

Mother's Day

May 9, 2021

Close your eyes, focus on your breath as it's coming in, as it's going out. Take a couple of good long, deep in-and-out breaths. Notice where you feel it in the body. Focus your attention there and then ask yourself if long breathing is comfortable. If it is, keep it up. If not, you can change. Make it shorter, faster, slower, heavier, lighter. Pay careful attention to what the body needs right now in terms of breath energy.

Have some appreciation for this. After all, without the breath, you'd be dead. It always stands to reason that, because this is the force of life, if the breath feels good inside, it's going to be good for you. Yet, we don't pay much attention to it. We put it on the back burner, while we pay attention to other things. So, give it some time, give it some attention. Show some appreciation for it.

Today is Mother's Day. It's a good day also to show appreciation for the people who've been good to you. Number one is your mother. In Thailand, when they ordain monks, they have a chant beforehand, which we don't have at the ordinations here. It goes over all the pain that the mother has gone through in raising the son, so that the son will have a sense of appreciation for all she went through.

The chant lasts for two hours. About one hour and forty-five minutes is about her pregnancy. And think about it: You just moved right in. You wanted to be born, you assumed they're going to take you, and they did. No questions asked, no interviews, no references, no trial periods. They took you on. On top of that, they cared for you. She gave you her blood and her flesh. And that's just before you were born. Since you were born, think of all the things she did for you, too. It's good to have some appreciation for that. Some gratitude.

The word for gratitude in Pali, *kataññu*, means having a sense of what was done. When Buddha is talking about karma, one of the principles he was saying is that you do have a mother and a father. The implication there is that you owe them a debt of gratitude. Because they had a choice: They could have aborted you, they could have disposed you, but they didn't. They showed you the world. If you don't have the appreciation for that kind of thing, how are you going to appreciate goodness?

And how are you going to become a good person yourself? Being good requires that you go out of your way. If you don't appreciate the way other people have gone out of their way for you, you're very unlikely to go out of your way for other people. You have to realize that the fact that you have the life today, that you are what you are, depends on the support and help of lots of people who chose to give the help, chose to give the support, many times making lot of sacrifices. So, appreciate that. Have some gratitude for that. And think about how you can repay the debt.

If your mother has passed away, dedicate the merit of your meditation to her and spread thoughts of goodwill. If she's still alive, figure out what ways you can help her. Make sure she's not suffering. As the Buddha said, the best way to repay your parents is, if they are stingy people, you teach them how not to be stingy. If they're unvirtuous, you teach them how to be virtuous. If they don't meditate, you teach them to meditate. Of course, parents are the hardest people in the world to teach. But you can show them by your example. Maybe it can inspire them to act in skillful ways. That good karma then becomes their source of happiness.

At the same time, think of all the other people, beside your mother, whose goodness you have depended on, and make sure that that goodness does not disappear from the world. In other words, you extend the goodness you got from other people. This shows that you received something good from your parents and other benefactors, you appreciate it, and you're happy to pass it on.

This is how goodness stays in the world. Without that sense of appreciation, without that sense of gratitude, goodness disappears very quickly. Life in the human realm becomes less and less of a human life and more of something from the lower realms. So gratitude keeps us on the human level. Have gratitude for your parents, gratitude for all the people who've done good to you. And then do good for others. You received what's called their benefaction. So pass that benefaction on.