

The Profound Generosity: Embracing the 2025 MahāSaṅghikādāna for Robe Offerings

I. Introduction: A Timeless Call to Generosity

Welcome and the Spiritual Significance of the 2025 MahāSaṅghikādāna

A warm invitation is extended to all devotees and supporters of the Dhamma to partake in the auspicious 2025 MahāSaṅghikādāna. This event represents a profound opportunity for spiritual cultivation and communal support, echoing a timeless tradition within the Buddhist path. It is a chance to connect with the living legacy of the Buddha's teachings and contribute to their flourishing. Such gatherings reinforce the collective commitment to the Dhamma and provide a tangible means for practitioners to engage with the principles of generosity that underpin the Buddhist way of life.

Setting the Stage: The Enduring Practice of *Dāna* (Generosity) in Buddhism

At the heart of Buddhist practice lies *dāna*, the virtue of generosity, which is far more than a simple act of giving. The Pāli Canon extols *dāna* as the very "beginning of the path to liberation". This fundamental practice serves as the most potent antidote to *lobha* (greed), one of the three unwholesome motivational roots. By engaging in *dāna*, individuals facilitate the crucial process of letting go of attachment towards possessions, thereby dissolving egoism and selfishness. This practice, running counter to the worldly ways of craving and accumulation, is of key importance in a materialistic society.

The Buddha himself profoundly emphasized the importance of sharing, stating that if beings truly understood the ripening of sharing gifts, they would not consume even their last morsel without sharing it, if there were anyone to receive it. This highlights that *dāna* is an active, transformative practice that purifies the mind, filling it with "light, wholesome qualities" when cultivated frequently and with the knowledge that the gift benefits the recipient. The internal state of the giver is paramount; a "noble giver" is characterized by being happy before, during, and after giving, anticipating the opportunity, feeling satisfaction in fulfilling a need, and being content with the good deed done. This deep focus on the giver's internal state and intention over the sheer material value of the gift reveals a core Buddhist principle: the act of giving is a vehicle for the giver's own spiritual development and liberation from greed and ego. This means that participating in the MahāSaṅghikādāna is not just about fulfilling a need for the Sangha, but primarily about cultivating profound wholesome states within oneself, making it a powerful personal spiritual practice.

Furthermore, the introduction of *dāna* as a fundamental practice immediately sets the stage for understanding the interdependent relationship between the lay community and the monastic

order. The Pāli Canon articulates this symbiotic relationship: lay supporters provide the "four basic requisites (robes, food, shelter and medicine)" to the Sangha. In return, the Sangha, having committed to fully practice the Dhamma-Vinaya with morality and virtue, provides "spiritual guidance to the lay community". This is explicitly referred to as an "interdependent relationship based on mutual support and respect". This goes beyond a simple act of charity; it is a fundamental societal and spiritual structure vital for the perpetuation of the Dhamma. This highlights that the MahāSaṅghikādāna is not a one-sided benefaction but a crucial act within a reciprocal system that ensures the well-being of both the lay and monastic communities, and thus the continuity of the Buddha's teachings.

II. MahāSaṅghikādāna: Offering to the Great Assembly

Defining MahāSaṅghikādāna: An Offering to the Entire Monastic Community (Sangha)

The term "MahāSaṅghikādāna" literally translates to "offering to the Great Sangha" or "offering to the entire monastic community." This specific form of *dāna* is distinguished by its focus on the *collective* body of monastics, rather than targeting individual monks. It is considered a "noble and blameless" offering precisely because it is directed towards the Sangha as a whole, irrespective of the moral character of individual recipients. The Pāli Canon emphasizes that a gift made to the Sangha as a group yields "much more merit than a gift offered to a single monk in his individual capacity". This highlights the profound spiritual significance of supporting the collective institution that upholds the Dhamma. While the historical "Mahāsāṃghika" was an early Buddhist school, meaning "of the Great Sangha", the term here is used in its broader sense to denote a major offering to the universal monastic community, emphasizing the collective nature of the donation.

