



## DĀNA OR SKILL OF CHARITABLE ALTRUISTICALLY

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### ABSTRACT:

*In Buddhism as Nibbāna is the final goal, the subject of Nibbāna is indeed very profound in the Ultimate sense of the term. But Nibbāna is not the one which is unattainable or unrealizable. It is, of course, within the reach of every man. Apparently, Nibbāna, in a proper sense, is not easily comprehensible even for a Buddhist from both the theoretical and practical aspect. As it is the final aim, all Buddhist aspire to reach it.*



**KEYWORDS:** *Apparently, Nibbāna, theoretical and practical aspect.*

### INTRODUCTION :

No man ever could fulfill the eternal thirst or craving of his senses until and unless the craving is wiped out of his mind. Man may work as hard as a slave until his last breath is taken but still his desire or craving will continue to take root in him, even though he is too old to make use of his faculties. The infallible method to quench his craving as taught by the Buddha is to calm down one's senses instead of gratifying them. There are four ways of practice in Buddhism for overcoming craving. They are:

1. To give alms or charity (Dāna)
2. To keep to morality or to restrain one's body and verbal actions (Sīla)
3. To concentrate on any one of the forty objects (Samatha) and
4. To meditate on the actual nature of one's own mind and body (Vipassanā).

These can quench your cravings. The more you practice these four principles the more you can reduce or decrease your thirst. For instance, by giving alms or charity, greed (Lobha) in your mind can be dispelled.

**What is Dāna?:** Dana is a very common Pāli word in Buddhism. Though the word "Dāna" is known to all Buddhists, yet it is very hard to understand it in the actual sense of the term and to perform it accordingly. Dāna simply means performing acts of charity with a good-will or pure volition. It may also be in the form of service of teaching or instruction, etc.

It is not like an ordinary gift or present or give-and-take as prevailing among common people. It is a meritorious deed of forsaking one's property or material with a true faith in action (Kamma) and it results (Kammavipāka) for the welfare of others or recipients. The donor at the same time acquires merit as wholesomeness; delight rejoicing, gladness and happiness in his mind. Truly enough, Dana indeed is a principle of the noble man's virtue.

Dāna is fundamental practice of Buddhism as it is the first factor of the ten kinds of Meritorious Deeds (Pubbakirivavatthu) as well as the ten perfections (Pāramī). All the Buddhas to be) have attained Buddhahood only by fulfilling this very perfection, “Dana” from the noble examples of how He Himself had sacrificed for aeons of lives by forsaking so much material or wealth, organs of body and even His life.

**Definitions of Dāna:** Dana means offertory which in the sense of Pāli is “Dānaṃ deti, or Dātabbanti Dānaṃ”, alms are given or should be given; in other words, wholesome or pure volition in the sense of Pāṭi “Dīyati iminīti Dānaṃ”, alms giving only through pure volition, and also non-greed in the sense of Pāṭi “Alobha”, ungreediness. Therefore alms-giving (Dāna) actually means the pure or wholesome volition by which the ten kinds of offertories are given with a foregoing right knowledge intended the welfare of others. Here the foregoing right knowledge means a right view or understanding of the action and its results which is actually bound to exist by nature according to the law of cause and effect. There are different connotations of the word “Dāna”. They are:

1. Dāna is so-called “Vata” as it is to be observed and practiced ;
2. Dāna is so-called “Brahmacariya” as it is a stem of practice of the noble persons prescribed by wise ;
3. Dāna is so-called “Sīla” as it is the release and protection for beings from dangers.

**Characteristics of Dāna:** Dana actually means good wish or pure volition in honouring or offering one’s materials to others for the welfare of recipients. In other words, it means abstinence from destroying, killing, stealing and looting another’s life as well as property.

The characteristic (Lakkhana) of Dāna is the forsaking of materials; its function (Rasa) is delight in the destruction of greed for one’s property. It is manifested (Paccupaṭṭhāna) as detachment from the materials given or having its fruits as one’s wealth or property. Its proximate cause (Padaṭṭāna) is the forsaking of materials or offertories gifts.

**Components of dāna:** There are four component parts of the accomplishment of a charity (Dāna), namely, (1).donor; (2).recipient; (3) offerings and (4) .generous volition. If one part of them is absent Dāna is impossible. When these four components are complete, it is said Dāna has been perfected. Of them, the donor and his generous volition are the first and foremost factors. As soon as the generous volition appears in the donor’s mind, he has to keep it until the charity is given in actually. And then the donor should take delight in doing charity in three periods of time, before the act of charity is performed (pubba), while the charity is being enacted (muñca) and after the act of charity has been accomplished (Apara).

