



Nalandabodhi Connecticut

Paramita of the Month Newsletter



"The suffering of guarding all we have,
The pain of losing it all."
-Shantideva

Welcome to the 2005 incarnation of the paramita of the month newsletter from Nalandabodhi Connecticut. In an attempt to allow us to offer more diverse content this newsletter is now being sent in HTML format via Ezine Director.

Each month we will strive to bring you thoughts and comments on one of the 6 paramitas. The six paramitas refer to the six perfections strived for in Buddhist practice: generosity, discipline, patience, effort, meditation, and wisdom.

With the new year we restart the paramita cycle with the paramita of generosity. Of the practice of generosity the Ven. Khenpo Kharthar Rinpoche comments in his book Dharma Paths:

"If we cannot begin to let go of our involvement in mundane existence, to at least some extent, it will be quite difficult to undertake any spiritual journey at all."

As for the actual practice of generosity Ven. Khenpo Kharthar Rinpoche suggests:

"There are two external objects towards which we should practice generosity. First, we should make offerings to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha..... In addition we should help beings in great need, whenever we encounter them. Giving to those in need and making offerings to the enlightened sources of refuge are both essential practices of generosity."

Given the recent events in India and Southeast Asia we are all presented with an opportunity to practice generosity to those in great need. As just one way of supporting these people in their time of tragedy I might suggest the possibility of donating to the relief efforts of the CARE organization at <http://www.careusa.org> I recommend this particular organization since 92% of the funds you donate are used to directly benefit the people in need. Only 8% are used for administrative purposes.

The perfection of the practice of generosity has three aspects, referred to as the "three-fold purity" by the Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche in Heart of Daring:

"The determining factor in whether our paramita practice is genuine or not is *right view*, which comes from our intention. In order to have right view we need an understanding of three-fold purity..... the right view of paramita practice is that it be practiced with the understanding ofshunyata. If you can invoke just a glimpse, just an idea of shunyata, or emptiness, and then practice generosity, your practice becomes pure..... It works with the egoless nature of the self..... the selfless nature of the object..... it works with the act of giving as well. This three-fold purity is extremely important in terms of making these practices transcendental practice."

Here it is stressed that if we are attached to the act of generosity or the thing given that our practice will become one of fostering attachment and this can lead to further suffering. If our practice is to be pure we should try to recognize the emptiness of it and so break our attachments and our "involvement in mundane existence" mentioned by Ven. Khenpo Kharthar Rinpoche.

Below are some further references and teachings on the practice of generosity. My best wishes to you all for a happy, healthy, and peaceful new year.

Kevin Hartmann
-on behalf of the Nalandabodhi Connecticut Sangha

My this activity be of benefit to all beings. May all be free from suffering. May all bring peace.

Additional References:

From the [American Buddhist Congress](http://www.americanbuddhistcongress.org)
(<http://www.americanbuddhistcongress.org>)

The Six Principles of Enlightened Living

The Six Paramitas occupy a prominent place in the Mahayana scriptures as a Buddhist's way of life leading to Buddhahood. They are:

- 1. Generosity** (Liberality)
- 2. Conduct** (Morality)
- 3. Patience** (Forbearance)
- 4. Energy** (Diligence, Industrious, Hard Work)
- 5. Meditation**
- 6. Wisdom**

This list of six is a shortened version of the ten qualities for which enlightened beings strive in their every day living. Since they are concerned about the welfare of all beings and strive to end their suffering and unjust treatment, they (1) give alms to all beings so that they may be happy, without investigating whether they are worthy or not.....

From [The Practice of Generosity](#)
Gil Fronsdal
Tricycle

The Practice of Generosity

There are two ways of understanding generosity. One is a spontaneous and natural expression of an open mind and open heart. When we are connected wholeheartedly with others and the world, it is not a matter of deciding to give; giving simply flows out of us. This type of generosity is, for example, the generosity of a mother with her children. The second way of understanding generosity is as a practice itself, which we can undertake even though it may not automatically be flowing out of us.

As a practice, generosity is not done simply because we think it is a virtuous thing to do. The practice has two important functions. First, it helps connect us with others and with ourselves. Giving creates a relationship between the giver and the receiver, so acts of generosity help us to learn more about the nature of our relationships. It also develops those relationships. Practicing generosity together with a meditation practice helps ensure that our spiritual practice doesn't occur aloof from others.

Second, through the practice of generosity we begin to understand where we are closed, where we are holding back, where we feel our fear. We learn what keeps us from being generous. We take on the practice to see where we resist it.

Maitreya's Comments on the Practice of Generosity from [The Lotus Sutra](#):

First *Maitreya* describes the Bodhisattva perfection of **generosity** (Dana Paramita). The perfection of generosity described in this verse is limited to the offering of material things and the offering of oneself. It does not explicitly describe the Bodhisattva's offering of fearlessness (which relieves suffering) or the offering of spiritual enlightenment (the Dharma). These will be described later:

"For some there is the practice of giving.
Gold, silver & carnelian,
Pearls & Cintamani gems,
Mother-of-pearl, agate & diamonds,
And other rare treasures,
Male and female servants,
Bejeweled chariots and palanquins,
All joyfully given away.
Turning them all over to the path of enlightenment,
They vow to attain this vehicle
Praised by the Buddhas,
Supreme in the threefold realm.
There are some Bodhisattvas
Offering bejeweled carriages drawn by four-horse teams
Adorned with railings and covered with blossoms.
And I have seen Bodhisattvas
Giving away their lives,
Their flesh, their hands and feet,
Their wives and children,
Seeking the supreme path.
And I have seen Bodhisattvas
Gladly wishing to give their eyes, their heads,
Their bodies and their lives,
Seeking the wisdom of the Buddhas."

An article entitled [Generosity: A Buddhist Perspective](#) by Topga Yulgyal Rinpoche can be found at this site:
<http://www.diamondway-buddhism.org/teachings/english/bt4topga.htm>