



Dear Friend,

Dana means giving or generosity in Sanskrit. In Buddhism, it also implies the cultivation of generosity. The virtue of generosity has been a part of the Buddhist canon since the earliest days of the Buddha's teaching. The Diamond Sutra describes the Buddha offering the teaching after he had returned from begging in town.

One day before dawn the Buddha clothed himself, and along with his disciples took up his alms bowl and entered the city to beg for food door to door, as was his custom.

Buddha then teaches Subhuti that the foundation of an understanding of emptiness begins with practice of generosity.

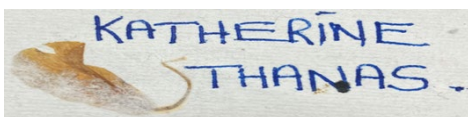
Furthermore Subhuti, in the practice of compassion and charity a disciple should be detached. That is to say, he should practice compassion and charity without regard to appearances, without regard to form, without regard to sound, smell, taste, touch, or any quality of any kind. Subhuti, this is how a disciple should practice compassion and charity. Why? Because practicing compassion and charity, without attachment is the way to reaching the Highest Perfect Wisdom, it is the way of becoming a living Buddha.

In our tradition of Zen Buddhism, there is the practice of Takuhatsu.

Takuhatsu is the spiritual activity of Zen Buddhist monks to receive charitable offerings for support of the temple. It is the tradition of Zen monks to go on rounds, holding their eating bowls to receive offerings. The person who gives, places the offering in the bowl and the monk acknowledges this by chanting a verse that acknowledges gratitude, as the giver and the receiver are one. They then bow to one another in mutual gratitude and respect. Both parties are recipients, together they are the teaching. (Eido Frances Carney)

In Japan, no words need to be spoken. The presumption of need exists within the culture and the virtue of generosity is its own reward.

I am inviting you to consider becoming a contributing member. This is a financial pledge of regular support for Monterey Bay Zen Center.



*This is the main body with excerpts from a letter composed by Katherine for the MBZC sangha in the early 2000s.*

*The signature and leaf are from a personal gift card created by Katherine and presented to a sangha member.*