

The Perfections – Generosity

Reflections and Practices

The following reflections and practices are offered as ways to continue your exploration of the Perfection of Generosity. Both the reflections and the practices can be enriched by discussing them with friends, fellow practitioners, strangers, and if you have chosen to have one, with your Dharma Practice Day buddy.

A useful way of engaging with the reflections is to spend a few days with each one, perhaps rereading the reflection to see what new perspectives repeated readings provide. It can be nice to devote some quiet time to focus on these reflections, perhaps while going for a walk or drinking tea.

Suggested reading: the two articles on generosity in the Issue at Hand, also found on the Dharma Practice Day page on IMC's website (URL below).

Reflections:

1. Our attitudes toward generosity are often conditioned by how generosity was viewed and practiced in the family and culture we grew up in. Spend some time considering how you may have been influenced by this conditioning. What are the formative influences that shaped your relationship to generosity. If you can, talk with someone from your family of origin to help you understand how your family related to generosity. You might also talk to someone with a similar cultural background as you to explore your culture's attitude toward generosity.
2. What beliefs do you have that interfere with being motivated to be generous and what beliefs interfere with acting on your impulses to be generous? Spend some time considering the validity and usefulness of these beliefs. What are appropriate ways to overcome the limitations these beliefs place on you?
3. Spend an extended period of time considering the ways that it benefits you to be generous to someone else. As you reflect on this and discuss this topic with others, write down a list of the ways you benefit.
4. Reflect on your attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about being the recipient of someone's generosity. Spend some time thinking about how you can be a generous recipient.

Practices:

1. During this month find four occasions where you can bring food (e.g. a nice snack) to share with people who would not expect you to bring food (for example, not a potluck). Notice what effect your gift has on these people. Also notice how it affects you to have done this.
2. During the month find four occasions where you can give something anonymously to a person you have some direct contact with. Be mindful of what you are feeling and thinking as you are considering doing this act, while you are doing it, and after it is done.
3. During this month look for an opportunity where you want to do something generous that feels like a challenge or a stretch for you to do. Act on your wish and explore what you feel and think before, during, and after doing it.

Handouts and Readings for each month of the Dharma Practice Day series is found at

www.insightmeditationcenter.org/books-articles/articles/theparamis/