

Grateful to Our Mothers

May 8, 2016

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Watch it all the way in, all the way out. It's the breath of life. It's what keeps the mind and body together. So if the quality of the breath is good, it's going to be good for both body and mind.

So look after it. All too often we just leave it to its own devices. We don't get the most out of it. So have some appreciation for the fact that the breath can heal a lot of things in the body and heal a lot of things in the mind. It can give you a sense of well-being in the present moment.

If you notice whether it's too long or too short, you can adjust it. It's in your paying attention to it that you make a difference.

Today is Mother's Day. It's also a day of appreciation—actually a day of gratitude, which is more than just appreciation. The Pali word for gratitude is *kataññuta*, “knowing what has been done,” or having a clear sense of what has been done. We think about what our mothers have done for us, and we have to admit that they've done an awful lot. Without them, we wouldn't have this breath of life, we wouldn't have this body. And there are a lot of things we wouldn't know about: how to speak, how to walk, how to act. Lots and lots of things that they did for us.

It's what they did for us that we're especially grateful for. We may have mothers who are beautiful or rich or very intelligent, but those things don't really go deep into the heart. What goes to the heart is the fact that they did good things for us, they went out of their way to help us to learn about the world, to get started in the world.

Even the simple fact that they carried us around for all those months in their womb: That's was a huge burden we have to be grateful for.

So if they're still alive, we show our gratitude to them by helping them as we can. If they've passed on, we do good because we want to make sure that their goodness doesn't die with them. In other words, it lives on in the goodness that we do.

So when you have an opportunity to do good in terms of generosity, in terms of virtue, in terms of meditation, remember you got that goodness from your mother and your father, you got that goodness from your parents. And so you want to make sure that that goodness doesn't die.

What makes human life worthwhile is the good things we do for one another. If everybody were out just looking out after themselves like animals, this wouldn't be a liveable world at all. We'd be back worse than the Stone Age.

But the fact that we have parents who look after us and they teach us what goodness means, that's what makes human life liveable

As the Buddha said, gratitude is a sign of a good person. In other words, you appreciate the difficulties that other people went through in order to be good to you, and that's a sign that you probably appreciate the fact that you're going to have to make an effort to be good to other people as well. A person who's not grateful doesn't have that sense and is somebody you can't trust.

So you look for gratitude in other people as a sign of their goodness. And try to cultivate gratitude in yourself to cultivate your own goodness as well. That's how the goodness of our parents lives on. That's how we repay our debt to them by making sure that their goodness, all the effort they went to, just doesn't stop with us but it lives on in the world.

We'll be meeting up with them again, in one way or another, as long as we're still going through samsara. So you want to meet up on good terms. You want to meet up in a good place, and a good place is created by the goodness you do.