The Purity and Collective Merit of Sanghika-dāna, as Highlighted in the Pāli Canon

The Pāli Canon underscores that the purity and immense merit of Sanghika-dāna stem from the intention to honor the Sangha as a whole, which represents the living embodiment of the Dhamma. This collective intention purifies the offering, making it highly meritorious regardless of the individual conduct of the recipients. The concept that an offering to the Sangha is "noble and blameless regardless of the recipient's individual morals" is a significant aspect. This unique characteristic ensures that the donor's merit is maximized by connecting with the collective spiritual force of the monastic order, which is viewed as a "field of merit". This understanding suggests that the Sangha, as a collective entity and the preserver of the Dhamma, possesses an inherent spiritual purity or potency that transcends the individual perfections of its members. It functions as a spiritual reservoir that, when cultivated through offerings, yields bountiful karmic results. This implies that supporting the Sangha via MahāSaṅghikādāna is not merely an act of charity but a strategic spiritual investment, tapping into a collective spiritual force that ensures profound and far-reaching benefits for the donor.

The Sangha's Vital Role in Preserving and Transmitting the Dhamma

The Sangha is not merely a group of individuals; it is the living repository and transmitter of the

Buddha's teachings. The existence of the Sangha is what makes Buddhism a "living, applied spiritual tradition rather than a mere philosophy". Through generations of oral transmission, memorization, and recitation, and eventually the writing down of the Pāli Canon (Tipitaka) around 30 BCE in Sri Lanka, the Sangha has ensured the continuity of the Dhamma. The Buddha himself declared that the Dhamma and Vinaya (Doctrine and Discipline) would succeed him as Teacher after his passing. Therefore, the very survival of Buddhism hinges on the existence and integrity of the Buddha's teachings, which are maintained by the Sangha. Without the Sangha's dedication to practice and preservation, the profound wisdom of the Dhamma would undoubtedly fade away. This highlights that lay support, through offerings like robes, provides the material conditions necessary for monastics to continue their practice, study, and teaching. Therefore, MahāSaṅghikādāna is not just about individual merit accumulation; it is a direct, tangible contribution to the *survival, continuity, and accessibility* of the Buddha's teachings for current and future generations. This elevates the act of giving from personal piety to a fundamental, collective responsibility that ensures the very existence of Buddhism in the world.

The Symbiotic Relationship Between Lay Practitioners and the Monastic Order

The relationship between the lay community and the Sangha is one of profound interdependence and mutual respect. Lay followers provide the "four basic requisites" – robes, food, shelter, and medicine – which are essential for the sustenance and well-being of the monastics. This material support enables monks and nuns to dedicate themselves fully to their spiritual practice, study, and teaching, free from worldly distractions. In return, the Sangha offers spiritual guidance, teaches the Dhamma through sermons and counsel, and serves as a living example of the Buddhist path, embodying virtues like renunciation, simplicity, and mindfulness. This reciprocal support is fundamental to the flourishing of the entire Buddhist tradition, creating a virtuous cycle where lay generosity facilitates monastic practice, and monastic wisdom enriches lay life.

III. The Profound Significance of Robe Offerings (Cīvara Dāna)

Robes as One of the Four Requisites for Monastic Life

The monastic robe, known as *cīvara* in Pāli, is one of the four fundamental requisites for Buddhist monks and nuns, alongside almsfood, dwelling places, and medicine. These essentials are not luxuries but are critical for a monk's survival and their ability to progress on the path to Nibbana. Providing robes directly supports the practitioner's ability to maintain their ascetic duties and dedicate themselves fully to spiritual development, free from the burden of seeking material necessities. The provision of these requisites is a tangible service to donors, creating merit for them.

A clear overview of these essential needs is presented in the table below:

Table 1: The Four Requisites for Monastic Life

Requisite	Pāli Term	Significance
Robe	<i>Cīvara</i>	Essential clothing for

Requisite	Pāli Term	Significance
		protection, symbolizing renunciation and spiritual dedication.
Almsfood	<i>Piṇḍapāta</i>	Daily sustenance, obtained through alms rounds, fostering humility and dependence on the lay community.
Dwelling/Shelter	<i>Senāsana</i>	A place for rest, meditation, and study, providing protection from elements.
Medicine	<i>Gilānapaccaya</i>	Healthcare provisions to maintain physical well-being, enabling continued practice.

