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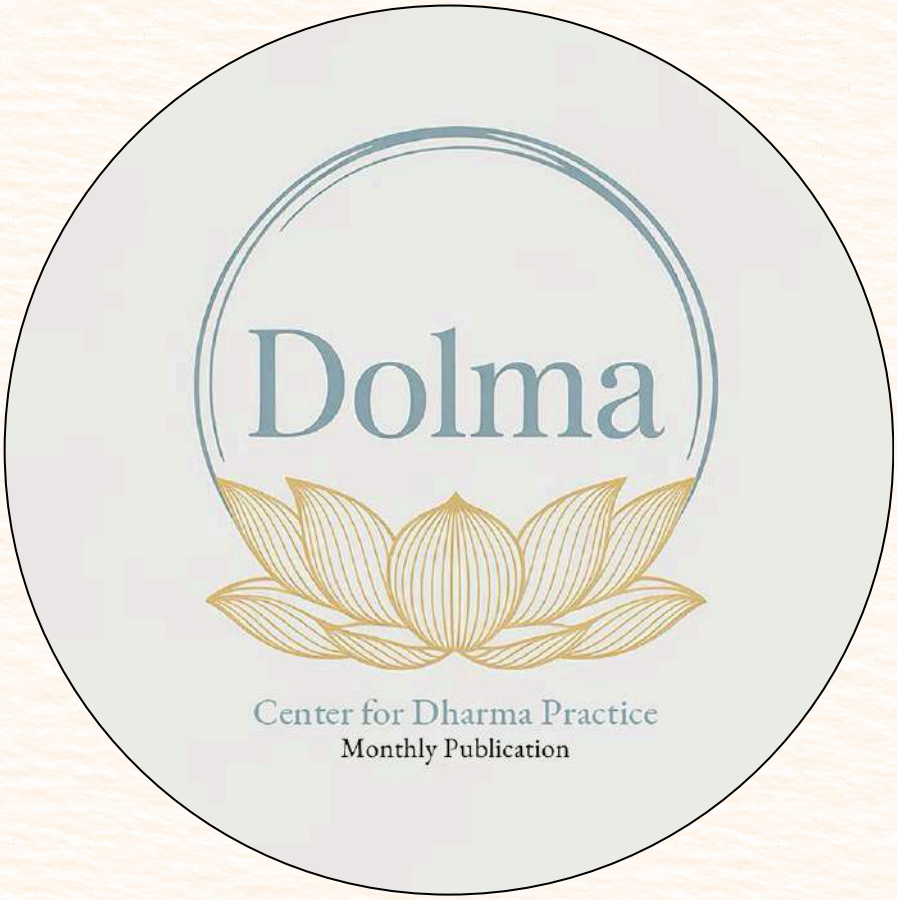
THEME: GRATITUDE



Namaste and Welcome!

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Dedication



Sri Leslie Lewis-Ji
(Anuttarā)

My dear friend and chela, Leslie, entered Parinirvana on August 19, 2026.

You have passed beyond the cycle of sorrow into ultimate peace. Yet, out of boundless compassion, do not remain in the quietude of Nirvana. We pray for your swift return. Manifest a new form, turn the wheel of Dharma, and guide us once again from the lonesome valley to complete liberation.

Glenville Ashby
(Konchok R. Tobgyal)

Anuttarā

The signs are many.
Attainment, so elusive at one time, is yours.
Tender is your smile amid every difficulty;
Your mind is still, unwavering.
Your hand rests on your heart,
Your grace for all to behold.
Neither a cry nor complaint,
Your eyes steady and soft.
Lessons abound for those with understanding.
Painstaking is your every move,
Yet offerings you make,
While your pearly countenance glows ever more strongly.
When words failed you, never did your mantra and prayer.
Your reassurance, “I will be alright,” calmed us,
And your pronouncement, “I am your guru now,” affirmed you in spirit.
O Anuttara, return swiftly—
Out of boundless love for all.

Glenville Ashby
(Konchok R. Tobgyal)

From The Editor's Desk

Spirituality in Everyday Life: A Path from Inner Transformation to a Better Society (Pt. 1)

By Yogi Brahmanand

Spiritual Guide & Founder, Nikhil Vatika Spiritual Research Centre



Yogi Brahmanand

In the modern world, human life has become faster, more connected, and materially advanced than ever before. We possess technologies that can connect continents within seconds, knowledge that was once inaccessible, and comforts that previous generations could scarcely imagine. Yet, amid all this progress, an important question remains: Are we becoming equally peaceful, compassionate, and conscious within?

This is where spirituality becomes deeply relevant.

Spirituality is not merely about visiting temples, performing rituals, chanting mantras, or withdrawing from worldly responsibilities. These can certainly become valuable paths of spiritual development, but the essence of spirituality goes much deeper. Spirituality is the awakening of consciousness and the transformation of the way we think, feel, act, and relate to life.

A spiritual life does not necessarily require us to abandon family, profession, business, or society. True spirituality should accompany us into every dimension of life.

When we speak the truth, even when dishonesty appears easier, spirituality is present.

When we remain patient instead of reacting in anger, spirituality is present.

When we earn honestly, fulfil our responsibilities sincerely, and refuse to harm another person for personal advantage, spirituality is present.
When we forgive, show gratitude, help someone without expecting anything in return, or quietly examine our own mistakes before judging others, spirituality becomes a living experience.

Therefore, spirituality should not remain limited to the meditation room. The real examination of meditation begins when we leave meditation and enter the world.

If years of spiritual practice do not gradually make us more peaceful, humble, disciplined, compassionate, and aware, then we must examine not the greatness of the path, but the depth with which we are walking upon it.

Gratitude

WHEN LIFE BECOMES SACRED

The Spiritual Power of Recognizing What Life Has Already Given Us

By Yogi Brahmanand

Spiritual Guru & Founder, Nikhil Vatika Spiritual Research Centre

Gratitude Is More Than Saying "Thank You"

Gratitude is generally understood as expressing thanks when someone helps us or when something good happens in our life. Gratitude has a much deeper meaning. It is a state of consciousness in which we begin to recognize life itself as a gift. Our breath, body, family, teachers, knowledge, food, nature, opportunities, and even the simple possibility of waking up to another morning are blessings that easily become ordinary because they are continuously available to us.

