



Newsletter 2023 nr. 1
Zen Heart Sangha the Netherlands
17 October 2023

Dana

As most of you know, the Paris Sangha, in which I took my first steps on the Zen path, is named after the paramita of “Dana” which is the Sanskrit word for generosity. The word paramita (also Sanskrit) has a double meaning. On the one hand, in this context it means "perfecting", i.e. the practice that seeks to develop an important quality of character. And on the other hand, it means “That which has already crossed over to the other side”. I find that very interesting. Practicing trying to develop a character trait, means that this trait is therefore already fully developed in the practitioner. If you try to become Buddha, that attempt is exactly your innate Buddha nature. If you try to wake up you have awakened.

In our tradition there are six qualities, character traits, that are important to develop: Dana (generosity, ultimately giving yourself), Sila (morality, virtue and discipline), Ksanti (patience, acceptance and perseverance), Virya (effort, strength and care), Dhyana (concentration and contemplation), and Prajna (wisdom and insight). Of course you cannot separate them from each other (they form a coherent whole and also reflect each other), but it is no coincidence that the first one mentioned is Dana Paramita.

The word Dana too, can be translated from Sanskrit in various ways. To donate and donation (both are possible), generosity, but also giving, bestowing (verbs). In the context of donating, it is also associated with the balance between what the recipient needs and what the giver can provide. To donate what the recipient needs, without losing sight of what the giver needs. Giver and receiver are completely one and at the same time each completely unique. That uniqueness is precisely that in which we are indivisibly one.

I was once told that I have a “poverty-mentality” because I don't charge money or quote a price for what I do as a teacher in our Sangha. The person who said that, felt that the Dharma was so precious that as a teacher I should ask a good price for it. I sat with that for quite some time. But my conclusion is that there is no price at all for what I do. The Dharma is precious beyond price, but the Buddha did not ask for money and begged for his food, clothing and everything else he needed. The first Sanghas existed purely on the basis of donations. And that's what I want too, that's how I want to try to live.

It was (and is) essential that there's no quid pro quo. Giving and receiving are unconditional, because giver, receiver and what is given, are truly indivisibly one. So there can't be anything transactional about it. The Buddha gave unconditionally. And I try to do what I do without expecting anything in return, even to the point of not expecting anyone to participate or listen. At the same time, I feel a deep gratitude towards the Buddha, my teacher and her teacher and his teacher and so on. And for my fellow practitioners in Paris and The Hague and for everyone who donates so generously to make it all possible. And even that gratitude is not a quid pro quo on my part for the gifts, nor is it a condition for the donors.

If every form of conditionality, of transaction, disappears, the question cannot be: What is the value of what I do for the other person? What is a “reasonable price” for what I give? There is no other, no price, no "value of what I do". The question that does matter is actually very simple: "What is ac-

tually needed and what is not?" It's *Needs of beings* that should drive us, not *Value of things*.

I need a roof over the head of my beloved and myself and our Sangha. And food and clothing (and health insurance). Just everyday livelihood. And actually also small (and sometimes larger) luxuries. Sometimes a concert, a book, maybe some travel. Essential are a safe place for myself and for the Sangha. Space to practice in place and time and body. If I want less than is necessary for life and well-being, you could call that a poverty mentality. And if I want more than that, there surely is a poverty mentality present (and in a form that is quite predominant in our society).

I do acknowledge that both forms of poverty mentality are present in me. I try to be alert to them. I also know that I want to try to live without conditions and expectations. Dana ultimately leads me to letting go of ownership, and of the Owner, of "ME" and of "MINE," but without losing sight of ordinary human needs and without a semblance of holiness.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, our treasurer writes, on behalf of the board, about the need to increase the donation-suggestions we make. It arose out of the circumstances of high inflation, increasing energy costs, etcetera. The need is real. It is our treasurer's responsibility to draw attention to this. What I want to emphasize here is that the oneness of giver, recipient and what is given, also means that it is an "appropriate" donation. For some that is the suggested amount, for others it can be a bit more, and then again for some, much less or nothing at all. A donation that recognizes the uniqueness of giver and recipient. I try to give what I can and have in terms of experience, attention, presence, Dharma, without holding anything back, but also taking into account what I can handle, physically as well as financially. And if you can donate something (because we also have to pay our mortgage and buy bread, pay the energy bills and the insurance premiums) then please do so, taking into account what you need for yourself. No one can determine that for you. Only you yourself can. And it's always just right.

