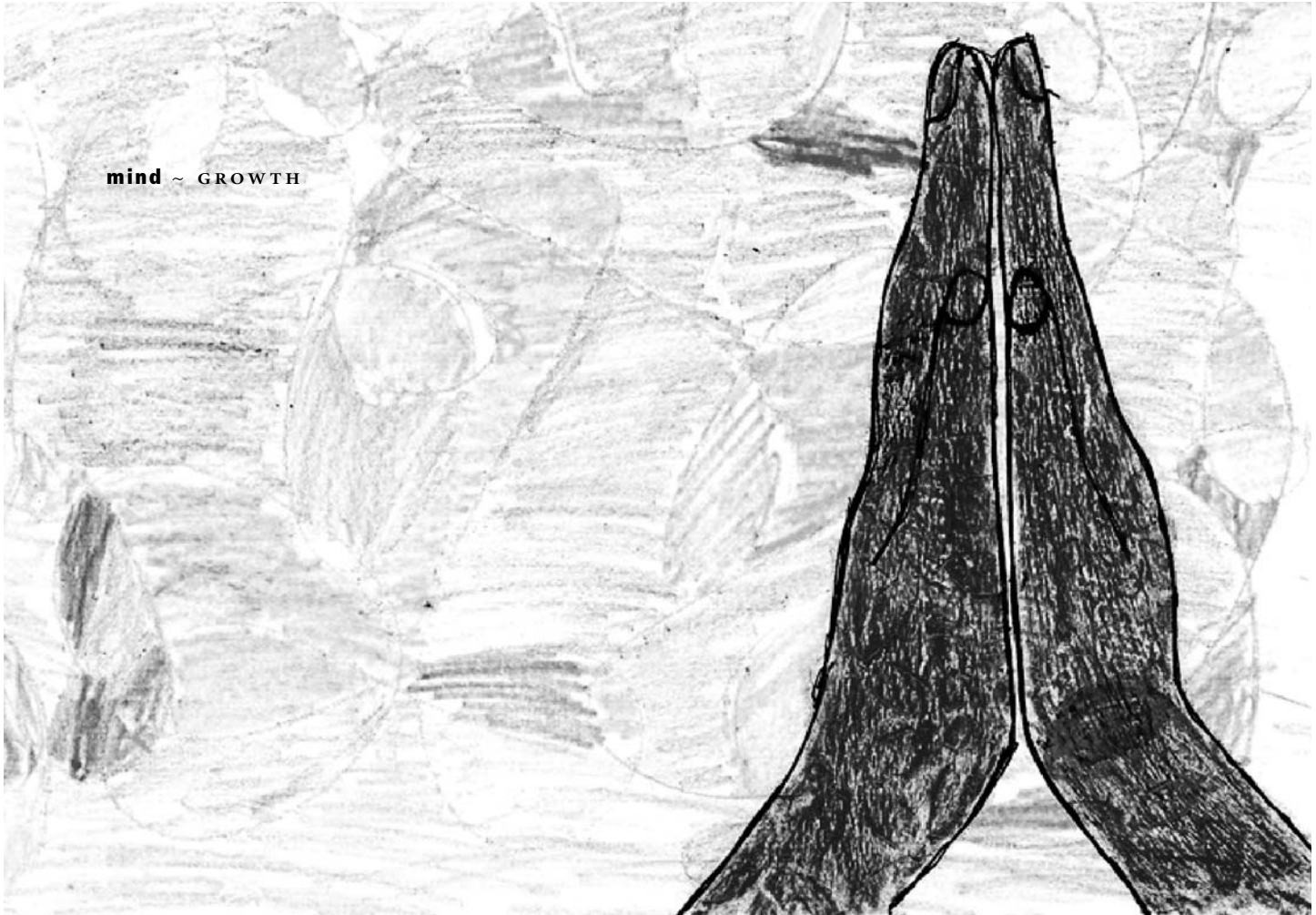


mind ~ GROWTH



Drawing by Aditya Deshingkar; Age 10

PATH TO THE DIVINE PRESENCE

AS YOU ACKNOWLEDGE, EXPRESS APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE EVERY DAY FOR EVERY

HUMAN THROUGH WHOM THE DIVINE IS MANIFEST IN YOUR LIFE, YOU FEEL ALIVE

by **Jasmine Bharathan**

Acknowledgment comes in many forms: a thank you note, a hug, even a slip of paper from the post office. But I am fascinated by that form of acknowledgment that provides recognition of the 'other' as a human worthy of respect, and having a valid point of view even if you are not in agreement of the point made. Acknowledgment is a very basic and universal need, just as our need for food, water and oxygen. It can be seen both as an inner need, and as an expressed val-

idation of another individual.

