

## **Learning To Be The Light** **An Attitude of Gratitude**

I have heard that "we are the sun, and not the clouds". This reminds me of the story of the optimist who is digging through the pile of dung trying to find a pony. In that case, we are the pony and not the dung. Ajahan Brahm tells the story of building a wall with one crooked brick, and focusing on that one mistake at the expense of all the rest done properly. That seems to be the problem, getting wrapped up in the cloudy smelly stuff of life, and forgetting to enjoy the goodness.

You may say "but life is very cloudy and smelly"! True, there are still many wars going on, political abuses, an ecological crisis, and many other serious problems we must face, but if we focus mainly on the bad, it is all too easy to miss out on the good. That's the point here. How can we focus on the good so as to keep a good attitude to deal with and improve life without getting dragged down by difficulties? For me, it is the big picture. This may work for you too, so here goes.

I start with the universe. Have you considered how awesome the universe is? All of the stars, planets, moons, comets, asteroids, solar systems, and galaxies exploding from one spot smaller than the period at the end of this sentence. Whether you believe it was from natural or divine beginnings it is no less amazing. There is a video called "Earth compared to the rest of the universe" you may enjoy that puts into perspective just how microscopic our planet and problems really are. "Nature by numbers" is another favorite that does the math to show us just how intelligent and amazing life and creation is.

Yet after a few billion years of that incredible scenario expanding and unfolding, something infinitely more amazing happened; life. Something magnificently diverse, tenacious, abundant, intelligent, and beautiful came to fill the landscape, even changing the whole dynamic of the surface of our planet and most likely many others. Scientists number types of plants (flora) at 600,000 and types of animals (fauna) at over one million. I am somewhat of a "nature boy" so find raw nature absolutely awesome and inspiring. Michelangelo said "My soul can find no staircase to Heaven unless it be through earth's loveliness." I couldn't agree more.

Imagine the great flocks of birds in the skies, schools of fish in rivers, herds of wildebeests across the plains of Africa, and packs of wolves playing in the forests. The story of life through-out the ages is certainly amazing, emotional, and dramatic. Thinking on that for a few minutes should bring a smile to your face and some passion to your soul.

Consider now the also wonderful and beautiful story that is humanity as play of human events has been just as amazing, emotional, and dramatic. We have developed the sciences of astronomy, geology, oceanography, psychology, biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, reasoning, and philosophy as well as the fine arts, liberal arts, visual arts, decorative arts, applied arts, design crafts, performing arts, to an incredible degree. On a more personal level, consider how the many weddings, graduations, births, championship games, celebrations, and other events we have seen or attended have affected us so deeply. It unfortunately has also been a story of great misery, suffering, and pain in wars, famines, and other tragedies. But let's set that aside for now, and tap into the helping, healing, and beneficent side of the story.

There is one more superb example of the excellence of life; you! If you do the math by the age of twenty seven and a half we have lived 10,000 days, fifty five years is 20,000 days, and eighty two years is nearly 30,000, many of them etched into eternity by their deep and profound experiences.. So that mean eighty two birthdays, but also 328 season changes, over 400 major holidays, 4,260 weekends, and 90,000 meals and countless drinks of water, juice, soda, wine, beer, and other beverages. This also means we have taken 4-500 million breathes, and had approximately 2.5 billion heartbeats. Wow!

Our bodies are also a great wonder. First thing every morning I open two gifts; my eyes! There all around me is a kaleidoscope of colors, forms, and textures to be enjoyed. My eyes are like jewels that the light of the world shines through, and just as precious, as I would give all I have for this gift if it was lost. Wouldn't you? My ears hear the birds singing outside, the rain falling, laughter, the words of loved ones, and glorious music of millions of instruments and songs. I can smell roses and coffee, meals cooking, and incense in the air. The taste of good food makes my eyes close in sublime pleasure, and fruits, veggies, and juices are savored as well. My mouth takes in air as lungs swell with the life giving force, then expires in whistles, words, sounds, and song.

My teeth and tongue do an amazing job of starting digestion that goes on within me so efficiently to give my legs the energy to walk, run, swim, and dance. My arms and hands can hold another, make a work of art, or play a game of cards. On the outside my skin holds it all together yet flexes perfectly to allow complex movements. On the inside all the organs are working in concert to keep things humming along wonderfully for a lifetime. Topping it off, our minds are able to process countless thoughts, ideas, and concepts each day. At the center of it all, our hearts are the home of rich, full, and deep feelings and emotions. What a blessing we carry around with us every day!

Think now for a moment of all of the wonderful relationships, vacations, learning, trips, meals, books, movies, videos, games, music, possessions, pets, homes, friends, and love you have had or seen. There are many delightful events like weddings, graduations, births, and parties we get too enjoy. Then there are the simple things like a long hot shower, a good night's rest, a glorious colorful sunset, or intimate conversation. The fine arts are another area of great satisfaction and enjoyment in paintings, music, performances, dancing, and much much, more.

Congratulations! You just had your first guided meditation in the preciousness and wonder of life, from the big picture of all creation and life, down to the intimate but often seemingly infinite life that you have had. YOU are awesome, amazing, and wonderful. A microcosm in essence containing all of the wonder and beauty of the macrocosm that is life and the universe. You may not think so, probably because you spend much time thinking about what you don't have and haven't done rather than all the wonderful things you have done and *are*.

This is the light on the inside. Creation, life, and all the good things people have done are the light on the outside and just as important. All of this light can serve to shine through the clouds of dysfunction and unhappiness to bring us back to the well being that is our birthright and perfectly natural despite our thoughts otherwise, the BIG, beautiful picture of which you are an important part, and the sun as well as the clouds.

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