He also should be intent only on gaining supreme wisdom or enlightenment (bodhi), without desiring or craving for any worldly happiness or pleasure, or aiming at anything, to have but just the matter of sincere giving. Such an objective alone can release him from the round of sufferings (saṃsāra).

As for the recipient, he should be either one who has already done away with greed, anger and ignorance, or else one who is earnestly trying to eliminate them. In other words, the more the recipient’s morality, concentration and wisdom, the more the benefits accrue to the donor.

With reference to this, the Buddha explained to king Passenadikosala that charity should be given to one to whom the donor is devoted. Moreover, the fruits of Dāna can be fully attained only when it is given to one who has already eradicated hindrances (Nīvarana) and also has morality, concentration, wisdom, deliverance and visioned knowledge of deliverance.

But when the moral standard of the recipient is low, one cannot attain much benefit though valuable offertories have been given as a charity (Dāna).

**Qualification of a Recipient:** Charity given in fear or for fame, favour or flattery, promotion or vanity, etc. is not genuine charity in the true sense of the term in Buddhism. Genuine charity means no distinction of class, creed, race, faith or religion, colour or ideology, but is made to all needy or morally

higher persons. In other words, it is true charity that is offered in the spirit of pure love, compassion and service to all living beings.

Charity should also be given to societies or organizations which carry out activities for the common welfare of the people, such as hospital, dispensaries, free schools, libraries, aged homes, etc. beneficial to the general public. However, the Buddhists who understand Dāna in the proper sense would choose the morally purer ones, because the Teaching of the Buddha indicates that the more pure the recipient, the more beneficial will be the results that accrue to the donor. In fact, the donor should endeavour to cultivate his mind and aim at gaining of any one of Bodhi (Enlightenment), bearing in the three kinds of Volition occurring in the three lengths of time. Thus it confers upon the giver the double blessing of rejecting immoral thoughts of greed or selfishness, while developing pure thoughts or non-greed (Alobha). There are 14 kinds of individual recipients to whom charity should be given. They are:

1. The Buddha;
2. The Individual or Private Buddha;
3. One who has attained the Fruition of an Arahanta;
4. One who has arrived at the Path of an Arahanta;
5. One who has attained the Fruition of the Non-returner;
6. One who has arrived at the Path of a Non-returner;
7. One who has attained the Fruition of a Once-returner;
8. One who has arrived at the path of Once-returner;
9. One who has attained the Fruition of the Stream-winner;
10. One who has arrived at the Path of Stream-winner;
11. A hermit or recluse who believes in Kamma formation and has attained ecstasy and higher knowledge (jhānasamāpatti);
12. A moral layman;
13. An immoral lay man and
14. An animal.

**The resultant effects of Dāna:** We Buddhists know that Dāna originates first and foremost in intention or volition (cetanā) and hence to perform a genuine Dāna is not so easy for an ordinary Buddhist.

However, in giving a Dāna, the donor must have true faith or confidence (saddhā) in the inherent qualities of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha and also a belief in Kamma and its effects as:

“The action of Dāna done with one’s own intention or volition will, according to the nature of the cause-and-effect order, follow oneself somehow or other wherever one goes; this is called belief in action (kamma). And this very volition will invariably bring forth good result as a reaction; this also is the belief in the result of the action (kammavipāka).

A prudent Buddhist thus understanding and believing in both action and its effects is accustomed to performing a Dāna rejoicing in it and aspiring to the attainment of Nibbāna.

### CONCLUSION:

All human beings can improve their life with this method.

Dana out of compassion

Dana with a heart full of mettā

Dana for the happiness of both!

1. Dāna out of compassion = seeing a thirsty or hungry being, you give water or food because you can feel how he or she suffers.
2. Dāna with a heart full of mettā = you look at this being with the eyes of a mother who looks at her child full of loving-kindness with no other desire than the child’s welfare.
3. Dāna for the happiness of both = When you see the beneficiary’s face after eating or drinking, you can feel his happiness to the same extent.

With this “recipe”, you will surely gain the full benefit of your Dāna for the future as well as immediate happiness for yourself and the recipient. It is really worth offering something, even a glass of water mindfully in the above way. The joy is incomparable. Try and see for yourself.

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