Gratitude is great! We should have more of it! It is the best attitude! It should be a habit! It warms our hearts and sends smiles for miles! Gratitude is the natural radiation of a noble soul! Only elevated spirits can feel its beauty.

To quote the Buddha: “Every day, be grateful if you learn something new. If you do not learn anything new, be grateful you are well and healthy! If you are sick, at least be grateful you are not dead!” Good advice! Things could always be worse, so be grateful for small favours!

In Sanskrit there is a curious play of words: Yogi, Rogi, Drogi! (In English this list extends to “Old Fogi”!) Of course we all know (don’t we?) what a Yogi is! A Rogi is one who is sick! A Drogi is someone who is ungrateful! It is the worst insult that you can hurl in Sanskrit to call someone a “Drogi” – an ingrate. When the Yaksha (celestial being) asks Yudhisthira, the eldest of the Pandava princes, what is the worst sin in the world (Prasana Parva, Mahabharata) Yudhisthira replies without hesitation: Ingratitude!

Yet how rare is the quality of gratitude. It is a high state of mind, experienced only by noble souls! Only a creature who has cultivated Manas or consciousness can experience gratitude. The reptilian brain – dominated creature and those still primarily locked in their mammalian complex cannot experience true gratitude! I recall an incident from Dr. Doolittle, a delightful story about a doctor who could understand the language of animals. The good doctor saves the life of a rat through CPR, but a day later, when reminded by him about the necessity of having a sense of gratitude, the rat gives the classic reply: “Man! That’s history!” Well, so many rats are running the rat race in modern times and they are firmly entrenched in that same mentality! Many dogs are there who bite the hand that feeds them. Recently I read a news item about a large pet tortoise that bit the lips of his owner who tried to kiss him – it would not release his hold and the poor owner had to have the tortoise surgically removed in a hospital! So much for reptilian and mammalian behavior!

Shallow minds are superficial, stuck in the senses – perception is all above the skin – superficial (super-above/ ficial skin). So, they exist in a state of “out of sight, out of mind” mentalities. Such souls can never feel gratitude – an elevated feeling which realizes it “owes a debt”. Senses are happy only when stimulated. When stimulation ceases, satisfaction turns to hatred. Such minds are cunning like a fox and hide behind verbal screens like: “You have done so much for me! I
can never repay you!” So they never do! Other instances of such shallow mentalities are men (or women) who profusely thank the door man who holds open the door of the five –star restaurant or the waiter who serves him (her) a cup of coffee but would never think to say “thank you” to his wife (her husband) who would have cooked, cleaned and kept house for him (supported her financially) for decades! Perverted gratitude! Lip service for show alone! Show girls and show boys! Ingrates – Drogs – all!

Many an experience I have had with beggars, who were legion in Pondicherry until an anti-beggar drive in the city drove them to migrate to greener pastures a decade ago. I had a weakness for these pitiable creatures. One old crone was my favourite and I never failed to drop a Rs 5 coin/note in her palms, when I saw her on my daily trips to town. One day, slightly off mood, in a hurry with no change in my purse, I said, “Not today! Tomorrow!” How angry she became! Drawing herself to her full height, she glared at me and spat out in a derogatory tone. “Po!” This Tamil word virtually means “Get lost, you skunk!” I had denied her, her daily dose of coins and all the yesterdays were “Man! That’s history!”

Gratitude is truly the best attitude! But it takes an evolved man / woman to feel it. Gratitude is a type of Iswara Pranidhana, accepting what the Lord gives with a happy heart. Like Job in the Bible, the heart softened and sweetened with gratitude chants silently when facing loss or gain, “The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord!

Grateful for happiness

Grateful for sorrow!

Grateful for pain!

Grateful for pleasure!

Grateful for gain!

Grateful for loss!

Grateful for the gift of a human body with the possibility of an awakened consciousness capable of feeling grateful!

Gratitude opens the door to higher realms of existence: that golden kingdom where Sat! Chit! Anandam Dwell! Over the door of that golden gate surely must be this sign:

ENTER HERE ONLY YE WHO ARE CAPABLE OF GRATITUDE.