



*Gratitude is the fairest blossom which springs from the soul.* – Henry Ward Beecher

Of the many lessons that I have learned on the mat, gratitude is perhaps among the most empowering. Through a mindful yoga practice, we go through a gamut of emotions, including humility, acceptance, and the cultivation of gratitude. Gratitude is the sweetest way to live your yoga; when you are struggling or becoming self-defeating in your practice, gratitude can pull you through. It is the realization that each of us has been given an amazing gift; our bodies, minds, and hearts are unique and amazing, and we can instigate change, as Gandhi hoped, first within ourselves, then in the world.

But how do we light the fire of change, of tapas, in order to make a difference in the world? How can we cultivate selfless gratitude within the garden of our hearts?

One of the chief tenants of yoga is mindfulness. When we take a moment to be mindful of our thoughts, words and actions, when we savor each moment for the moment, when we accept our shortcomings along with our victories, when we consider the feelings of others, we tend the garden of our hearts and souls. Mindfulness fertilizes and feeds gratitude. It is often the smallest seed of gratitude that will grow and blossom in your heart.

When you truly cultivate the garden of gratitude, you will find joy even amongst life's challenges and sufferings. It is easy to be grateful for the magnificent things in life. Growth and change

happen when we can remain grateful through challenges and strife. When we practice gratitude, we learn to be thankful for the tools we have to cope with a difficult situation. If we are cultivating gratitude, then attitude is the hoe. A positive and non-defeating attitude goes a long way.

This Thanksgiving, take a moment to express gratitude for all of the beauty and wonder in your life. Count your blessings, seen and unseen. Be thankful for the small wonders and the huge miracles that surround you. Be grateful for those who love you, and who you love, but also be thankful for the people who serve you invisibly every day. There is a Chinese proverb: *When eating bamboo shoots, remember the man who planted the bamboo.*

Be grateful even for the hard lessons you have learned this year, and use those unpleasant moments to fertilize the soil of your garden of gratitude.

I am full of gratitude for my loving, supportive and patient family, my generous and thoughtful friends, and my diligent, dedicated, and amazing students. I am grateful for the way that this community has received Dancing Dogs Yoga, for the amazing people that have come into my life this year and for the opportunity to roll out my mat, and experience the miracle of the human body as I move through my practice. I am thankful for the hurdles that I have overcome, for the mistakes that I have learned from (and for those that I am still learning from). I am thankful for the miracle of the world that lies outside of my door, for the beauty that surrounds me, and the life that awaits.

Namaste. Happy Thanksgiving.

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