



## ***Understanding Dana – the Buddhist Practice of Generosity***

Just as students depend on teachers, teachers depend on students.

The teachings of the Buddha have been sustained by the 2,500-year-old tradition of *dana*, a Pali word meaning “generosity.” It is one of the central and first practices the Buddha taught. In the Buddhist tradition as it is practiced here in the west, students (in retreats and sanghas) are invited to make a donation to the teachers, managers, and/or sangha at the retreat’s end, or ongoing, as a way to express their heart’s gratitude and to support the teachings in continuing. For many this is quite unfamiliar, as we are so entrained to pay a “set fee for services.” In contrast, *dana* is a practice of mutual generosity and of “paying it forward.” We as teachers offer our time and teachings freely as a gift, as they have been offered to us by our teachers. You are invited to offer generosity in appreciation of the teachings. This ongoing stream of *dana* allows the teachings to continue moving forward.

*Dana* is a *practice* – of the body and heart. You are invited to feel into the value of your experience of receiving the teachings in whatever form they are offered (on retreat, in a weekly dharma talk, in a small group or individual practice consultation, or as a community to come home to) and to make a contribution in support of teachers’ and sanghas’ ongoing service to the Dharma. There is no set fee. Rather this is an inquiry into what feels generous given your experience, your values, and your resources. You are invited to begin to understand and *experience* generosity. You are asked to be active, engaged and embodied in the practice of *dana* – sometimes one gives and it feels like too little, sometimes too much, sometimes “just right.” It is a practice of balancing being compassionate to others and your self. It is a practice of interconnectedness. It is a practice of love.

I welcome your generosity in whatever form and amount it takes. Thank you for your practice.

Warmly,  
Jean

***“If beings knew, as I know, the result of giving and sharing, they would not eat without having given...”***

*-words of the Buddha from the Itivuttake, Pali Canon*