Gratitude Awakens Spiritual Awareness

Spirituality begins when we move beyond living mechanically and start observing life with deeper awareness. We may believe that everything we possess is entirely the result of our own effort, but a closer examination reveals how interconnected our existence really is. We did not create the earth that supports us, the sun that gives energy, the air we breathe, or the body through which we experience life. Parents, teachers, family, society, nature, and countless unknown people have contributed to our journey. Recognizing this interdependence weakens the ego's belief that "I alone have achieved everything." Therefore, gratitude naturally creates humility, and humility prepares consciousness for deeper spiritual understanding.

Gratitude, Contentment and Inner Peace

One of the greatest sources of restlessness is the continuous feeling that something more is required before we can be happy. We think that after receiving a certain amount of money, recognition, success, relationship, or position, we will finally become satisfied. Yet, after one desire is fulfilled, another usually appears. Spiritual gratitude introduces the principle of Santosha—contentment. Contentment does not mean abandoning ambition or refusing to improve our circumstances. It means being able to work for tomorrow without rejecting today.

We can sincerely pursue prosperity, knowledge, and success while simultaneously recognizing the value of what we already possess. Gratitude, therefore, does not stop progress; it prevents progress from becoming an endless search for happiness outside ourselves.

Gratitude Changes Our Relationship with the Divine

Most people remember the Divine strongly when they need something. Our prayers often contain requests for protection, prosperity, healing, success, or the removal of difficulties. Asking the Divine for support is natural, but spirituality becomes deeper when prayer also contains gratitude. Sometimes, sit before the Divine without asking for anything. Simply acknowledge: "Thank You for this life, for another breath, for those who love me, for the teachers who guided me, for the opportunities I received, and for the strength that carried me through difficult times." When prayer moves from continuous asking toward gratitude, our relationship with the Divine becomes less transactional and more devotional. Sometimes the deepest prayer is simply: "Whatever You have given me, let me become worthy of it."

Gratitude in Difficult Times

True gratitude is easiest when circumstances are favourable; its deeper spiritual value appears during difficult periods. This does not mean pretending that pain is pleasant, accepting injustice passively, or forcing ourselves to feel thankful for suffering. Spirituality should never become an excuse to deny genuine pain. Instead, gratitude teaches us that even when one part of life is difficult, the whole of life need not become meaningless. With time, difficult experiences may reveal courage, patience, discernment, detachment, or inner strength that we did not previously recognize. Some experiences teach us love, while others teach us boundaries. Some doors that closed may eventually redirect us toward another path. We may not be grateful for every painful event, but we can sometimes become grateful for the wisdom that eventually emerged from it.

Gratitude Toward Guru, Parents and Relationships

Gratitude has a special place in the Guru-disciple relationship. A Guru or spiritual teacher does not merely provide information; the purpose of spiritual guidance is transformation. Therefore, genuine gratitude toward the Guru should become visible in our practice and conduct. If we receive a mantra, we should practise it sincerely. If we receive knowledge, we should contemplate and apply it. If we are taught compassion, discipline, or humility, these qualities should gradually become part of our personality. The greatest Guru Dakshina is the transformation of the disciple. The same principle applies to parents, family, and relationships. We often recognize people's importance only when circumstances change or they are no longer available to us. Spiritual awareness teaches us to express appreciation while people are still present in our lives.

When Gratitude Becomes Seva

Gratitude reaches a higher level when it moves from feeling into action. If life has given us knowledge, we can share knowledge responsibly. If we have received support during difficult times, we can support another person when we are capable.

If society has contributed to our growth, we can contribute something meaningful to society. If nature sustains our existence, respecting and protecting nature becomes an expression of gratitude. In this way, a beautiful spiritual progression develops: I received, I recognized, I became grateful, and then I gave something forward. At this stage, gratitude becomes Seva and positive karma rather than remaining only an emotion.

Gratitude as a Daily Spiritual Practice

Gratitude does not require an elaborate ritual. Every morning, before entering the rush of daily life, remain silent for a few moments and recognize the simple fact that another day has been given to you. Before meals, remember the many visible and invisible forces that brought food to your plate. During the day, consciously appreciate someone who has helped you. At night, remember three things from the day for which you are grateful. They need not be extraordinary—a peaceful conversation, someone's smile, food, health, a lesson learned, a problem solved, or an opportunity to help someone. Such a simple practice gradually trains the mind to recognize grace within ordinary life.

The Highest Expression of Gratitude

At first, we practise gratitude consciously. Gradually, gratitude becomes a natural feeling, and eventually it can become a way of living. Then spirituality is no longer confined to meditation, mantra, or worship. Eating becomes remembrance, relationships become opportunities for appreciation, service becomes worship, and each morning becomes another opportunity to use life consciously. We begin to understand that the greatest expression of gratitude for life is not merely saying “thank you”—it is using the life we have received wisely.

Do not measure the richness of your life only by what you possess; measure it also by what you are capable of recognizing. Before asking the Divine for the next blessing, recognize the blessings that have already arrived. Before concentrating entirely on what is missing, remember what remains. Be grateful for your breath, your teachers, your parents, your relationships, nature, knowledge, and every opportunity to grow.

Gratitude is ultimately the realization that life itself deserves our reverence. And perhaps the highest form of gratitude is to make our life worthy of the gift we have received.

Hari Om Tat Sat.
Yogi Brahmanand
Spiritual Guru & Founder
Nikhil Vatika Spiritual Research Centre

Feature Article

Why Does God Always Have to be Good?

By: Anais Khan-George



Anais Khan-George

Note: for much of this piece, I will be leaning into the Christian idea of God.

'Why does God always have to be good?'
This question formed late one night in the membranes of my mind as I drifted off to sleep. The blasphemous nature of the question rendered me ashamed, and so I immediately tried to discard it.

