



Dakshina: The Practice of Giving

By Reva

Dakshina is a monetary offering made in appreciation of the priceless gifts we have received from a spiritual teacher or teachings. Giving often comes with a hidden expectation of an exchange. Whether you are offering time, money, or help, it is difficult not to feel an unspoken entitlement to receive something in return, whether material or for expectations of attached status. *Dakshina* is different. Giving is done with an attitude of selflessness and without specifying criteria or expecting any reciprocal gain.

Donations often support a project or a group of people, usually connected to a feeling of wanting to help, improve or alleviate suffering. They are often linked to a moral, political or social stance. *Dakshina* differs; it is a spiritual practice based on feelings of gratitude. *Dakshina* is an act of surrender, and of trust.

Dakshina bridges the material and esoteric worlds. The practice tunes into a transformational cycle; the universal law that 'like attracts like', 'what goes around comes around' or as in the Bible, 'as you sow so shall you reap'. When we give with openness the universal energies align with this vibration and we experience that same sense of openness appearing in different areas of our life. Nature echoes this law back to us with her cycle of life-sustaining giving and receiving: the seed forms the apple that is given back to the earth for new trees to grow, the fish gives its life so the bear can eat, the rain clouds become full and replenish the rivers.

At the Ashram we have periodic *havans* (sacred fire ceremonies) where we practice the act of giving symbolically to the fire. In yogic history the Vedic practitioners made offerings in their *havans*, such as rice, honey and ghee. They offered the best that they had. We can use this to remember that expressing our generosity in a limited way, holding something back or giving something superfluous, comes from a fear of scarcity, of not having enough, of not trusting. This blocks the natural cycles necessary for life and transformation.

Dakshina invites us to give our best as a form of practice, honouring our teacher or the teachings that we are blessed to receive. When performed with dedication and understanding, the practice cultivates generosity and gratitude which brings us closer to the essence of the teachings and our own Self or Consciousness. *Dakshina* is a practice of devotion and expresses the longing of the seeker, bringing a deeper sense of connection to life.

In my own personal experience of giving *Dakshina* I have had times when I have been on a good salary and times where I have had very little financially and I have adjusted my monthly offering accordingly. The amount is not important; it is the practice that counts and the Heart behind the giving. *Dakshina* is not an invitation to forget your own needs but to make a selfless offering from an inner space of love and trust.