

THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

Charity

*Charatha, bhikkave charikam, bahujana hitaya, sukhaya deva
manussanam*

*Go forth, O seekers. Tyaga (renunciation, letting go) – that which nurtures the souls of
angels and humans being selfless*

Charity comes from the words *chaga, charita, chariya yoga* – all meaning unconditional giving. *Yoga Achara* (the conduct of yoga) is *chariya yoga*. The Vedic rishis (enlightened sages) only talked about *chariya* – *chaga, tyaga* – burning possessions to be selfless, giving off everything as a way of *sanyasa vairagya* (renunciation and dispassion).

Charity is when given without any expectation, not for any favour. Normally when we get a favour, we give in return – that is not charity, that is a donation. Giving that makes the receiver indebted – that is called *dhana*, and it shows ego. The actual word is *charity*.

Any true giving carries three marks.

It is given.

It is given without expectation.

And once given, it cannot be taken back.

Arjyantu vittam meru, samam runantu, tyagaye vittam.

Earn wealth vast as Mount Meru – the great Himalayan peak – but when you give, give with no hesitation, give it like a strand of grass feeling light in heart, unburdened & unloaded, relieved. Chaga only for soul purpose is wisdom

Sabba daanam, dharma / vidya dhanam jeenathi.

Of all charities, the gift of dharma (truth) or vidya (wisdom) is supreme. This is not academic knowledge – that only inflates ego and teaches us to earn money. True vidya shatters avidya (ignorance) at every moment. Charity that supports an enlightened Guru, or a tradition that teaches this pure dharma, is therefore the greatest charity.

To whom is the charity given? This Himalayan-size wealth we have earned is for the one who is moving selflessly – the one who really serves the world for conservation, not for consumption; who educates these five koshas (the five layers of the self); who protects the divine within us – the god, the allah, the holy spirit in your heart; who liberates it; who purifies this temple, synagogue, mosque, church within; who makes you realise, makes you become like a Jesus, a yogi, selfless.

This is what charity is called – like in a temple, a church, a mosque – giving without expectations and returns of gains other than merit, without mentioning reasons for the charity, to make it unconditional, as to earn merit. Non-refundable.

A charity once given cannot be taken back. Tyaga (renunciation) and yaga (sacred offering) mean to give off – without the blink of an eye you should give off. The moment you start thinking over the merit of your charity, it is no longer charity. It has to be spontaneous. There are many conditions for this.

Charity is for the soul. Everything else is for the ego.

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So where does the charity go?

The meditation hall belongs to the school, which is under the monastery – a temple we can't use for free. Every year, like any big convention hall, we give them charity – alms beyond what is asked – for letting us use that space. Only this allows people like us to meditate there, in the land of purity, though we are not of that land. This needs to be appreciated. They are like gods to us.

Year after year we continue to support their infrastructure – CCTVs, shelters, kitchens – whatever they request. We are doing lots of work throughout the year, and in turn we have the freedom to use the school, and the Lamas arrange anything in service to us. Nothing we keep indebted.

Each year, the monastery entrusts us with more – to do for the monastery, though nothing personal to them. Anything we do for the monastery is of such merit to every donor, as chaga, charity.

Hotels that meet our pramana (the right standard) are also limited. They charge higher than others, with 40% advance six months before, and the balance expected as seva charges (contributions as service).

This is the spirit in which the retreat is offered, and in which your charity is received. 🙏