But, like an unwelcome visitor, it refuses to leave, and it sits here, nagging at me.
So candidly speaking, 'Why does God always have to be good?'

To understand the complexity of my question, I first had to reflect on my teachings. Growing up in Trinidad allows one to be immersed in a polytheistic culture, and throughout my life, I was lucky to have freely engaged with aspects of Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity. While I lack scholarship where these religions are concerned, I can confess to understanding at least the fundamental principles of each. Upon examining each of these major religions, the central narrative that permeates them is the goodness of God.

Examining from a Christian perspective, God has historically been seen as the bastion of light and goodness, from whom no wrong or error can ever come. Any wrong or evil —if we are to go this far—must be attributed to an external source, a perverse anomaly in what he has created. We can call these 'anomalies' by any name—sin, evil, or the devil—but we are always told, in fact, we are always assured that they can never come from God, for he is the embodiment of ultimate perfection. Any questions that an inquisitive mind may have are quickly pacified by assurances that these anomalies were never part of God's plan. In fact, the only reason he allows them to exist is so as not to be oppressive to his creatures. After all, why would a loving God oppress his creatures? And so, you are sent off knowing that any other flaw you may encounter in the theory of God's goodness will be roadblocked by the 'anti-oppressive theory.'

In being sent away to digest the idea of God being the first democrat, we find ourselves trapped. We are now stuck in an eternal cycle of attributing anything good as being aligned with God, and anything evil as coming from the devil. The devil yields such immense power that his creation, evil, acts as the direct opponent to God's goodness. Yet, we are taught that the devil cannot be equal with God; he is a lesser being—even his name does not get the same honour of capitalisation—still, his creation is the perfect opposite of God's. So what separates them? What relegates the devil to a lower rung? The power of being good.

But it is at this crossroads where contradiction is birthed. The mind, despite its best efforts, now begins to wander. If God is responsible for all creation and is the ultimate source of good, then how could an anomaly such as evil even exist? Did God make a mistake? Would that mean that he is not perfect, and then, in not being perfect, is not always good?

Truth be told, God can be immensely cruel from a human understanding. Instances of this have been well documented across multiple religions. Despite this, we have always been taught that this cruelty is justified. Not only is it a matter of God righting wrong, but many religious teachings go as far as asserting that it is not cruelty; rather, it is out of love and is a part of a greater plan that we are not privy to. We have been trained to always give God the benefit of the doubt because he is inherently good.

Yet, God's constant goodness creates a problem for us. When we humans look around and see suffering thriving despite our ardent prayers, how can we reconcile the fact that our good God allows this to happen? We are given no concrete explanations as to why but are instead told to keep faith because God is good and, in his goodness, he will one day end all suffering.

But perhaps this age-old narrative that prevents any questioning is becoming counteractive amongst a new generation. Many young people today seem to be turning away from this hard-and-fast religious idealism, as God's nature and the world around them do not seem to be in alignment. Maybe this is why more and more young people are leaning into spirituality.

Spirituality, in a modern sense, allows you to carve your own path rather than forcing you to follow a rigid, predetermined one. It does not rely on the traditional understanding of God but, rather, leans into the acknowledgment of a higher power and focuses on finding harmony between oneself and the universe.

In spiritual teachings, neutrality becomes a major concept: the idea that there is bad with the good and that there is no singular source of good or bad but, rather, it is all-encompassing. Instead of being dissuaded from questioning the nature of the world and its aspects, persons are encouraged to ask questions. In asking questions and puzzling them out for themselves, they delve deeper into their understanding of this universe, its nature, and the nature of what created it. It does not ask us to live in a state of blind faith and view higher powers as only being good. Instead, we can accept them as being multifaceted and, in doing so, can then focus on how we adapt to both the good and the bad.

What freedom could come from accepting that God is not always good but, rather, a neutral higher power? Could we then be more accepting of the trials of life? In lowering our expectations of God, could we, in turn, become better human beings? Ones that don't need to scream his name when things go well and curse it when they don't.

Adopting a spiritual path has the potential to be a freeing experience. Letting go of our expectations, the things that we feel are right, or good, or even justified, and accepting things as they come can, in turn, allow our minds to be freed. This then allows us to neither be upset with God nor exist in a state of blind faith, desperately waiting to be saved. We can embrace spirituality's neutrality, free our shackles, and, in the end, save ourselves.

SACRED TEACHINGS FROM THE UPANISHADS

"TAT TVAM ASI" – THE GREATEST SECRET OF THE CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD

By Yogi Brahmanand

"Tat Tvam Asi" — Thou Art That

Among the countless jewels of Sanatana Dharma, the Upanishads shine as the highest expression of spiritual wisdom. They are not merely books; they are records of divine realization experienced by enlightened sages who penetrated the deepest mysteries of existence.

One of the most profound teachings found in the Chandogya Upanishad is the Mahavakya:

"Tat Tvam Asi" (तत्त्वमसि)

This simple statement means:

"You Are That Supreme Reality."

At first glance, these words appear ordinary. Yet hidden within them lies the secret of liberation, self-realization, and the ultimate purpose of human life.

The Great Illusion

Most people spend their lives identifying themselves with the body, mind, emotions, possessions, status, and relationships. They say:

"I am rich."

"I am poor."

"I am successful."

"I am a failure."

"I am happy."

"I am suffering."

However, according to the Upanishads, all these identities are temporary. The body changes, thoughts change, circumstances change, and even relationships change. That which constantly changes cannot be the true self.

The sages declared that behind all these changing experiences exists an eternal consciousness—the Atman.

The Atman is unborn, undying, pure, and infinite.

The Teaching of Sage Uddalaka

The Chandogya Upanishad narrates the dialogue between the great sage Uddalaka and his son Shvetaketu.

After returning from years of study, Shvetaketu became proud of his knowledge. Seeing this, his father asked him a profound question:

"My son, have you learned that knowledge by knowing which everything becomes known?

Shvetaketu was unable to answer.

Uddalaka then began teaching the highest truth.