The significance of robes extends beyond mere covering; they are a direct facilitator of monastic practice. By providing these fundamental needs, donors directly enable monks to sustain their lives and, crucially, to maintain their "ethical practice and moral purity within the monastic community". The robes allow monks to focus on meditation, scriptural study, and alms rounds, rather than being distracted by the struggle for basic survival. This means that the act of offering robes is not just a symbolic gesture or a means of accumulating personal merit; it is a direct, practical, and indispensable contribution to the Sangha's ability to live the Dhamma, making it a powerful form of active support for the continuation of the spiritual path.

Symbolism of the Monastic Robe: Renunciation, Simplicity, and Spiritual Dedication

Beyond their practical utility, monastic robes are profoundly symbolic. They represent the monk's renunciation of worldly life, their commitment to simplicity, and their dedication to spiritual growth. Historically, monks initially wore *pamsukūla* or "rag-robes" sewn from discarded cloths collected from places such as cemeteries, streets, or rubbish heaps, embodying extreme detachment from material possessions. This practice highlighted their commitment to a life free from material attachments. The act of offering robes, therefore, is a tangible expression of devotion and gratitude, honoring these profound symbols and the spiritual commitment they embody.

Historical Context: The Buddha's Allowance for Householders' Robes

In a significant development recorded in the Pāli Canon, the Buddha, at the request of the physician Jīvaka, granted permission for monks to accept "householders' robes" (*gahapaticīvara*). This compassionate and pragmatic allowance eased the burden on monastics who previously relied solely on rag-robes and made it more accessible for lay devotees to offer support. The people of Rajagaha, for instance, rejoiced upon hearing this allowance, recognizing it as an opportunity to "give gifts" and "work merit". This historical shift demonstrates the Buddha's wisdom in adapting monastic rules to ensure the well-being of the Sangha while maintaining the core spirit of renunciation. The evolution of monastic support reflects the Dhamma's adaptability and compassion. This change, initiated by the request of Jīvaka, demonstrates the Buddha's pragmatic approach to monastic discipline. It shows that while the

core principles of renunciation and simplicity remain paramount, the practical application of the Vinaya can evolve to better serve the Sangha's well-being and facilitate lay support. This flexibility ensures the Dhamma's relevance and sustainability across different times and contexts. This implies that the MahāSaṅghikādāna, as a contemporary manifestation of robe offering, aligns with this historical adaptability and the Buddha's compassionate concern for the comfort and practice of his monastics, ensuring the tradition remains vibrant and accessible.

IV. Merits and Blessings from the Pāli Canon: Beyond the Kathinā Season

General Benefits of Generosity (Dāna)

The practice of *dāna* yields manifold benefits, described in detail throughout many parts of the Pāli Canon. It is a powerful means to cultivate wholesome qualities, practice renunciation, and let go of attachment. It is considered the "best weapon against greed (*lobha*)" and helps to overcome egoism and selfishness. A noble giver is characterized by being "happy before, during and after giving," anticipating the opportunity, feeling satisfaction in making another happy, and being content with the good deed. The Buddha's profound emphasis on sharing is evident in his statement that if people knew the value of giving, they would not enjoy a single meal without sharing. The concept of a "lordly giver" is introduced, referring to one who, even if content with simple fare for themselves, offers delicacies to others, highlighting the paramount importance of intention and selflessness.

The Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN 5.35) explicitly details five universal benefits of giving:

Table 2: Universal Benefits of Dāna (Generosity) from the Pāli Canon (Aṅguttara Nikāya AN 5.35)

Benefit	Description
1. Dear and Agreeable	One is beloved and well-regarded by many people.
2. Good Persons Resort	Virtuous individuals are drawn to associate with the giver.
3. Good Reputation	The giver acquires a widespread and positive reputation.
4. Not Deficient in Duties	The giver fulfills their responsibilities as a layperson without shortcoming.
5. Favorable Rebirth	With the breakup of the body, after death, one is reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world.

These benefits provide concrete reasons for lay practitioners to engage in *dāna*, appealing to both worldly well-being (reputation, agreeable to people) and spiritual aspirations (good destination after death). This also lays a general foundation for understanding merit accumulation before delving into the specific benefits of robe offerings, demonstrating that robe *dāna* is part of a broader, well-established principle of generosity.

Specific Merits of Robe Offerings (Cīvara Dāna)

Offering robes is described in the Pāli Canon as "extremely glorious". The merits accrued from

this act are extensive, impacting both present and future lives. Symbolically, offering robes provides protection from heat and cold.

