



buddhist global relief



helping hands newsletter

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Generosity's Perfection



By Sharon Salzberg - The cultivation of generosity is the beginning of the Buddhist path. When the Buddha taught, he always began with generosity. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

As we learn how to give at the most obvious level—giving material objects to others—in that giving, we develop the ability to let go, to let things be as they are. We begin to see that compulsive attachment

really doesn't bring us any happiness, whereas the benefits of being able to give fully with a pure intention are innumerable.

The Buddha talked about many worldly benefits that come from giving. When people are generous, other beings love them quite a lot. Such love occurs without a sense of contrivance or expectation: we don't give so we can become popular. Being loved is not part of the motivation for giving. It's just a law of the universe: as we give, we receive. So there is an openness that beings feel toward us and a great deal of love.

The Buddha taught that a generous person can enter any group without fear. Once again, such courage is without contrivance; it's not thought out or planned. It's just the natural consequence of opening one's heart. A certain brightness grows within us as we learn to give, and people are drawn to us and trust us.

These types of worldly happiness are all types of spiritual happiness as well. There's value in a single act of giving that goes beyond what we would normally conceive. The Buddha said that when we offer someone food, we're not just giving that person something to eat; we're giving far more. We're giving them strength, health, beauty and clarity of mind, even life itself, because none of those things is possible without food. We're offering the stuff of life itself.

That single moment of offering someone food represents a tremendous part of the spiritual path. All four of the qualities known as the *brahma-viharas*, or divine abodes, are found in that single moment. *Love*, or *metta*, is there because we feel goodwill toward the person who is receiving; we feel a sense of oneness with them, and want them to be happy. We feel *compassion* in that moment because we wish that being to be free from pain or suffering. There's that trembling of the heart that responds to a being and wants them to be free of pain. We also experience the third divine abode, *sympathetic joy*. We rejoice in the happiness of someone else rather than feel envy or jealousy. The last divine abode, *equanimity*, is also found in the act of giving because we're willing to let go of an object of craving—to give it away to others.

All four of these qualities are found in that one moment of giving. At that moment, we're abandoning desire and grasping. We're abandoning ill will and aversion. And we're abandoning delusion as well, because when we perform a wholesome or skillful action we understand that what we do in our life—the choices we make, the values we hold—matters.

In an act of giving we're aligning ourselves with certain values. We develop love, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. We let go of grasping, aversion, and delusion in a single act of giving. That's why the Buddha said that if we knew as he did the power of giving, we wouldn't let a single meal pass without sharing something.

To rejoice in our ability to make choices, to cultivate the good, to let go of that which harms us and causes suffering for us will give us the confidence and joy to keep practicing, to do things that are difficult and unfamiliar to us. As we keep rejoicing in generosity, we will keep on purifying.

No one of us can do these things perfectly; it is a practice. We practice generosity with others and with ourselves, over and over again, and its power begins to grow until it flows almost like a waterfall. This is

who we become, this is how we continually are able to touch on and deepen a true and genuine happiness.

Sharon Salzberg is one of the founders of the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, and a well-known meditation teacher and author. She is also a member of the Council of Advisers of Buddhist Global Relief. This essay is excerpted from an article originally published in the March 2005 issue of the Shambhala Sun.

BGR Grant Helping Slum Children in India



Buddhist Global Relief awarded a grant to enable the Bodhicitta Foundation to provide education and counseling for more than 200 slum children, mostly girls, in the Dalit community in Nagpur, India. Formerly known as "untouchables," the Dalits have been subject to extreme discrimination for centuries and most live in desperate poverty. Over the past fifty years, many have embraced Buddhism.

The Bodhicitta Foundation was founded in 2003 by the Australian Buddhist nun, Bhikshuni Yeshe. The Foundation is using BGR's grant for a variety of purposes: to furnish books, pens and other school supplies, school fees, and uniforms; to provide basic food supplies to the families to allow the children to attend school; and to offer the services of a social worker to counsel the girls. The goal is to give these girls and young women the education and skills they need to lift themselves out of poverty.

In a recent update to BGR, Sister Yeshe reported that the Foundation now has 250 children in part-time schools where they can learn English, study methods, meditation, anger management, and arts and crafts. She noted that part of BGR's grant has been used to provide dahl and rice for the poor parents of children who are being sponsored to go to school.