He explained that just as countless ornaments are made from one gold, countless pots are made from one clay, and countless waves arise from one ocean, similarly, the entire universe has emerged from one Supreme Consciousness.

"

That Supreme Consciousness exists within every living being.
Again and again, the sage repeated:
"Tat Tvam Asi, Shvetaketo."
"You are That."
What Does "You Are That" Mean?
It does not mean that the physical body is God.

It does not mean that the ego is supreme.
It means that the deepest essence of your existence is none other than the same divine consciousness that sustains the entire universe.
The light shining in the sun, the life moving in every creature, the intelligence governing creation, and the awareness through which you experience existence are all expressions of the same Supreme Reality.
The Upanishads teach that separation is an illusion created by ignorance.
The moment true knowledge dawns, one realizes:
"I am not merely this body."
"I am not merely this mind."
"I am the eternal witness of all experiences."

Practical Application in Daily Life
This teaching is not meant only for scholars and philosophers. It is meant for every seeker.
When difficulties arise, remember that your true Self is greater than every problem.
When fear appears, remember that the Atman is fearless.
When sorrow comes, remember that the soul remains untouched.
When pride arises, remember that all beings share the same divine source.
The realization of "Tat Tvam Asi" naturally gives birth to compassion, humility, wisdom, and inner peace.

The Path to Realization
The Upanishads recommend four essential practices:
Meditation: To experience the silent witness within.
Self-Inquiry: Constantly asking, "Who am I?"
Guru's Guidance: Receiving wisdom from an enlightened teacher.
Pure Living: Truthfulness, discipline, compassion, and self-control.
Through regular spiritual practice, the mind becomes calm, and the truth hidden within begins to reveal itself.

Final Message
The greatest pilgrimage is not to a distant temple but into the depths of your own consciousness.
The greatest treasure is not found in the outer world but within your own soul.
The greatest realization is to know your true nature.
The sages of the Upanishads invite every seeker to awaken from ignorance and discover the divine presence already residing within.

May the wisdom of the Chandogya Upanishad illuminate your path.
May you discover the eternal truth hidden in the Mahavakya.
"Tat Tvam Asi" — Thou Art That.

Om Shanti Shanti Shantiḥ
May all beings be blessed with wisdom, peace, and spiritual awakening.
Yogi Brahmanand is the director of Nikhil Vatika Spiritual Research Centre and the spiritual advisor of Center for Dharma Practice.

Chalkboard

Dharma *and Education*

GRATITUDE: A LIVING PHILOSOPHY

By Charlene Sinanan-Hansraj



Charlene Sinanan-Hansraj
Educator

As a child, one of the first courtesies I was taught was the expression, "Thank you." This simple gesture of gratitude was reinforced at home and at school. When forgotten, at least one parent was guaranteed to instruct me to say it. However, the older I became, the more I learned that gratitude is much more dynamic than a mere emotion or a common courtesy. I did not formally study the philosophies of gratitude. Instead, it was my life experiences that revealed many of the truths penned by the great philosophers.

The philosophies on gratitude span more than 2,500 years, from ancient civilizations to the present day. Every age, every culture, and every great thinker has approached it from similar yet different perspectives.

For Aristotle, gratitude is a virtue that cultivates good character. The Stoics, such as Lucius Annaeus Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, view gratitude as acceptance of life's circumstances and appreciation of what we have while responding with generosity. Confucius links gratitude to respect and honouring family and community. In Christianity, gratitude is a response to God's grace that inspires service and generosity toward others.

My earliest lessons in gratitude did not come from books but from my grandmother. She was a woman of modest means, yet she gave generously to family, neighbours, strangers, and anyone in need who crossed her path. I recall my childhood visits to my grandparents' home, where, every time before I left, my grandmother would call me aside and quietly place money in my hand—as she did with many. Her practice continued even after I started to earn my own money. She gave what she could with a big heart and a gracious smile.

At the time, I never questioned my grandmother's intent, if she had any at all. I was simply overjoyed and grateful to receive the gift. Looking back, I realize that her generosity did not arise from abundance. I believe it flowed from her unwavering gratitude to God for "the small mercies," like food on the table, good health, and the blessings of her children. Her acts of giving were the "gold and diamonds" that added value to her life.

My grandmother's actions taught me to receive with an open mind and give with an open heart. The Stoics would have understood this well. Seneca wrote extensively about giving and receiving benefits, arguing that gratitude is not measured by the value of the gift but by the spirit in which it is given and received. A grateful person does not calculate the value of the gift or its repayment. Instead, gratitude creates a cycle of goodwill by encouraging further acts of kindness. In this sense, my grandmother was practising a Stoic principle without knowing it. Her kindness and generosity were an expression of a grateful heart.

Today, I see many of those same qualities reflected in my mother. Like her own mother, she gives quietly, serves without seeking recognition, and measures wealth by the ability to help another person rather than by possessions. My understanding of gratitude further deepened when I witnessed their strength, courage, and determination during times of hardship, loss, and pain—the kind of strength I pray for. They understood that hardship and sacrifice are not punishments but stepping stones to build character—another philosophy grounded in Stoicism.

As I reflect on my own life thus far, I realize that it has been kinder to me than it has been to many others. I have much to be grateful for. I like to believe that I walk in the light of the goodness and greatness of my forefathers. Although I have faced challenges in both my personal and professional life, I know they are only a small measure of what others have endured. Life may or may not bring more difficult seasons, but if they do come, I shall acknowledge the teachings of the great philosophers. However, it is the example of the gracious women before me and my faith in Jesus Christ that will ultimately sustain me. Through Christ, I shall embrace every challenge as an opportunity to meet whatever comes my way with courage, grace, and gratitude.

Spirituality & Art

THE QUIET APPLAUSE

By Dr. Nisha Luthra







As a theatre director, I have always believed that theatre is a reflection of life. Through every production, I strive to bring forth a narrative that leaves not only the audience, but also the actors, musicians, and everyone involved in the creative process, a little more hopeful and a little more joyous about life.