We see it in the spontaneous behaviour of a toddler who, in spite of being unable to verbalise his feelings clearly, exhibits his hunger for acknowledgment and delights in it when it arrives. A young child appears thrilled when he comes home and proudly displays a star that his teacher has given him. Even in the agony of defeat, a young athlete is deeply touched and inspired when his effort and his courage are acknowledged.

By acknowledging, we validate something that lies beneath the surface in the other person; the effort that has gone into a task, the emotion which has remained invisible and silent. There is recognition of what lies beneath the surface, what lies hidden or what has gone before. By providing acknowledgment I am saying, "I know, I can see, I care." I see this as an outward expression of the bond we share as human beings.

My uncle once attended a talk by a

world-renowned figure. There was a minor interruption, the sound of a door opening, and someone walking in rather timidly. Many heads turned, some perhaps in annoyance. The speaker very calmly acknowledged the late-comer, her perseverance and courage, pointed to a seat towards the front, and continued. My uncle says that he learnt more from that action than from all the rest of the material presented.

Does acknowledgment always require another person? I think we can certainly benefit from giving acknowledgment to our own inner child or other selves within us. It does help us to become aware of our own inner selves; wounded or otherwise. An honest introspection of our own deeper emotions and needs provides us an avenue for the gentle healing or nurturing that we ourselves need.

Allow me to take my fascination in a different direction: one that has led me to a deeply moving realisation and the start of another journey. Remember the story of a man trapped on an island who kept waiting for God to help him?

A man was trapped in his house during a flood. He began praying to God to rescue him. He had a vision in his head of God's hand reaching down from heaven and lifting him to safety. The water started to rise in his house. His neighbour urged him to leave and offered him a ride to safety. The man yelled back, "I am waiting for God to save me." The neighbour drove off in his pick-up truck.

The man continued to pray and hold on to his vision. As the water began rising in his house, he had to climb up to the roof. A boat came by with some people heading for safe ground. They yelled at the man to grab a rope they were ready to throw and take him to safety. He told them that he was waiting for God to save him. They shook their heads and moved on.

The man continued to pray, believing with all his heart that he would be

saved by God. The flood waters continued to rise. A helicopter flew by and a voice came over a loudspeaker offering to lower a ladder and take him off the roof. The man waved the helicopter away, shouting back that he was waiting for God to save him. The helicopter left. The flooding water came over the roof and caught him up and swept him away. He drowned.

When he reached heaven and asked, "God, why did you not save me? I believed in you with all my heart. Why did you let me drown?" God replied, "I sent you a pick-up truck, a boat and a helicopter and you refused all of them. What else could I possibly do for you?"

Yes, this is merely a story; whether true or not, God alone knows!

But think about it the next time you sit at a meal. The food on the plate in front of you did not come crashing through the ceiling directly from heaven. It was made possible through the hard work of hundreds of people right from the time of sowing of the seed to its journey to you. We must acknowledge them all for we owe them a debt of gratitude.

Divine presence is experienced in everyday living. Each and every day, each and every one of us can experience the divine hand working through the human hand. The process is fascinating. You might have made a wish or declared an intention. Then a miraculous process is unleashed. Someone says something that leads to someone doing something that results in a newly created reality for you. Voila! Your thoughts have manifested as reality.

All the divine miracles are manifested through us. All the intention manifestations are experienced through us. All our life's learning is experienced through us. Although many of us do acknowledge and thank the Divine, I wonder how different the world would be if we also expressed our acknowledgment and gratitude to all human channels that participated in the process.

I have learned much about acknowl-

edgment from one of my teachers, Dr Richard McHugh. He doesn't teach acknowledgment. He lives it. It is his being. Just being around him is, for me, an experience of a deep acknowledgment of my own spirit and I am always enveloped with a deep sense of gratitude and love.

Several years back, in a large gathering, I witnessed a guru walking along, acknowledging hundreds of people, walking by each person, patting on the heads of some, nodding, smiling and listening. In the background was the melodious bhajans of Sat Nam. I was so moved by the guru's acknowledgment of every human present there that my being was an experience of immense love; although tears covered my face, I only felt love and joy. The guru suddenly turned and walked several metres up to me and placed his hand on my head, as if he understood what I was experiencing. It felt like a 'forever moment'.

As I acknowledge, express appreciation and gratitude every day for every human through whom the Divine is manifest in my life, I feel alive. I experience magic in my own presence. I experience love all around me. I feel abundant. I experience calm even in difficult situations.

Quoting from an interpretation of Rumi's work, "Gratitude as a spiritual practice only requires that we open ourselves to that sense of appreciation for all that surrounds us and is part of us, to walk on the earth with gratitude in every step, every breath. When we know we are part of this incredible creation, we can know that in the way the world supports us, so can we support the world with our love, compassion and strength."

Allow me to appreciate your presence while you read this article, acknowledging my thoughts! Thank you. ☺

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