The specific merits of offering robes are detailed as follows:

Table 3: Specific Merits of Robe Offerings (Cīvara Dāna) in the Pāli Canon

Category	Specific Merits
In This Life	Born in high caste and have good physical shape; Sense of good conscience and integrity; Renowned due to accumulated good karma; Free from obstacles, healthy, and have perfect body form; Success in business, good fortune, and possessions.
In Future Lives	Liberated from the suffering of the hell (hot and cold realms); Free from the suffering of hungry ghost realm (thirst and hunger); Rebirth in human form with complete perfect physical shape, attractive, conceivably pleasant and beautiful; Having high status like the lineage of a King.
Ultimate Fruition	Can create the cause for one to go to enlightenment, with benefits experienced for eons.

These merits are powerfully illustrated through stories from the Pāli Canon. The story of Ekasataka Brahmin, for instance, exemplifies the profound significance of robe offerings, showcasing how such generosity can lead to immense spiritual benefits and a tangible expression of devotion and gratitude. Another compelling example is the Brahmin who offered a white robe to the Buddha and was subsequently prophesized to attain Buddhahood as Ngonshy Zangpo, demonstrating the ultimate fruition of such meritorious deeds. While not exclusively about robes, the story of a man who offered medicinal food just one time to four ordinary monks and was reborn as the powerful King Ashoka further illustrates the vast, multi-lifetime benefits of supporting the Sangha, emphasizing that "karma expands" from even seemingly small acts of generosity.

The purity of the offering is significantly influenced by the giver's virtuous intention and the ethical means by which the gift was acquired. Giving with a "pleasant mind"—meaning without doubt as to its virtue and obtained without causing harm to others—yields immense merit. The *Dakkhinaṅgaha Sutta* (MN 142) clarifies that an offering is purified by the giver if the giver is virtuous, by the recipient if the recipient is virtuous, or by both if both are virtuous. The highest material gifts are those offered by a passionless one to the passionless, with a trusting heart. This highlights a nuanced understanding of merit, where while individual virtue enhances merit for direct offerings, the collective Sangha itself, as the embodiment of the Dhamma and the "field of merit," possesses an inherent purity that purifies the offering made to it as a whole. This means that MahāSanghikādāna offers a uniquely robust and reliable path for merit accumulation, as it taps into the collective spiritual power and institutional integrity of the monastic order, providing a powerful incentive for broad participation.

Distinguishing from Kathinā Ceremony

It is crucial to understand that while the Kathinā ceremony also involves robe offerings, it is a

distinctly separate and highly specific annual event. Kathinā occurs only during a particular one-month period following the end of the *vassāvāsa* (rainy season retreat). It is governed by strict Vinaya rules regarding its acceptance and distribution, and it grants five unique, temporary privileges to the recipient monks, such as freedom to go to meal invitations without informing another monk or keeping a lot of robes. The Pāli Canon, particularly the Vinaya Pitaka, emphasizes Kathinā as the "highest offering" and the "most meritorious of skillful deeds" due to its specific conditions and benefits.

While the Kathinā ceremony holds a special place, the Pāli Canon unequivocally supports and encourages the offering of robes and other requisites to the Sangha at *any time* of the year. The general benefits of *dāna* and the specific merits associated with robe offerings, as detailed above, are universal and apply regardless of the season. The 2025 MahāSaṅghikādāna, therefore, provides a significant and continuously available opportunity for lay practitioners to accumulate immense merit and support the monastic community, independent of the Kathinā period. It is a vital act of ongoing generosity that sustains the Sangha year-round, ensuring their well-being and the perpetuation of the Dhamma. This distinction emphasizes that opportunities for accumulating merit through supporting the Sangha are not confined to a single, special season. The MahāSaṅghikādāna, by being outside the Kathinā period, serves as a powerful reminder and an accessible avenue for consistent, year-round generosity. This continuous practice of *dāna* cultivates wholesome habits, ensures ongoing material and spiritual support for the Sangha, and reinforces the idea that the path to liberation is one of sustained effort and generosity, not just episodic grand gestures.