Nisha Luthra

That is what we attempted to do with our latest production. It explored the idea of revolution—not in its violent or political form, but as an awakening of consciousness. A revolution of thought, compassion, and self-awareness.

Art, in its truest form, provokes reflection. It invites us to pause, question, and connect with something larger than ourselves. It breaks the monotony of everyday life and places us in a space where we become participants in social commentary and agents of social change.

One of the most fulfilling outcomes of this production has been witnessing the transformation of our young actors. The poetry they once wrote about love, loss, death, and the universe has gradually evolved into verses about nation-building, unity, hope, justice, humility, and the responsibility of creating a better tomorrow.

I believe that when a simple story performed on stage awakens even the smallest sense of patriotism, empathy, or courage, it gently shifts something within us. We leave the theatre carrying a different perspective from the one we arrived with. For a brief moment, we are liberated from our roles, responsibilities, age, gender, and lineage. We simply become human.

Isn't that the true responsibility of art—to move us so deeply that it continues to speak to us long after the curtain falls, leaving us transformed forever?

I remain immensely grateful that the performing arts have become my medium to express ideas that have the power to inspire reflection, ignite hope, and contribute, however modestly, to meaningful change.

"The theatre is a spiritual and social X-ray of its time."

And perhaps gratitude is the quiet applause we offer life for allowing us to create, to serve, and to transform through art.

THE PSYCH SERIES

LICENSED CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST

By Amina Mahmood, PhD NYS (Licensed Psychologist)

The Psychology of Gratitude



Amina Mahmood

"Wear gratitude like a cloak, and it will feed every corner of your life."-Rumi

These words, written seven to eight hundred years ago, are backed by research-based psychological evidence today. The field of positive psychology has recognized the connection between gratitude and appreciation and overall happiness. Additionally, the growing body of literature in psychology and neuroscience also points towards better mental and physical health for those who "wear gratitude like a cloak."

Expressing gratitude and appreciation, or genuinely being grateful and appreciative, can improve our mental health and well-being by decreasing anxiety and depression, increasing our overall emotional resilience, and making us feel increasingly content and satisfied with our lives. Expressing gratitude and feeling grateful allows us to step away from the hamster wheel of social media that constantly drives us towards comparison with others and an emphasis on what we lack. Feeling gratitude and appreciation allows us to notice and take ownership of what our capabilities are, trains us to view our cup as half full (or perhaps spilling over), and thus allows us to build emotional strength that protects us from an unexpected or unwelcome occurrence (think: emotional resilience that helps us navigate difficult moments/situations that we encounter).

When our emotional and mental health fares well, so does our overall physical health. Stronger mental and physical health results in reduced stress levels and better sleep—both foster stronger immunity in our physical bodies and guide us emotionally towards contentment, fulfilment, and happiness.

Human survival instincts may have trained our brains to highlight threats to our safety, which, in our modern existence, translates into hyper-focusing on or magnifying negative and anxious thoughts. However, our brain is highly susceptible to learning throughout our lifespan, and thus practising gratitude at any stage of life will result in positive mental and physical health benefits.

To put gratitude into practice, consider:
Starting a gratitude journal—choose whether you wish to write a detailed entry or just highlight 2–3 things you are grateful for today.

Incorporate gratitude into your daily prayer or meditation practice: similar to the journal, incorporate a phrase, statement, or a few things that you are grateful for.
With your family, start a gratitude conversation: at the end of the day, share with one another one thing that you are grateful for or appreciated today.

Challenges to consider:
Write a thank-you letter to someone who impacted you positively; either deliver or mail it to them.

Engage in a "gratitude loop": when someone shares something good that has happened in their life, respond to them with the excitement they are exuding and ask genuine follow-up questions to immerse yourself in their happy/excited feelings.

[Note: This helps with our own health and well-being, but it also strengthens another area that being grateful positively impacts: our relationships!]

Pathfinders

SWAMI SIVANANDA
(1887- 1963)



Swami Sivananda

Sri Swami Sivananda was initially drawn to medicine, writing extensively on health and rehabilitation as an allopathic doctor. But destiny called, and he renounced his illustrious career to delve into spirituality, settling in Rishikesh, where he underwent austerities, emerging as one of the most significant figures in spiritual philosophy. In 1932, Swami Sivananda established the Sivanandashram, which eventually gave birth to The Divine Life Society, an organization that continues to disseminate the teachings of the ages to seekers worldwide.

Swami Sivananda is the author of several books, including the acclaimed "What Comes of the Soul After Death."

Here a some of his famous sayings:

- Past and future are dreams. The present moment is the only reality.
- He who is contented and calm is happy.
- Love is the healing stream of life.
- Difficulties come to test you and thereby to help you by strengthening your will, patience, and power of endurance.
- That which separates you from God is mind.
- Take everything as it comes, instead of complaining.

- Just as gold is purified by passing it through the crucible several times, so also the heart must become pure, and the faith must become unflinching, through passing through the crucible of trials again and again.
- Mind is nothing but a collection of impressions. It is a bundle of habits.
- Spiritual life and devotion to God are essential for preventing a feeling of frustration in life.
- Silence the surging thoughts and the bubbling emotions. Forget the body. Forget the world. Enter into the great calm.

Bat Kol
Teachings by Carlos

Intuitively conveyed by Guru Konchok (Glenville Ashby)

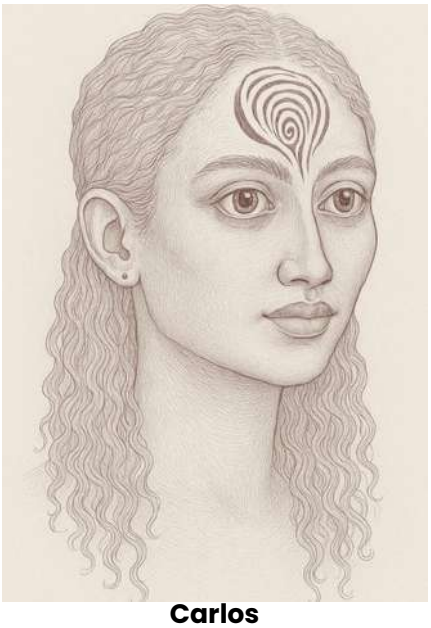
TAKEN FROM THE UPCOMING CONVERSATIONS IN SPIRIT BY GURU KONCHOK.

