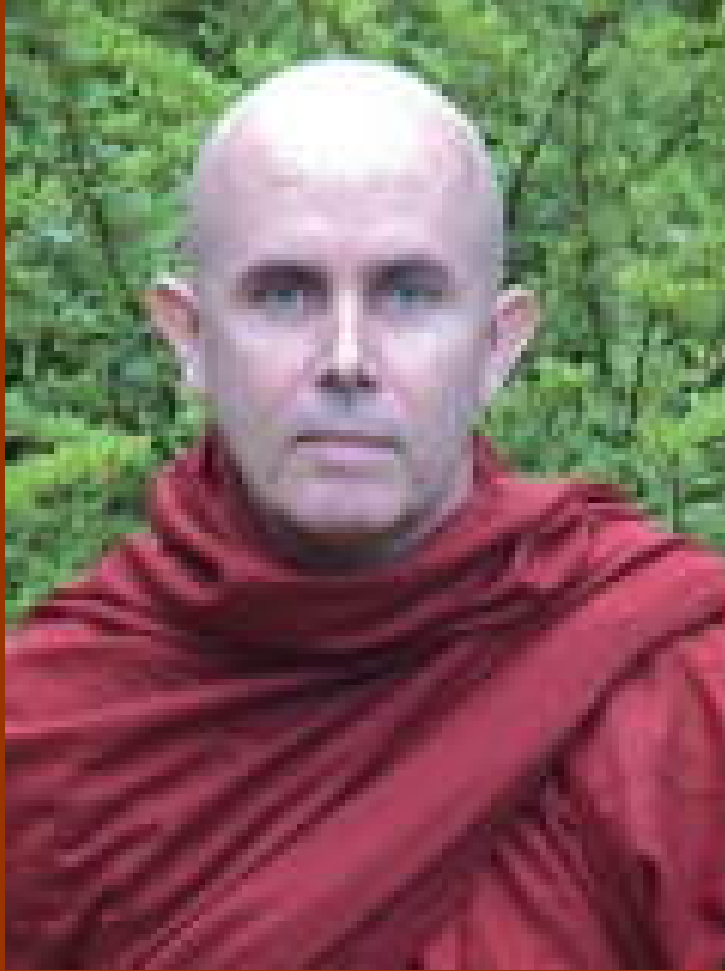


Adhamma Dana



By
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Compiled for the Serene Joy and Emotion of the Pious
A Gift of Dhamma

Preface

Many of us who have read the **Bhikkhu Patimokkha** rules - The Bhikkhu's' Code of Discipline – rules for the Bhikkhu and Rules for the Bhikkhuni, are familiar with the rules relating to accepting money as an offence; but I have not read, in the past, any article written by Bhikkhu in regard to the most common kind of offence to educate the lay disciples.. Here in the Western countries, it has become a general practice for many visiting Bhikkhu's from our homeland to collect donations. In due respect lay disciples love to offer money as their donation, money put in an envelope, and offer it direct to the Bhikkhu. This is cause for offence on the part of Bhikkhu; thus the donors do not accrue any merit for causing such offence on the part of Bhikkhu Sangha.

Some say, giving money as – *Nawakamma* in Burmese – money donated for Monk to spend at his discretion, is acceptable. An analysis of the ***Bhikkhu Patimokkha will tell you that it is an offence. This is the first time I have read this coming from a Theravada Bhikkhu.***

This act of Dana is called Adhamma Dana – which is not in accordance with the Patimokkha rules written in the Pali Canon. Many will prefer to hand it over to the Bhikkhu or Sayadaw rather than hand it to the Upasaka, the Sayadaw's disciple. This act is demeritorious act of charity; it causes demerit to the donors as well as to the Bhikkhu, because Bhikkhu by accepting the money in an envelope has committed an offence by the Patimokkha rule.

Bhikkhu Pesala, a Bhikkhu ordained in the Theravada tradition in Myanmar, has written this article to educate the lay disciples here in the West not to commit such impropriety by forcing the Bhikkhu to commit offence and demerit.

Bhikkhu Pesala said lay disciples should not embarrass the revered Bhikkhu by such Adhamma Dana.

Dana – gift giving is an act of merit, if done in proper way. Lay disciples should learn to understand the Bhikkhu Patimokkha rules. This article is most enlightening. Thus, offering money to bhikkhus is much more demeritorious than offering unallowable meat.

Gifts giving to Bhikkhu must be in accord with Patimokkha rules to accrue merits to the donors.

Compiled for the serene joys and the emotion of the pious

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1. Introduction:

Giving things to others is a way to develop kindness and generosity. It helps to remove attachment if done with the right intention, and should be cultivated as a constant habit by all good people. If the recipient is a virtuous bhikkhu who is free from attachment to the gift, then an ordinary act of charity becomes a noble way of honoring the Buddha.