A message from the Treasurer and the Board

Starting next sesshin in November in Holten, we will increase the amounts for suggested donations by approximately 10%. For the week sesshins this means a suggestion € 500 for full participation (€83 per day). For three day sesshins it will be a donation suggestion of € 150 (€ 50 per day). The previous donation suggestions of € 450 and € 135 euros, have not been adjusted to the changing circumstances since 2017. And as long as we as Sangha could carry out our activities on a cost-covering basis while also maintaining a small buffer for unexpected circumstances, there was no reason to adjust the contributions. But this year it appears that a structural deficit on annual basis will arise as a result of the inflation that has been high for some time. As a result, we may need to start using our reserves this year. In particular, expenditure on accommodation (De Dieken in Holten) and food and drinks during sesshins has increased by approximately 25% compared to 2017. In order to keep the Zen Heart Sangha financially healthy, an adjustment in suggested donations appears to be necessary.

For anyone who makes a general donation periodically or once in a while, we would like you to consider adapting these donations to changing circumstances as well, if possible.

We would like to remind everyone once again of the possibility of making donations 100% deductible in income tax, by recording them as a 'periodic gift' to a Public Benefit Organization (ANBI), which also includes Zen Heart Sangha. If you would like more information about how this works and what the advantages and disadvantages may be, do not hesitate to call the treasurer, Mark Hakstege, on 06 30367440.

Finally, we would like to emphasize once again that this is a contribution suggestion. In the announcement email for sesshins we say: *"The amounts we mention are merely suggestions. Making a donation is completely voluntary. If possible, pay the suggested amount (or a little more), if not, pay less (or not at all). Having little or no money should never be an obstacle to participating. Your*

most important contribution is your participation!"
Thank you very much for your support, in whatever form!

Discover the Zen Heart Sangha Market Share your life!

Looking for a lift to Holten? Need help making your Rakusu? Need a washing machine? Or do you want to go to the movies with some Sangha members? You can find it in the ZHS Marketplace! The ZHS Marketplace is a WhatsApp group where we, as members of the sangha, can request and offer items and services, based on sustainability and connection. The group is an initiative of one of our members and not an official ZHS platform. You will not find announcements from Michel or the board here.

How do you participate? Very easy; Scan the QR code with your phone and you will be taken directly to the WhatsApp group. Start by reading the house rules (in the group information) and you can start posting offers, requests or just browsing.

Note: You can set the group to muted notifications if there is a lot of posting going on. Share your life in the Zen Heart Sangha Marketplace. Gassho, Sjoerd Wiarda.



Announcements

Dharma-Transmission for Bart van Lent

In August next year, Michel Sensei will give Bart -Endless Vow- van Lent full dharma transmission. This will take place during the second week of the sesshin in Holten, which runs from Monday 19 to Sunday 25 August 2024. During the first week of that sesshin (from Monday 12 to Sunday 18 August) Michel Sensei will be in Paris and Bart van Lent, Jeroen Bosch and perhaps also Marieke Dawson will lead the retreat.

Zazenkai October 29 cancelled. Healthy Boundaries Workshop April 6-7, 2024

We intended the Zazenkai of Sunday, October 29, for a Healthy Boundaries workshop. The plan was to invite Roshi Amy Hollowell from the Wild Flower Sangha Paris, to facilitate this workshop. That will actually happen, but on a different date and in a different way. The workshop has been moved to the weekend of Saturday 6 - Sunday 7 April 2024 and will now last two days! Amy Roshi will provide guidance and will come to The Hague for this purpose. The Zazenkai of October 29 has been cancelled.

Restarting the Study Group

The Thursday evening Study Group will start again on Thursday, January 11, 2024. This time we will address the question: "How do we deal with the unrest in the world (like climate change, wars and conflicts, the refugee crises, etc.) and the unrest within ourselves, through our practice?" We will look at this and share our experiences in the form of the Sangha Circle practice and ground ourselves in the Three Tenets of the Zen Peacemakers:

- Not knowing (letting go of your ideas about yourself and the world)
- Bearing witness (experiencing and affirming the suffering and joy in the world)
- Loving response (letting a response arise from not knowing and bearing witness).

Schedule

November

Sesshin (6-day): Monday 6 - Sunday 12 November. Location: De Dieken, Holten

December

Sesshin (6-day): Monday 11 - Sunday 17 December. Location: Zendo The Hague

Winter break

December 22, 2023 to January 7, 2024

The full schedule for 2024 can be found at <https://www.zenheart.nl/Eng/?Events>

Colophon

The Zen Heart Sangha News letter is published two or three times a year.

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