Gratitude

In the same spirit that we are advised (by the wise) to love everyone, including our enemy, we must be thankful not only for the good that befalls us, but also for the most unpleasant of things. How many of us are thankful for the good and bad in our lives?



Gratitude-Love



Carlos
An artistic impression of Carlos

How many of us, upon rising, are thankful for life, for the air we breathe, for the sun, the rain, and nature? When it rains cats and dogs, we spew words of frustration, selfishly upset that our plans are upended, never considering that the vegetation and animals that fend for themselves stand to benefit.

In some cultures, annual thanksgiving gatherings are a time to mark the abundance gained and the good things experienced. And although prayers are recited, the event is marked by festivities. There is also the unmistakable sense that God has bestowed blessings upon the hosts. That in itself suggests being favoured among others and could arguably be considered a form of spiritual pride.

Although we can grow spiritually from abundance (through charitable deeds—especially when anonymous), it is in hardship that we gain enlightenment. Not unlike the biblical Job, we grow in patience, steadfastness, faith, and detachment—all attributes of the enlightened mind. Hardship is the greatest of teachers. Why not be thankful?

Thus, we are called upon to show gratitude equally for every circumstance—good and bad.

SADHANA: THE TIMELESS PRACTICE

by Konchok Rinchen Tobgyal (Glenville Ashby)

Taken from Glenville Ashby's Finding Mother Expanded Version with Commentary by Yogi Brahmanand.

Even a simpleton becomes an eloquent orator.
A poor and miserable man becomes an emperor, forever moving around fearlessly. Such is the result of even one letter of your mantra falling in one's ears. Who among the mortals, O Mother, can ever comprehend the immense rewards that a properly done sadhana of you can bring?
— Devi Aparadha Kshamapana Stotram



Konchok Rinchen Tobgyal (Glenville Ashby)

It was Patanjali (2nd century BCE) who dictated a series of prescriptions for enlightenment. One prescription he called tapas, the Sanskrit word for heat. In practical terms, it means renunciation. Regarding Patanjali's counsel, I am most moved by tapas. There is a purifying element here. Fire cleanses in a caustic, punishing way. Such are the demands of spirituality. We must strive to renounce habits that work against our spiritual growth.

Enlightenment cannot be bought, neither is it attainable through a single course of study. With dismay, we read of programs that promise to activate the chakras (energy centers), programs that tout the wonderment of opening the Third Eye. It is never that straightforward. The experience of the sadhaka (aspirant) is sometimes determined by karma and a host of other variables. We bristle at hardship. Few among us can perform tapas in earnest. A Job-like quality is called for. But like Job, a favoured denouement is assured.

Self-abnegation, the essence of any sadhana, is a Herculean challenge. There are no shortcuts. Renunciation engenders discipline of mind and body. Renunciation is the fuel for every mirific feat. We are asked to adopt new eating patterns, engage in daily and protracted study and meditation. On the issue of diet, sattvic foods are advised. Many have asked the reason for this, to which I oftentimes quote Swami Satyananda Saraswati: "For one who is serious about yoga and spiritual aspirations, diet is as important as yoga, but if you are only worried about your diet and are not practicing yoga, then you are a fanatic."

Brahmacharya (celibacy) during our sadhana might be necessary, and so is giving alms and other forms of charity. For the sadhak, this can be daunting.

Sadhana can be taxing. The sadhak might be required to meditate during the wee hours of the morning, between 3 a.m. and 5:30 a.m. This window is called Brahma Muhurta and is most favoured by mystics. Before any sadhana is undertaken, there must be a preparatory phase.

Self-reflection is key. We must know with certitude why we are embarking on this path. We must be certain that we can honour our sankalpa (intention). That means that our physical surroundings are accommodating, that we have the privacy needed, and that we have the time to devote to our practice.
Pratyahara, or the withdrawal from external stimuli, is important. Sometimes, we are drawn to all that is occurring around us, affording little time for introspection and little time to listen to the inner voice. The draw of politics, idle chatter, and entertainment robs us of the most precious of our resources. The answers to all enquiry and concern are within, if only we listen.
It was the 9th-century writer Al-Jahiz who said, "If speech were silver, silence would be of gold."

Indeed, silence is golden. No greater truth has been spoken.
The sadhak should be mindful of the following guidelines before performing a sadhana:

- Avoid mantras seen on the web.
- Receive mantras from a competent guru.
- Be faithful to the practice.
- Perform the daily practice at a set time.
- Keep the attention on the Goddess throughout the duration of the sadhana.
- Keep the company of like minds.
- Read literature on the Mahavidyas, in particular, the goddess to whom the sadhana is dedicated.
- Mentally recite the given mantra throughout the day.
- Avoid distracting conversations.
- Avoid gossip and confrontational language and behaviours.
- Do not chase siddhis or fey abilities.

Be resolute in our practice, and all good things shall be added unto us. This is the overarching power of our sadhana. We must look within.

Saint Thirumular said this so eloquently: "A person was running and running in search of the Light. He spent his whole life doing that. Ultimately, he collapsed and died because he couldn't reach it."

Swami Satchidananda adds to this discourse. He notes, "All the art is inside. Why run after museums and gardens when they are inside us?"
These quotes can be likened to the biblical dictum, "The Kingdom of God is within you."

Literary Corner

All things dharma





River Rose is a long-standing member of the Center for Dharma Practice.
River Olivia Rose: Love, Peace & Chicken Grease

VENUE: Gilded Balloon Teviot (Nook)
DATES: 17th, 18th & 19th August
TIME: 17th, 16:40 (1 hr)
18th, 19:20 (1 hr) & 19th, 20:40 (1 hr)

A Survivor, A Maverick, A Storyteller
River Olivia Rose steps onto the comedy stage with a life story that most people wouldn't believe, let alone dare to tell into a microphone. Love, Peace & Chicken Grease takes the raw material of survival – adoption, the army, sex work, pole dancing, motherhood, activism, and burnout – and alchemises it into sharp, soulful stand-up.

