

# The Unexpected Power of Gratitude

In today's fast moving world, qualities such as gratitude seem to belong to another age - a simpler time when life moved along at an easier pace and there was time to appreciate everything. Yet within this apparently meek sounding quality there lies a tremendous source of power that can radically reshape the way you look at the world.

## What gratitude can do for us:

- **Puts things in perspective:** Human beings have this self-defeating propensity to let the bad things in life fill our mental vision and leave no room for the good, a tendency reflected and perpetuated by television and newspapers. Often it takes just one bad thing to happen for us dwell on it and get depressed, no matter how many good things that are happening. In cultivating a daily practice of gratitude, we start to reverse that process and gain a true perspective on life.
- **Lifts us above the ebbs and tides of life:** The more you develop the quality of gratitude in your life, you will start feeling grateful even when bad things happen to you, because you will have developed the inner vision to see that good things and bad happenings are nothing but experiences to shape you and make you stronger. Hence you will be able to have piece of mind no matter what the outer circumstances are.
- **Takes us out of our limited ego:** As with other practices of self-discovery, your awareness expands and you gradually feel you are part of something much more infinite than your limiting ego and finite mortal frame. Gratitude helps us turn away from {selfishness} and realize our place in the universe.
- **Awakens a higher part of our being:** Gratitude is primarily a quality felt by the heart centre, that place in the middle of our chest where we can feel our soul, or the essence of our existence. Therefore, when we are consciously grateful, some inmost part of ourselves is awakened and we enter into the higher and nobler realms of our being.

## Techniques to cultivate the quality of gratitude:

There are many different techniques to use; the important thing is that they be practiced every day, preferably at the same time each day so you can form a habit. Just after you get up in the morning is usually the best time - you aren't likely to be disturbed, and the peace and serenity you get from the practice benefits you throughout your whole day.

- **Writing down things you are grateful for:** This serves as a useful beginning to the other techniques. Each day you can write down seven things that you are truly grateful for, and as you write try to feel that quality inside your heart. When you start writing, you realize how many things there are - from the big things such as the gift of life and friends down to tiny little incidents that happened yesterday such as someone giving you a smile or the chance to spend a few minutes sitting in a park.
- **Expanding the flower of gratitude inside your heart:** you can try silently chanting the word gratitude over and over again. Each time you repeat the word you can feel that a tiny flower of gratitude inside your heart is growing and growing, expanding petal by petal.
- **Cultivating inner joy:** Joy carries with it the quality of expansion and awareness which gives rise to gratitude. Try breathing in and out and keeping your awareness on the river of breath entering and leaving your body. Feel that when you breathe in, pure inner joy in entering into your heart, and when you breathe out, worry tension and stress are leaving your system.