

In the Spirit of Generosity: DANA

Since the time of the Buddha, communities throughout Asia have provided the basic necessities of food, clothing, shelter, and medicines for persons wishing to pursue prolonged periods of meditation and spiritual inquiry. Those who have chosen this life have primarily lived in monasteries. The local villagers would offer these daily requisites and in return receive teachings and instructions from the monks and nuns.

In the West, the Buddhist monastic tradition is not well established. Many of the teachers who give the teachings and meditation instruction have chosen to remain within lay life. As lay people they have all the bills and responsibilities that everyone else has. However, in order to keep costs low and retreats and classes affordable to all, the lay teachers do not charge for their services or ask for a “suggested donation.”

The charge for this event, like all events in this tradition, covers only the actual expenses of the organizational costs. No one will be denied the opportunity of attending an event for financial reasons. Since no fee is charged for the teachings, the cost can be kept to a minimum.

Teachers offer their guidance and experience in the spirit of generosity. The teachings (called the Dharma) are considered priceless. The teachers are dependent on voluntary donations for their livelihood. They freely offer their time, energy, understanding and experience. In addition they spend time helping to run the organization that supports these events. The teachers also assist organizing other classes, daylongs and workshops, teach residential and nonresidential retreats, answer mail, meet with individuals for counseling and personal guidance, consult with people on the phone, and offer guidance to sitting groups. All of this is done without payment.

However, unless they receive financial support (one form of *dana*, or generosity) which provides them with the requisites of food, clothing, shelter and health care, the teachers cannot continue to offer these services. The continuation of the teachings is dependent upon your generosity. Rodney's primary source of income is the *dana* he receives from you. Thus, financial support from those coming to classes and retreats and those receiving individual guidance, is essential to allow the teachers to cover their bills, provide for their families, and continue to practice and teach the Dharma.

Undertaking an event such as this with commitment and genuine interest in spiritual inquiry is another expression of *dana*. You are offering your sincerity and risking change. Ultimately we undertake this training not solely for ourselves but for all living beings. We give back even as we receive.

May your efforts be for the welfare of all beings.