A natural storyteller with a globe-spanning past, River brings the unfiltered honesty of someone who's seen the underbelly of British life up close, then decided to laugh at it anyway. From sleeping rough in Rotherham after leaving the army at 17, to being a working girl & high-end pole dancer in London and beyond, she has lived the stories other creatives only imagine.

From Activism To The Mic
Before comedy, River spent years on the frontline of racial and environmental justice and women's rights – leadership roles that came with real risk, sacrifice, and, ultimately, silencing. Love, Peace & Chicken Grease channels that history into a fierce, funny reckoning with power, shame, and who gets to tell their story.

Onstage, River moves effortlessly from pole rooms and late-night clubs to protests and community organising, exposing the hypocrisies of politics and the ways women – especially Black and mixed-heritage women – are policed in most spaces they enter. Her comedy is political without preaching, grounded in lived experience rather than slogans.

Dark Times, Bright Jokes
River has an almost disarming ability to find humour in the darkest corners of her past – from navigating life as the only Black child in a string of mostly white schools and communities. Her set spills the tea on men, sex, class, and survival with the ease of someone who's told these stories in dressing rooms and kitchen corners for years before ever stepping onto a stage.

Whether she's talking about clients who underestimated her or clubs she played like a drum, River's material is brutally honest but never self-pitying. She invites the audience to laugh with her, not at her, turning stigma into punchlines and trauma into connection.

A Voice Years In The Making
Having only been on the stand-up circuit for just over a year, River's rapid progression reflects a performer who has already lived several lifetimes' worth of material. She has appeared at events including Hastings Comedy Festival 2026 with her headline show Love, Peace & Chicken Grease, where she showcased her ability to move a room from shock to belly laughter in a single story.

Alongside comedy, River is an actor, playwright, and poet, currently developing her memoir, Memoirs of a Survivor, which, like her stand-up, spans continents, communities, and subcultures. Her creative work is rooted in the belief that telling the truth – especially the uncomfortable, unflattering, un-airbrushed truth – is both radical and healing.

Why River, Why Now
In an era obsessed with glossy "glow-up" narratives, River offers something messier, more dangerous, and far more real: a woman who has been the taboo, the warning, the stereotype – and decided to write her own script. Love, Peace & Chicken Grease is a rallying cry for anyone who has ever been written off, talked over, or told their past disqualifies them from joy.

River Olivia Rose is a diverse writer and performer: stand-up comedian, actor, playwright, and poet.

She turned to stand-up comedy as a form of therapeutic relief and creative rebellion, crafting Love, Peace & Chicken Grease as a vehicle for her stories of survival, sexuality, motherhood, and activism.

Her work has been featured via platforms such as The Outcasts Creative, Hastings Comedy Festival & now Edinburgh Fringe. She's just unstoppable, known as a true force for good.

RIVER OLIVIA ROSE
Instagram: @thisriverflowsfree

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Konchok Rinchen Tobgyal (Glenville Ashby)
Spiritual Director



The Spoken Word

THANK YOU

By Primawattee Teeluck Dharry



I am alive
Walking among the living
Like a ghost
No one sees me
Or hears me
I move silently
Among many
Alone
but
Stillness
Becomes understanding
and
Gratitude
Illuminates
Freedom

End-of-life Reflections

CONTENT WITHIN DISCONTENTMENT

By Anna Ellis



Anna Ellis

Gratitude has the capacity to be an enlightening yet abysmal topic, especially in the arena of change and loss. This month's focus will be more in respect to bereavement and grief. Whether it is the loss of something near and dear to us or something that identifies us as who we believe we are, the challenge is to find a way to make meaning out of the experience. Through making meaning, we have the capacity to achieve a higher level of appreciation and thankfulness.

Change is imminent. What will be, will always be. We cannot expect this life to stay the same. And why should we? If everything were the same at all times, how would we begin to navigate our lessons in this life?

One of the most challenging times is the loss of another living being we hold near and dear to our hearts. It is only natural to grieve the loss and feel great sadness. What we must try to focus on is the time we had with them while they were still in this natural life. This is much more than the cliché suggestion of 'remembering the good times.' When another living being touches our lives so deeply, they were often present during all sorts of events. In and of itself, what a wonderful gift. Knowing the Universe assigned these paths to cross and help one another. Experiencing a great loss not only expands our journey in this life, but it also lays the foundation for us to make meaning out of it and help others. This, in turn, allows us to realize our ambitions of gratitude.

Below are some suggestions for questions to ask oneself during times of grief and loss. It is natural not to necessarily have answers to any or all of the questions, as well as to realize that the answers shift over time.

