



How Generosity Blossoms Into Meditation, by Sharon Salzberg

The cultivation of generosity is the beginning of the path. [...] The path begins there because of the joy that arises from a generous heart. Pure, unhindered delight flows freely when we practice generosity. We experience joy in forming the intention to give, in the act of giving, and in recollecting the fact that we've given.

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If we practice joyful giving, we grow in self-esteem, self-respect and well-being, because we continually test our limits. Our attachments say, "I will give this much and no more," or "I will give this article or object if I am appreciated enough for doing so." In the practice of generosity, we learn to see through our attachments. We see they are transparent, that they have no solidity. They don't need to hold us back, so we can go beyond them.

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Therefore, the practice of generosity is about creating space. We see our limits and we extend them continuously, which creates a deep expansiveness and spaciousness of mind. This happiness, self-respect, and spaciousness is the appropriate ground for meditation practice to flourish. It is the ideal place from which to undertake deep investigation, because with this kind of inner happiness and spaciousness, we have the strength and flexibility to look at everything that arises in our experience.Â

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The aim of giving is twofold. The first is to free our minds from the conditioned forces that bind and limit us. Craving, clinging, and attachment bring confinement and lack of self-esteem. If we're always looking for some person or thing to complete us, we miss the degree to which we are complete in every moment. It's a bit like leaning on a mirage only to find that it can't hold us; there's nothing there. The second purpose is to free others, to extend welfare and happiness to all beings, to lessen the suffering in this world. When our practice of generosity is genuine, we realize inner spaciousness and peace, and we also extend boundless caring to all living beings.Â

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The movement of the heart in practicing generosity mirrors the movement of the heart that inwardly lets go. So the external training of giving deeply influences the internal feeling-tone of the meditation practice, and vice versa. If we cultivate a generous heart, then we can more easily allow things to be the way they are.Â

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--Sharon Salzberg, in *Generosity's Perfection*
[<http://www.buddhistglobalrelief.org/newsletterArticles/2011SummerGenerosityPerfection.html>]

