It takes years for some people to say those two magical words: "Thank You". But when we do express our tender feelings to people who have contributed to enrichment of our lives, the

message will radiate a glow in their hearts-and of-course rekindle our own. Gratitude is like sunshine which we cannot do without because without it we would not experience the warmth so necessary to grow and thrive.

I owe a lot to the world

The hardest arithmetic to master is that which enables us to count our blessings! - Eric Hoffer

Let me admit frankly that I do not claim to be a self made man. I have received unparalleled love from all quarters of my life - be it my parents, siblings, mentors, friends or colleagues. I am never tired of acknowledging their contribution to my life. I owe my physical existence and well being to my parents, my professional education to my elder brothers and teachers, my intellectual and spiritual development to Aporesh, Natarajan, Harish Joshi and my professional development to many seniors in my profession who moulded my thinking and guided me in developing specialized

knowledge in the complex field of international taxation. My friends stood by me during my difficult times. And above all I owe a lot my wife and daughter but for whose support and sacrifices I would not have been able to achieve even half of what I did. When I think of this my heart is filled with gratitude towards one and all.

With my heart overflowing with joy and gratitude to one and all, I conclude by being grateful to...

...those who hated me; they made me a stronger person.

...those who loved me; they made my heart bigger.

...those who worried about me; they let me know that they actually cared.

...those who left me; they showed me not everything lasts.

...those who entered my life; they made me who I am today.

Yes, I am thankful to the Almighty for ...

...having chosen me to make a difference to this world;

...for trusting my abilities in solving problems by putting me in crisis situations oftentimes;

...for His endless love and blessings in spite of me and my limitations;

I shall ever remain grateful to you O my Master!

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