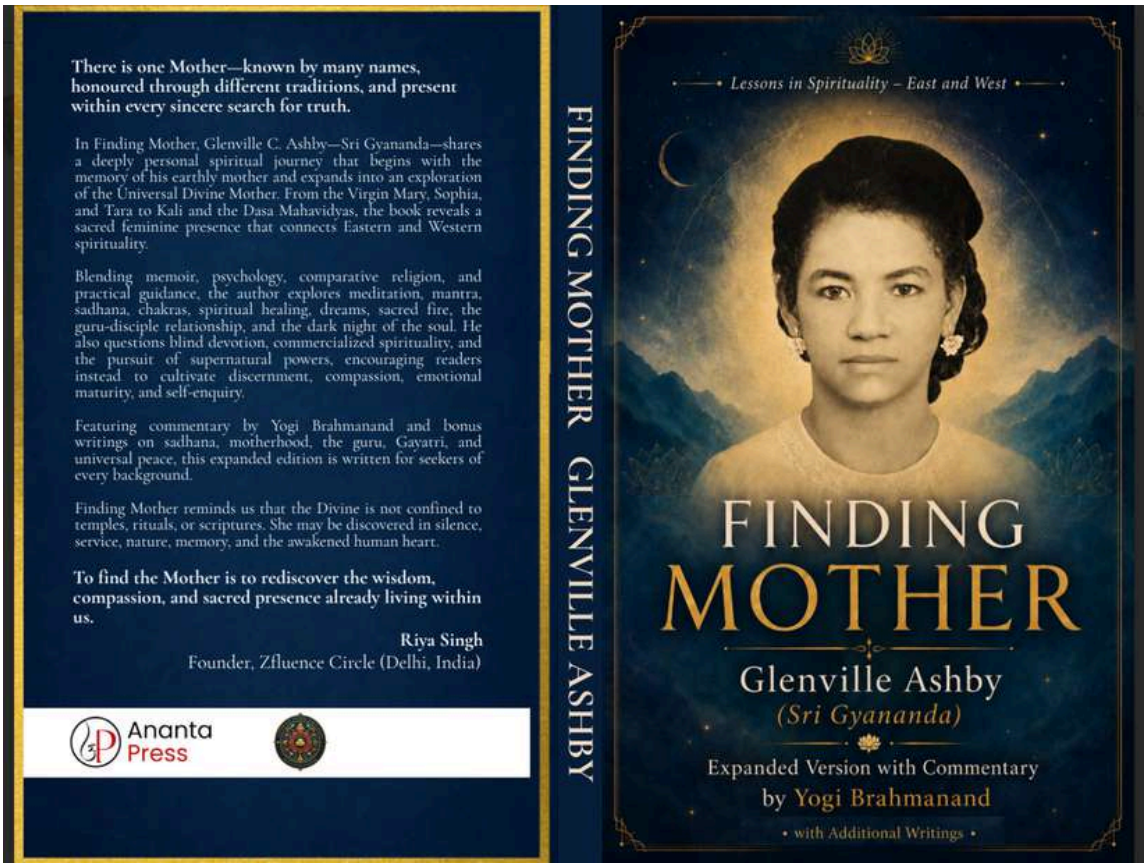
- How am I allowing myself to feel my feelings?
- Who was I before this loss, and who am I now?
- When reflecting upon my grief, are there moments of calm?
- What helps me regulate my emotions and reflection? (You do not need to regulate your emotions at all times—grief is a journey and must be experienced on an individual level.)

- Where am I able to reflect and navigate my grief journey in the healthiest, most supportive, and stable way?

As always, I would like to extend my best to everyone reading. May your continued journeys positively impact your health and well-being. And may you experience tranquility as you navigate them.

Announcements

Coming soon: Finding Mother - Expanded Version with Commentary by Yogi Brahmanand.



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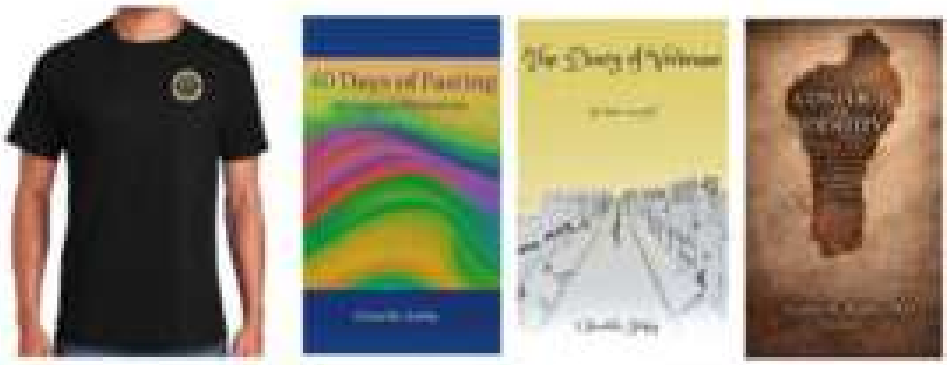

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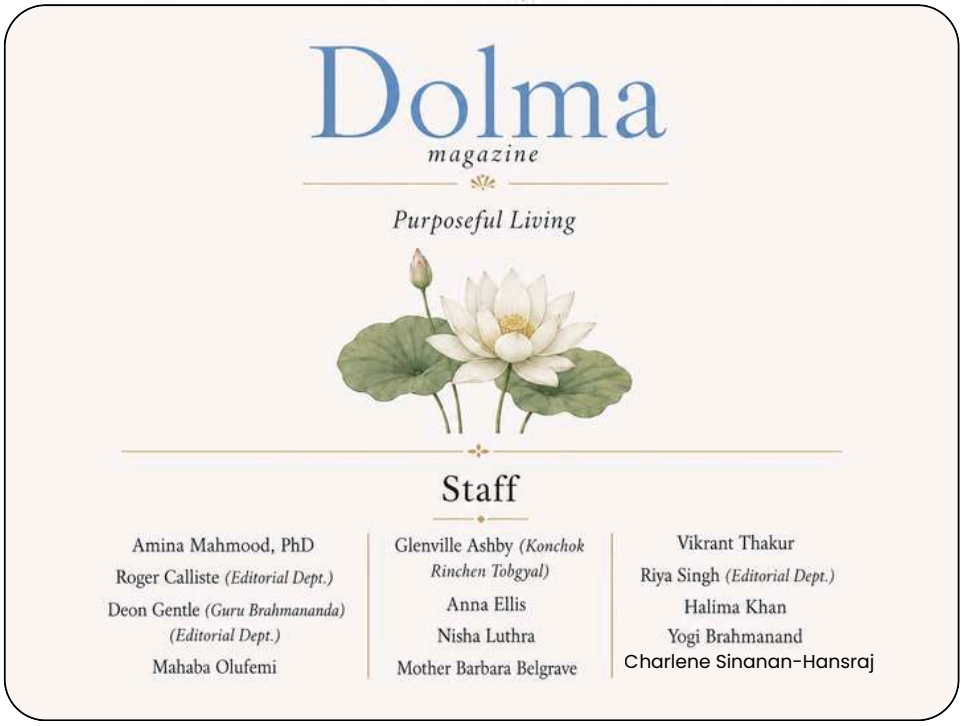

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