

A Life of Dharma and Service

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From one perspective, the Buddha's gradual path of training begins with generosity and ends with liberation. Liberation is the door from which compassion and wisdom flow forth without selfish clinging or identification. If our compassion has not blossomed, then our training is incomplete. For some, the by-product of liberation and compassion is the wish to be of service to others. This can take any one of innumerable active forms, such as aiding a neighbor in difficulty, choosing to work in a helping profession, or teaching the Dharma. Before sending his first sixty enlightened disciples out into the world to teach the Dharma, the Buddha said to them,

My friends, I am free from all human and spiritual entanglements.

And as you are likewise free of all human and spiritual entanglements, go forth into the world for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, with compassion for the world, and for the benefit, the blessing, and the happiness of gods and humans.

Reveal the spiritual life, complete and pure in spirit and in form.

The desire to be of service can also take personal and solitary expressions, such as being an example of living simply as a monk, nun, or contemplative layperson. The act of awakening is a great gift, a great act of service, because we can then give the gift of safety; others will never have to be afraid of someone free of greed, hatred, and delusion. When any individual is free of clinging, others benefit from the radiance, example and wisdom of someone set free. To

attain any degree of Dharma freedom gives others the example that they too can attain freedom.

When one matures in the Dharma, being of service to this suffering world brings the spiritual path full circle, with giving becoming both the beginning and end of the path. From this perspective, the Buddhist path never ends, it rolls on and on, with generosity and freedom rolling together for the benefit of all beings.

May this book support you to discover how teaching is a powerful Dharma practice. May you benefit from teaching at least as much as you benefit others.