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How do we express gratitude?

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The act of thanking someone need not be vociferously evident

The day after Mr Karunanidhi passed away, there was an electrical fault in my house and it needed immediate repair. The city was mostly shut and I was at my wits' end to correct the fault.



I called a very senior electrical contractor, who was preoccupied with some personal work and sought his help. Without hesitation he came and sorted out the problem.

I thanked him profusely and as he was leaving my house I offered to pay for his services. He refused the money I tried to give him and instead said, "I came to help you out not because you were going to pay me for my services, for I truly was touched by the manner you made the request. There was warmth in your voice and humility. I was moved."

I have often thought gratitude must be expressed vociferously, evidently, with telling effect and even through compensating, yet what the gentleman said, helped me realise expressing gratitude need not always be an overt act. It can even be conveyed through tone of voice and humility. What struck me as significant is the intention with which we express thanks. If said with honesty, genuineness, and lack of guile, it will truly be felt by the recipient.

Gratitude can also be expressed for small acts, again if the intent is pure and honest.

An uncle of mine, who ran a large business empire, and I, were waiting to board a train at a suburban station, and as the train was delayed, my uncle wished to rest. The station master of the station, which was all of one platform, noticed my uncle was tired and perhaps also sensed that my uncle was unaccustomed to waiting on a platform.

He came up to us and invited my uncle and me to accompany him to his frugal home just outside the station.

The single room tenement was bare and both he and his wife laid out their only clean sheet, provided my uncle a pillow and brought him fresh coffee.

When we were leaving the station master's home, my uncle offered him some money. Both the station master and his wife touched my uncle's feet, refused the money and said they did only what they would for their father. The station master, as we were departing, conveyed a thought that has helped me truly remember to be thankful. He said "My father once told me, 'Son, I have educated you and taught you the lessons of life I know. All I ask of you is to make my investment in you worthwhile by practising gratitude to life by performing acts with grace with no expectation.'".

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