

Thank You

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

What a heart-warming, heart-delighting virtue is gratitude! But how often do we contemplate the blessings of what we have received? How often do we consider the graces and fortunes that have fallen our way? Many unasked for. How often has a thank you been heartfelt and not just a social nicety? Anyone who has entered the Dhamma, reflecting on the supreme gift of this life form, the most advantageous for liberation, cannot but feel an aching gratitude towards one's parents. Many may harbour grudges about their upbringing. But do we imagine our parents to be awakened beings? One person said to me that it was only when he became a parent did he stop complaining about his parents! The Buddha said, even if we were to carry our parents on our shoulders all our lives, we would not have repaid the gift of life they gave to us. Thank you! And what about the gifts we have received from our society? Our whole early education is paid for by others. Both the education system and the National Health system arose out of a desire to educate and heal. They arose largely out of the ideals of egalitarianism and compassion. What about the police? Do we ever feel gratitude when we see a policeman or a police car? Or are we still teenagers, hating authority figures still! And our politicians? Do we really expect them to be saints? Most enter with idealism. They really do want to do something for society – no matter how misguided we may think they are. Would we do any better? It's not that gratitude should blind us to faults, but more that it balances our more 'natural' tendency to criticise, moan and complain. What about a bit of appreciation? A bit of praise? So thank you! What about the gifts of friends, of workmates, of countryside and parks, museums and libraries and a myriad other things. Thank you! And our practice even allows us to see those who dislike us and even do us harm as our teachers! Thank you! Even when things go wrong. We lose our spouses or partners, our friends, our jobs, we can see this as 'an opportunity for growth' – even if we say it through bared teeth. Thank you! And there are things. Things encapsulate the imagination, the skills and the work of hundreds of people. Next time you are holding your mobile, just think how many people were involved in getting the basic materials, in design, in manufacture, in distribution. We can do it with food, clothes, the humble door-stop. An eternity of thank yous! And what about the body that carries us around all day. The mind that can be so clear and precise. The heart that can fill our interior with such delight. Let's not dwell on the empty half of the bottle. Thank you! Gratitude engenders a generous heart. And when our gifts do not carry the heavy labels of 'me' and 'mine', then truly we are renouncing what time and wealth we could have spent on ourselves. So we also develop the virtue of renunciation. In this simple way the virtuous circle of gratitude, generosity and renunciation twirl us gently towards liberation. This is also a path in itself. Meister Eckhart the 13th Century mystic said to say thank you all the time would be enough. If gratitude is not something that comes easy to you, try spending a day saying thank you to everyone and everything and see how you feel by the end of it.

Thank You

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