

Gratitude Through Practice

November 22, 2017

The fact that we're here meditating depends on the goodness of a lot of people who've passed away. In some cases, it's parents; in some cases, it's teachers, starting with the Buddha. So it's good to reflect on how much we're dependent on other people's goodness and dedicate the merit of our goodness back to them. This is one of the aspects of gratitude that's such an important part of the practice.

As the Buddha said, gratitude is the sign of a good person. In other words, you recognize the goodness that other people have done to you, and when you do that, you're much more likely to be willing to be good in turn. You realize that they had to go out of their way, they had to make sacrifices. You realize the importance of being generous with one another and so you want to pass that on.

In the case of the Buddha, we pass it on by practicing. That's how he said we show our respect to him. We bring flowers, candles, and incense in homage to him, but as he said, even heavenly flowers, candles, and incense were not the right way to pay respect to him. The right way to pay respect is to practice.

The same applies when we feel gratitude to other people who've passed on. We practice in order to keep this practice of the Dhamma alive. As the Buddha said, it's going to pass away someday, but we don't want it to pass away with us. We want to make sure that we have something good to hand on to other people. So we hand it on by practicing.

And as we show respect to the people who helped us in the past, people in the future will show respect to us. These are reciprocal relationships. At the very least, make sure that you keep up your part of the bargain.

You remember the goodness done to you: That's literally what *kataññu* means. It's the Pali word for gratitude, and it means having a sense of what was done, in particular the goodness that was done—feeling gratitude and having appreciation for the goodness you've learned so that you can pass it on.

Even though meditation is an individual practice, it's part of a long line of apprenticeship, a long line of help: lots of people helping lots of people. Sometimes that thought can sustain you on days when the meditation's not going so well. There are people cheering you on—people in the past who've offered this to you—and they'd be happy to see you practice.

So at the very least give them some thought, show them some gratitude, by giving yourself to the practice as best as you can.