



Nalandabodhi Connecticut
Paramita of the Month Newsletter



"If a person be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows they are a citizen of the world, and that their heart is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent that joins to them."

-Francis Bacon, *Essays, Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature, 1625*

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This month we begin a new series of paramita newsletters that are based upon a series of teachings on The Six Perfections by Tai Situpa Rinpoche. In these teachings Tai Situpa Rinpoche explains that the perfection of generosity was the first to be taught by the Buddha because it is one of the easiest to understand and because everyone is capable of practicing it.

Tai Situpa Rinpoche describes the practice of generosity as having three aspects: giving of things, giving of protection, and giving the Dharma. The motivation that we have when we give any of these is very important. If we give gifts with the intention of harming others or the intention that giving will bring us fame and recognition then this is improper motivation. To whom we give is important as well. If we feed the desires of a gluttonous or greedy individual then our giving is not appropriately intentioned. How we make our gift is also significant. It is improper if we give angrily, reluctantly, disrespectfully, or scornfully. Such feelings can negatively impact our future practice of generosity.

Proper generosity is to give whatever we can manage joyfully, respectfully, and with a compassionate heart. We give to those in need, particularly to those who represent the Three Jewels and to those who have helped us such as our parents. We should also give to those who are particular enemies or rivals. Even when we give to our enemies we should give free of any sense of remorse. Tai Situpa Rinpoche states that it is best to give material gifts ourselves and not through others. We should try to make our gifts at just the right time and do so in a way that does not bring harm to any beings. Impartial giving is best, and we should only give just what is needed to avoid encouraging attachment or greed.

Other than giving material things and wealth, we can also make a practice of giving protection to those in fear, those who are sick, and those who may be dying. In the practice of the perfection of generosity we should take our meditation practices aimed at engendering compassion into our post meditation practice. When we see beings who are in pain, who are suffering from fear, who are ill, or who may be dying we should do what we can to offer that person some respite from the challenges that they are facing. We should actively care for them, visit with them, and offer them whatever help and shelter that we can. In this way the practice of the perfection of generosity can mature and develop our compassion.

The greatest generosity we can extend to others is to give the gift of the Dharma. When we encounter individuals who show an interest in the Dharma we should do what we can to help them learn and understand the true Dharma. With a pure motivation, humbly and with compassion, we should share the authentic teachings that we ourselves understand and that were taught to us by a proper teacher. We should avoid mixing personal opinion with classical teachings and should never blend the teaching of Dharma with mundane conversation. Dharma should be shared in a pleasant way and in a proper place with appropriate respect. The practice of generosity with respect to the Dharma has great merit as it causes the teachings of the Buddha to live on in future times.

As stated by Francis Bacon, through our practice of generosity we come to see that we are not islands isolated unto ourselves but that we are deeply connected to all beings. Realizing this we enhance our ability to be of benefit to them and lessen our propensity to cause harm.

May all beings benefit.

The information presented in this newsletter is based upon a teachings by Tai Situpa Rinpoche presented in the book "Way to Go." This text is out of print but excerpts related to The Six Perfections can be downloaded at the [Samye Ling](#) website.