The key distinctions between these two meritorious acts are summarized below:

Table 4: Key Distinctions: MahāSaṅghikādāna vs. Kathinā Ceremony

Feature	MahāSaṅghikādāna (Robe Offering)	Kathinā Ceremony (Robe Offering)
Recipient	The entire Sangha (collective body)	The entire Sangha, but specifically for monks who completed <i>vassāvāsa</i> (rains retreat)
Timing	Any time of the year	Specific annual period (one month after <i>vassāvāsa</i> ends)
Nature	General act of generosity	Formal Vinaya act with specific rules and privileges
Purpose	Support Sangha's general requisites, Dhamma preservation	Provide robes for monks after retreat, grant specific Vinaya privileges
Merit	Significant, manifold benefits	Considered "highest offering" and "most meritorious"
Rarity	Can be performed frequently	Rare, only once a year per monastery

V. The 2025 MahāSaṅghikādāna: An Opportunity for All

Practical Guidance for Participation in the Robe Offering

Participation in the 2025 MahāSaṅghikādāna is an accessible and profoundly beneficial act. All

lay practitioners are encouraged to approach this opportunity with an "open and generous heart" , cultivating the happiness that arises "before, during and after giving". It is paramount that the intention behind the offering is pure, and that the gifts themselves are "righteously obtained" , earned through wholesome means without harm or deceit. Engaging in this ceremony is also an excellent means of cultivating mindfulness and gratitude , deepening one's spiritual practice. The Buddha himself advised that donors should give wherever their gift would be used, well-cared for, last long, or wherever their mind feels confidence.

How This Act Strengthens the Dhamma and Supports the Monastic Community's Practice

By participating in the MahāSaṅghikādāna, individuals directly contribute to the vitality and continuity of the Buddha's teachings. Robe offerings, as essential requisites, enable the Sangha to sustain their spiritual practice, delve deeper into scriptural study, and continue their vital role in preserving and transmitting the Dhamma. This support ensures that the wisdom of the Pāli Canon remains a living tradition for generations to come. By providing the material foundation, lay practitioners empower the monastic order to focus on their path to liberation and to serve as invaluable spiritual guides for the wider community. This is an active, forward-looking commitment to the longevity and accessibility of the Dhamma, transforming a personal act of generosity into a collective legacy for the benefit of all sentient beings.

The interconnectedness of lay and monastic practice is evident here, forming a virtuous cycle. The material support from the laity, including robes, frees the monastics from worldly concerns, allowing them to cultivate *sīla* (moral conduct), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom). This deeper practice then enables the Sangha to offer the supreme "gift of Dhamma" (*dhamma-dāna*) to the lay community, inspiring further generosity and spiritual growth. This means that the MahāSaṅghikādāna is a crucial point in this interconnected system, where the generosity of one group directly fuels the spiritual development and guidance offered by another, ultimately benefiting the entire ecosystem of the Buddhist path. As the Buddha himself taught, even the smallest offering to the Sangha carries immense benefits, extending to "all the six-realm sentient beings" and creating causes for enlightenment.

An Invitation to Partake in This Meritorious Deed

We extend a heartfelt invitation to all to partake in the 2025 MahāSaṅghikādāna for robe offerings. This is more than a ceremony; it is an opportunity to engage in a profound act of generosity that brings immense spiritual benefits to the donor, strengthens the monastic community, and ensures the continued flourishing of the Dhamma in the world. Your contribution, no matter its size, is a powerful seed of merit that will yield boundless positive results for yourself and for all beings.

VI. Conclusion: Cultivating a Legacy of Dhamma and Generosity

In closing, the 2025 MahāSaṅghikādāna for robe offerings stands as a profound testament to the enduring power of generosity within the Buddhist tradition. The report has explored the manifold spiritual benefits of *dāna*, the unique and amplified merit derived from offerings made

to the collective Sangha, and the essential role that robes play as fundamental requisites for monastic life. Above all, this event underscores the critical and symbiotic relationship between the lay community and the monastic order, a relationship built on mutual support that ensures the preservation and flourishing of the Dhamma for all.

We invite all to embrace this precious opportunity to partake in a meritorious deed that transcends individual benefit, contributing to a legacy of wisdom and compassion. Your generosity, whether through this specific MahāSaṅghikādāna or through continuous support, is an invaluable act of faith and interconnectedness. By nurturing the Sangha, individuals directly strengthen the very foundation of the Buddha's teachings, ensuring that the light of the Dhamma continues to illuminate the path to liberation for countless beings. May noble intentions and generous actions bring boundless blessings and contribute to the peace and well-being of the world.

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