This is very important as poor people tend to only look at "the bottom line" in terms of putting food in their bellies, so if they are desperate, they will take their children out of school to feed the family. This means that the children's future is ruined as they will only ever be able to do menial low wage jobs for the rest of their lives. Feeding the families of poor children ensures the security necessary for them to study well. She added that the Foundation also held a temporary ordination for young girls in the area over the school holidays.



Girls put on nuns robes and took eight precepts. The girls practiced so beautifully and were like ducks to water in the nun's life. Many of the girls said they enjoyed the peace of meditation and going to holy places and parks their parents

could never afford to take them, also the social stimulation of communal life. Sister Yeshe reflected that the experience of offering temporary ordination reawakened her own desire to start a monastery for girls and young women.

There are many orphans and poor girls whose families cannot afford to support them who would be good candidates to become nuns. All their education and physical/spiritual/emotional needs could be met by us and when they are older they can decide if they wish to marry or take lifelong ordination. Ordination is also a chance for girls who wish to live an independent/social worker/ or scholarly life who may not be able to in the confines of an arranged marriage in poor economic conditions which would mean they struggle merely to survive.



BGR is pleased to support the work of Sister Yeshe. We are deeply grateful to our many donors who have made it possible for us to offer support to the Bodhicitta Foundation and to our other wonderful partners around the world who are working to give the poorest of the poor the chance to lead lives of dignity and purpose.

For more information about the Bodhicitta Foundation, please see www.bodhicitta-vihara.com.

New Spring 2011 Projects Funded

We are happy to announce the funding of several new projects this spring. They address varied aspects of the problem of hunger around the world.

Cambodia

A BGR grant to the Cambodian agricultural and health organization, Rachana, provides village-scale training for intensified rice cultivation to rural farmers in five target villages in Takeo province. The project aims to improve the living conditions of rural farming families by building their capacity, increasing the productivity and profitability of their rice production as a means of improving food security and overall living conditions.

Haiti

BGR provided a grant to the What If Foundation to supply over three thousand hot, nutritious meals to hungry children in Port-au-Prince through the local community run food program, Lamanjay, for the last six months of 2011. This continues a project that was started in the first six months of 2011 and has proved highly successful.

Kenya

This BGR grant, in partnership with Ecology Action, supports the training of Kenyan women in the GROW BIOINTENSIVE® certified teacher program. Three women trainers from Kenya will be trained at a GROW BIOINTENSIVE Mini-Farm in Ohio. They will then proceed to train approximately 1,650 women from the Central and Eastern provinces of Kenya in this organic method of ecologically sound farming.

Niger

A BGR grant to Helen Keller International supports a project to improve breastfeeding practices in the Diffa region of Niger. Breastfeeding practices can make a profound difference in the nutritional status and survival of children under two years of age, averting as much as 13 percent of child deaths. The program will instruct new mothers how to undertake such practices most effectively.

Sri Lanka

BGR awarded a grant to Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR) to enhance the education of fifty disadvantaged girls, aged 16-19, to equip them with employable skills and thereby help them move out of poverty.

Vietnam

A BGR grant to the International Cooperation Center of Thai Nguyen University will introduce a new approach of intensified rice cultivation to rural farmers in the Vo Thai district. This approach results in greater productivity yields of 15-25%. It increases farmer income and reduces cultivation density, irrigation, and use of chemical fertilizers.

For more information on these and our other exciting projects, go to the [BGR projects page](#).

Join BGR's Walk to Feed the Hungry



Make plans now to join Buddhist Global Relief for our second annual Walk to Feed the Hungry on September 10, 2011, at Riverside Park in New York City, or to hold an event where you live.



The main walk will be held at 10:00 a.m. in beautiful Riverside Park in New York City (check in at 9:30). We'll follow a 3.5 mile route along the paved footpaths of Manhattan's most spectacular waterfront park. You'll get to make many new friends and enjoy the exercise while walking for the good of the world.

The Buddha said that "the gift of food is the gift of life." All proceeds from the walk will go to support BGR's hunger relief projects in Asia, Africa, and the United States. If you can't join us at Riverside Park,

we encourage you to take part in the virtual walk on BGR's Facebook Fan Page and to hold walks or other fundraising events in your own community.

More information about the walk will be posted soon on our website.



A "Chant-a-thon" for Buddhist Global Relief



By Ajahn Anandabodhi - On March 12, 2011, friends gathered at Aloka Vihara, a training monastery for women established in San Francisco in 2009, to chant the timeless teachings and recollections of the Buddha, beginning at 7:30 p.m. and continuing through till midnight. Jacqueline Goldstein, a young member of our community, had the inspiration to bring people together in a marathon chant devoted to the Triple Gem. Her idea was met with enthusiasm from our local community and a date was set for a 'Chant-a-thon' to take place.