2. Are all gifts meritorious?

However, not all offering of gifts is meritorious; some things should not be offered because they corrupt the virtue of the recipient. For example:

- *weapons,*
- *alcohol,*
- *poisons,*

- *sexual favours,*
- *foolish entertainments and shows, though they may be pleasing to some, should not be given as they help the recipient to make unwholesome kamma.*
- *Giving gifts of money to laypeople is usually meritorious, but giving bribes is not.*

3. Offering money as gift to Bhikkhu

This article aims to show that:

3.1. Offering money as gift to Bhikkhu is demeritorious

- *offering money to bhikkhu is not only prohibited by the Buddha,*
- *but is also a demeritorious deed with bad results for the donor.*

3.2. Offering money to his lay attendant is meritorious

If money is given to a Bhikkhu's lay attendant, while inviting the bhikkhu to accept allowable requisites, then this is allowable and is, of course, a meritorious deed.

4. Offering of alms to accrue merit

The *Jivaka Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya* is about the eating of meat by bhikkhu. There, the Buddha says that bhikkhu may eat meat, provided they have not seen, heard, or suspected that the animal was killed specifically to offer meat to the Sangha.

4.1. Improper way of Offering of alms food accrues demerit

If an animal has been slaughtered to offer alms, then it is an offence of wrong-doing for a bhikkhu to accept it. The donor makes "much demerit" (*bahum apuññam*) in five ways:

1. By ordering the animal to be fetched he makes much demerit.
2. While the animal is being fetched it suffers, so he makes much demerit.
3. By ordering the animal to be slaughtered he makes much demerit.
4. While the animal is being slaughtered it suffers, so he makes much demerit.
5. By offering what is not allowable, he makes much demerit.

I quote the relevant passage from the Pali text: "*Yampi so Tathāgatam vā tathāgatasāvakam vā akappiyena āsādeti, iminā pañcamena thānena bahum apuññaṃ pasavati.*" (*Jivaka Sutta, Majjhima Pannasa, Majjhima Nikāya*). "Also, whoever offers to the *Tathāgata* or to the *Tathāgata's* disciple what is not allowable, in this fifth case makes much demerit." The meaning of "*āsādeti*" is "invite to accept", not "give", so one makes much demerit even if a scrupulous *bhikkhu* refuses the gift.

Accepting such unsuitable meat is a minor offence of wrong-doing for *bhikkhu*; but to accept money is a relatively major offence of *Nissaggiya Pācittiya*. So, offering money to *bhikkhus* is much more demeritorious than offering unallowable meat.

5. How does gift giving causing demerit?

Some may say, "How could the donor possibly make demerit, since to give away one's hard-earned money is a generous act." However, by the same reasoning, giving away one's own meat is also generous. Please reflect for a while on how a virtuous *bhikkhu* feels when invited to accept money. He may feel insulted, or at least embarrassed, since if he refuses the gift offered, he may offend the donor. The situation is really difficult in the midst of the Sangha. If all the *bhikkhus* accept the money except for him, he will really be put on the spot. If he accepts, he falls into an offence; if he refuses all of the other monks and the donor will be embarrassed. Is it a meritorious deed to embarrass virtuous *bhikkhus* and to tempt them to break their morality? Surely not!

Think again about what should happen after the money has been received. If a scrupulous *bhikkhu* realises his error later, he has to forfeit the money. Money must be forfeited to the Sangha, not to an individual. So he must give trouble to at least four *bhikkhus*. If a lay person is present, the *bhikkhu* who receives the forfeited money should give it to him; he can then do with it what he likes, but he must not use it for the benefit of the offending *bhikkhu*. If there is no lay person present, the Sangha must appoint a 'money disposer' who is impartial. He must then throw it outside the monastery compound, without noticing where it falls. The money may then be eaten by vermin, blown away, or picked up by some lucky passer-by. All this trouble even for 5 dollars!

6. Bhikkhu should not accept money nor accept money in his behalf.

Some say that if a donor offers money, the *bhikkhu* should tell the donor to give it to an

attendant, but this is also an offence.

"Whatever monk accepts money gets another to accept it for him, or consents to its deposit for his use, is guilty of an offence requiring confession with forfeiture."

He can only say, "We do not accept money, we only accept requisites that are allowable and at the proper time." If the donor then asks if there is any attendant who looks after his needs, the *bhikkhu* can point him out. Then, the donor can give the money to the attendant. However, the money remains the property of the donor; it does not belong to the *bhikkhu* or to the attendant. If the attendant does not provide the *Bhikkhu's* needs he can inform the donor of this, but he must not coerce the attendant into buying what he wants. If he does so, he will again fall into an offence requiring confession with forfeiture (of the improperly acquired goods).

If the donor asks what should be done with the money after the *bhikkhu* refuses it, the *bhikkhu* can explain the *vinaya* rule, but he should not tell the donor what to do with the money.

7. Should the practice of giving money to Bhikkhu be discouraged?

Do you still think that giving money to *bhikkhus* is a meritorious deed? If so, then surely it should be encouraged. However, if it is indeed demeritorious, then the practice should not be tolerated, just as the giving of alcohol, live chickens or other unsuitable gifts is not tolerated.

Source: <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/buddhism/pesala02.htm>