

# Week 3 - Generosity

## Buddhism Level 2 – Buddhist Ethics

### SECOND PRECEPT

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*Positive form: "With open-handed generosity I purify my body"*

*Negative form: "I undertake the training principle of not taking the not-given"*

*Pali: Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*

#### **Why is generosity the fundamental Buddhist virtue?**

- Trains us in relaxing our tight self-centred orientation – shows us our attachment & limits of generosity
- Undermines poverty mentality
- Reveals our connectedness to others & enables us to experience it.
- We can always practice it (when with others) - practical
- Expresses & deepens empathy
- Creates sense of community and Sangha

We need to train our generosity muscles

#### **Dana paramita (the perfection of generosity)**

A Bodhisattva ("ideal Buddhist") is said to practice dana paramita – perfection of generosity – in which gift, giver and receiver are all seen through as not ultimately separate. Wisdom perspective – seems very lofty. In this sense, dana represents the culmination of the path as well as a practice.

### NOT TAKING THE NOT-GIVEN (ADINADANA)

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*If we are to be really honest with ourselves, we may well find that our basic impulse a lot of the time is to take rather than give, or to keep rather than give away.*

*– Abbaya, Living the Skillful Life*

The double-negative suggests a more subtle, broad principle than simply not stealing. Make sure that what you take really is given to you willingly.

Examples of ways in which we might take the not-given	
Fare evasion, tax fiddling, being "forgetful" with benefits claims, erring rather too high with insurance claims, making personal phone calls from work (if not allowed), being over-generous with company expenses & claims, being late with bill or loan payments	Money
Shoplifting, permanently "borrowing" library books, friends' CDs etc, taking stationery from work, copying copyright material (eg music)	Objects
Not doing share of household chores, being a "psychic vampire", manipulating people to help you, withholding self & being half-hearted in communication	Energy

## GENEROSITY – DANA

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*Giving is the natural, unforced interchange of one's energy with that of others. In this sense real giving is receiving - Sangharaksita*

*We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give - Sir Winston Churchill*

*Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can - John Wesley*

Examples of ways of practising generosity		
Money	Increasing value →	Charitable gifts.
Objects		Small tokens of thanks (cards etc), spontaneous gifts
Energy		Putting self out for people; occasional visits to lonely relatives; giving of oneself in communication
Knowledge		Not withholding knowledge to maintain advantage; willingly sharing experience
Fearlessness		Encouraging words, give appreciation, being "a rock" for someone
Life & Limb		Putting self in physical danger to help another
Dharma		Being realistic with people; having meaningful conversations where possible; not being afraid to talk Dharma where there's interest.

### What prevents us giving?

Fear of rejection? A sense of own "poverty" (real or imagined) – feel we don't have the resources of money, time, energy, knowledge, positivity etc. Self-protectiveness.

### DANA RELATIONSHIP AT CB CENTRE

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Maybe now it makes some sense of why we have the so-called "dana relationship" – why we stop charging for most regular classes once people are in a certain relationship to CBC. We don't want to operate in reciprocal relationship – just want to give the Dharma. But the Centre needs to be given to in order to be able to do so. So part of job of the Centre is to communicate its needs.

The danger in being asked for help – especially monetary – is that you don't feel free to refuse, maybe we're used to being manipulated through guilt. If there's true asking, then there can be true, clean giving or not giving.

### HOME PRACTICE

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In class you thought of specific ways to practise the precept, by picking something small & do-able, maybe even with specific people or in specific situations.

Each morning and evening, remind yourself of your intention to be prepared to respond with generosity, or avoid taking the not-given, in the situations you've decided. Try to connect with that intention. Then try to do it!

### FURTHER READING

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*Mindfulness and Money*, Kulananda & Houlder, Broadway Books, ch 5

*Dana*, Selected Essays from Theravadin perspective (I haven't read them)

<http://accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/various/wheel367.html>