

The Perfections – Renunciation

Reflections and Practices

The following reflections and practices are offered for your exploration of the Perfection of Renunciation. Both the reflections and the practices can be enriched by discussing them with friends, fellow practitioners, strangers, and if you have chosen to have one, with your Dharma Practice Day buddy.

A useful way of engaging with the reflections is to spend a few days with each one, perhaps rereading the reflection to see what new perspectives repeated readings provide. It can be nice to devote some quiet time to focus on these reflections, perhaps while going for a walk or drinking tea.

Suggested readings: my article titled “Renunciation” found on the Articles page of IMC’s website. Also articles by Sister Siripanna and Thanissaro Bhikkhu on our parami class website (URL at bottom of page)

Reflections:

1. It is often said that people resist teachings on renunciation. What are your concerns and views about the value of renunciation? What reservations and fears do you have about the practice of renunciation? What is attractive to you about this practice? In what ways do you understand renunciation differently than the practice of letting go?
2. In what areas of your life could you benefit from practicing renunciation? What motivations or impulses would renunciation help to overcome in those areas? What motivations and understandings would make renunciation easier? Write down a list of all ways you might benefit from renouncing particular things.
3. Under what circumstances is it difficult for you to let go of things you want to let go of? In what circumstances is it easiest? What inner states of being support skillful letting go? What inner states make it difficult?
4. What would be the single most useful thing for you to let go of? Find someone to discuss why this would be useful and what makes it difficult to accomplish.

Practices:

1. Look for an instance when you are strongly clinging to something. Go off by yourself and spend some time observing and reflecting on the clinging. Don’t try to let go. Rather take the time to study as much about the clinging as you can.
2. Choose something you do regularly to renounce for a day. Throughout that day, actively investigate and consider how this renunciation might benefit you. For example, does the act of renouncing help highlight things about yourself that you had previously not seen well?
3. Find situations where you can give something up out of compassion or concern for others. What is it like for you to give something up when it is motivated by compassion?

Handouts, email list for parami course, and info about interviews are found at
www.insightmeditationcenter.org/books-articles/articles/theparamis/