This was the perfect opportunity to also raise funds and awareness for the work of Buddhist Global Relief. Jacqueline liaised with Kim Behan and Sylvie Sun to organize the event, which took on the added dimension of honoring International Women's Day through Oxfam. We chose traditional Theravadan chants and other Buddhist mantras, both in Pali and English. From 7:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. guidance was given on chanting in Pali and how to recognize the melody of the chants.

At 7:30 p.m. Ajahn Santacitta and I began with an invocation of the devas, inviting the forces of goodness to bear witness to our efforts that evening. Then all joined in with Pali protection chants, followed by a mantra of paying homage to the Buddha and English reflections on the Dhamma. We offered the funeral chanting for all who had so recently lost their lives in the tsunami in Japan, there were pictures of the devastation displayed on our shrine. The more challenging suttas in Pali were followed by gentle mantras, so there were times of deep connection, times of struggle, and times to allow the heart to settle and relax.

Breaks could be taken at any time, provided there were a minimum of four people chanting in the shrine room. There were always plenty of voices and everyone put their heart into the venture. People were welcome to take part for the whole evening or to come and go as they wished. Tea was available in the kitchen, as well as reading materials on BGR, International Women's Day, and women in Dhamma. Everyone had the chance to stop and refresh when needed and the chanting continued seamlessly. Seventeen people joined us that evening, with nine making it right through till midnight, when we shared the merits of our practice for the benefit of all beings. Then we sat together in silence for a few minutes, taking in the beautiful atmosphere that had been generated through our combined efforts.

Donations for BGR were offered at the vihara and through the BGR website from people further afield. It was an uplifting and beautiful way to come together as community and to help support those who are struggling to sustain the basic necessities of life. After the success of our first Chant-a-thon, we have decided to hold another next year and would like to make it an annual event at the vihara. May this be of benefit to those in need and a source of inspiration for others.

Please visit our website at www.saranaloka.org for information about Aloka Vihara and our next Chant-a-thon in 2012.

Ajahn Anandabodhi was born in Wales in 1968 and currently lives at Aloka Vihara, where she is helping to establish a nuns' monastery in the Theravada tradition. She shares Dhamma from the vihara and in the Bay Area and occasionally teaches in other parts of the United States.

BGR Board Member Examines Right to Food

Charles Elliott, an attorney and a member of Buddhist Global Relief's board of directors, has written an important paper that examines the legal basis for the right to food. The paper, entitled "A Review of the U.N. Human Rights Council Study on discrimination in the context of the right to food," argues that the right to food is a basic human right which must be fulfilled without discrimination of any kind. That right, Elliott explains, is enshrined in the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Article 25. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services.

Elliott observes that the right to food is also recognized in other international legal agreements. The Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, for example, recognizes the "fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger."

The 1996 World Food Summit issued a global Plan of Action to eradicate hunger. Its immediate goal was to reduce the number of undernourished people by half by 2015. According to Elliott, the reality has not significantly improved since the Plan's adoption. Factors such as gender discrimination and rural underdevelopment (80 percent of the world's hungry live in rural areas) increase the difficulties. Saddest of all, children suffer most from hunger, and it is estimated that more than one-third of child deaths worldwide are due to malnutrition.

But Elliott maintains that there is some good news, in the form of policies that distribute food aid directly to needy families, offer meals to children at school, and provide microfinance credits to women producing food for their families and local markets. The increased use of organic farming methods, which have been proven to be as productive as modern high-input methods as well as more sustainable, is another positive development.

BGR supports the right to food through investment in small-scale farming and training in sustainable agricultural practices, as well as through more direct food aid. We encourage all who share our concern for protecting this fundamental human right to read [Charles Elliott's paper on our website](#).

Will You Leave A Legacy

By Patricia Price - Your support for Buddhist Global Relief is a conscious demonstration of your belief in our mission to reduce chronic hunger and to improve the livelihood options of the world's most marginalized and impoverished people, especially women and children. BGR's program grants support sustainable grassroots projects that save fragile lives and nurture hope through education.

But what happens to your support when you pass on from this life? By remembering BGR as a charitable beneficiary in your estate plan, you can leave a legacy that will continue to support our mission far into the future.

There are several ways to remember BGR. For example:

- You can include language in your will stating, "I give (a specific dollar amount or a specific percentage) to Buddhist Global Relief." At any time during your lifetime, you have the option of changing this bequest according to your personal needs.
- You can name BGR as a charitable beneficiary of a trust for a fixed amount or percentage.
- You can name BGR as a beneficiary of your retirement plan, life insurance policy, or brokerage account, or as a co-owner of a simple passbook savings account.

You can also indicate how you prefer to have BGR use your legacy gift:

- You can make the gift unrestricted. It will go into our program grants fund to be awarded to a deserving project selected by our Board of Directors.
- You can indicate that the gift be used for a specific purpose—for example, to support a project addressing hunger or education, or to help defray the operating expenses that BGR incurs to increase awareness and raise funds for its projects.
- If you anticipate making a large gift, you can establish a permanent endowment—for example, The Miller Family Fund for Education. BGR will invest the funds and use the annual interest to support program grants.

And whether your legacy gift to BGR is a one-time gift or a permanent endowment, you can specify that you want to memorialize or honor a loved one.

A planned gift is an easy way to demonstrate your support for BGR's work without impacting your current financial situation. We welcome bequests of any size. Your generous gift will help us to provide a healthy and brighter future for the thousands of individuals and communities that BGR-funded projects help each year.

If you are interested in planning a legacy gift to benefit BGR, please contact Patricia Price at patriciaprice15@verizon.net or at (610) 349-7515. Thank you for your support for BGR.

Patricia Price is a member of BGR's Board of Directors and is the chair of the Program Selection Committee. She is the Director of Planned Giving at Moravian College, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Oxfam Salutes BGR's Support for IWD

In March 2011, the international humanitarian organization Oxfam America partnered with organizations across the U.S. to hold 195 events in 41 states to celebrate the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. Buddhist Global Relief was among the first organizations in the country to declare its support for the celebration and worked closely with Oxfam to promote it. Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi and BGR

executive director Kim Behan also represented BGR at Oxfam's IWD event in Berkeley, California, on March 8.

In a recent report to its members, supporters, and partner organizations entitled "Highlights from International Women's Day 2011," Oxfam recognized BGR's efforts to make the IWD celebration a success. "Buddhist Global Relief connected Oxfam America to nine national partners; reached out to their membership, which led to two new events; attended an IWD event and awarded a \$10,000 grant to an Oxfam America partner organization in Cambodia," Oxfam's report stated.

BGR is honored to have played a role in an event that has helped to raise awareness of the struggles that millions of poor women around the world face every day. We offer deep thanks to our friends at Oxfam America for everything they have done to make the celebration of the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day celebration such an inspiring event.

BGR Welcomes New Assistant Director



Buddhist Global Relief is pleased to introduce Carla Prater as our new Assistant Director.

A native of Southern California, Carla relocated to Brazil with her missionary parents at the age of 12. She remained there for the next twenty years and, shortly after returning to the United States in 1987, she went back to school, earning a master's degree in urban planning (1993) and a doctorate in political science (1999), both from Texas A&M University. In graduate school, she began working as a research assistant at Texas A&M's Hazard Reduction & Recovery Center, where she is now the Associate Director. She also teaches urban planning and emergency management courses in the university's Landscape Architecture and

Urban Planning Department. Carla began practicing meditation under Ann Dingus with the Brazos Insight Meditation Society in 2000.

Carla contacted BGR last year about volunteering and has provided the organization with excellent advice to advance our grant writing efforts. As Assistant Director, she will provide support to Kim Behan, our Executive Director. From time to time, she will be contacting BGR team members and volunteers about their work, asking for information, giving assignments.

"Carla attended our semi-annual BGR team meeting this past March, flying up from Texas for the occasion, and she made a highly favorable impression on all of us," said Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi, BGR's founder and chairperson. "Recognizing her intelligence, skills, and pleasant personality, we asked her whether she would be willing to become Assistant Director of BGR, and to our delight she accepted."

BGR Volunteers Lend a Hand at Vesak Celebration



On May 8, 2011, more than a dozen BGR volunteers gathered at Chuang Yen Monastery in Carmel, New York, to help out at the vegetarian food fair at the monastery's Bathing Buddha Ceremony and Garden Party. The event was held to celebrate the Buddha's birthday and Mother's Day. BGR operated a booth where volunteers prepared and sold dim sum and pastries, and invited attendees to sample a variety of unique teas, including Pu-erh tea with osmanthus and ginger and Yunnan Province black tea with rose petals, which were brewed and served in the traditional Chinese style. BGR also sold little packages of tea.

BGR is grateful to all of our volunteers who helped to make the event such a tremendous success. We would like to thank everyone who helped to prepare and serve the delicious food, including Pohui Chang (potstickers), Yuki Chen (organic pineapple pastries), Ke-shin Cheng (gourmet cookies), Sharon Chen and Monsong Chen (sticky rice), Chih-Ping Fan (veggie hamburgers), and Pei-Lei Tu and Catharine Chung (tea sandwiches and fruit tarts). We also thank the volunteers who worked at BGR's booth, including Miranda Chan, Johnny and Sandy Wong, Christopher Sun, and Christine Sun. We

are especially grateful to Ven. Dhammadipa, the abbot of Chuang Yen Monastery, and the monastery's sangha for their continued support for BGR.



Boxes of Tea sold by BGR



Fundraising Chair Sylvie Sun directs the assembly of the lunch plates

BGR Promo Featured on All Things Healing Website

Buddhist Global Relief would like to thank Dr. Elizabeth Mackenzie, co-editor of the Books for Healing section on the All Things Healing website, for selecting BGR as one of her "Editor's Favorites" among non-profit organizations. This designation entitled BGR to place a promotional ad on the ATH website for an entire month, ending on June 20, 2011.

All Things Healing is an online community and portal dedicated to holistic, alternative, and spiritual healing of mind, body, spirit, and planet. The website features more than 80 editors, assistant editors, and forum moderators who share their expertise on 39 topics related to alternative healing. It also provides a tool for locating alternative practitioners and organizations throughout the United States and around the world, as well as a variety of forums for sharing information on dozens of topics.

To learn more, please visit All Things Healing's website at www.allthingshealing.com.

Double Your Donation with a Company Match

By Carla Prater – The practice of giving is one of the most important ways we have to show solidarity with others and to grow in compassion and understanding. Sometimes we feel frustrated because we think we cannot make large contributions. There are two things to say about that. First, even the smallest contributions can be like the drops of water that combine to fill the ocean. Second, amounts that seem small to us may be large enough to make great changes in someone's life. We seek out projects that have high impacts in reducing hunger and improve livelihoods, whatever their costs may be.

Buddhist Global Relief's Corporate Matching Gift Program enables donors to double their donations when their employers match their gifts to BGR. One of the many BGR supporters who have donated to us in this manner is Chade-Meng Tan, one of the earliest engineers for Google, who is now semi-retired and holds the title of Jolly Good Fellow. His job description with Google's Talent Team reads, "Enlighten minds, open hearts, create world peace." We can't think of a better job than that! A practicing Buddhist, Meng wants to "save the world, and have lots of fun and laughter doing it," which we think is great because, after all, what makes us happier than giving to those in need?

Google is just one of the companies that support BGR by matching their employees' gifts. If your employer supports BGR with matching gifts, please let them know of your contribution so they can match it. If your employer does not, please inform them about BGR so we can apply for their corporate matching gift program.

Gifts to BGR are tax deductible and will be used to further our mission of providing food and, more importantly, improving livelihoods for the poorest of our fellow beings. We are an all-volunteer organization, so we are able to keep our administrative expenses low (1-2 percent of our total expenditures) and pass on most of the gifts we receive to the poorest of the poor, in many locations around the world. We can also accept donations through PayPal and Network for Good.

If you have questions about BGR's Corporate Matching Gift Program, please contact us at info@buddhistglobalrelief.org or at (888) 852-7579.

Carla Prater is BGR's new Assistant Director. She is the Associate Director of the Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center at Texas A&M University, as well as a Senior Lecturer in the University's Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning.

Watch Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi's Dhamma Talk in Berkeley



On March 12, 2011, Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi gave a Dhamma talk entitled "Buddhist Practices in Everyday Life" at the Mangalam Center in Berkeley, California. The talk was sponsored and organized by the Light of Buddhadharma Foundation International and was delivered to a full house of about 150.

You can watch a video the 75-minute talk followed by a 15-minute Q&A on the the Light of Buddhadharma Foundation International's website [here](#).

How You Can Help

Your donation will help us to continue our work providing relief to people afflicted by poverty and hunger in poor communities in southern and central Asia, Africa, Haiti, and the United States. We welcome both one-time and monthly donations. Please note that you can now donate to BGR through Network for Good, as well as through PayPal. To donate, please click [here](#). And if you would like to lend a hand to BGR by becoming a virtual volunteer, we would love to hear from you. Please contact us at info@buddhistglobalrelief.org to learn about volunteer opportunities. Thank you for your support for BGR.
