Aputtaka Sutta
(Paṭhamāputtaka Sutta)
The First Discourse on the Childless
[Wealth is meant to be enjoyed]
(Saṁyutta Nikāya 3.19/1:89-91)
Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2007

Introduction

There are two Aputtaka Sutta—the Aputtaka Sutta 1 (S 3.19) and the Aputtaka Sutta 2 (S 3.20). Both have an almost identical introduction (differing only in the seth householder’s wealth) [§3] but the main stories thereafter differ. At least two important and positive points emerge from the two suttas:

1. wealth has a practical value, but is useless if simply stored away;
2. the propensity and capacity to enjoy our wealth is the result of past good karma.

In both suttas, the Buddha’s admonitions centre around a seth householder who dies heirless and intestate. As such, his wealth is forfeit to the crown. In the Aputtaka Sutta 1, the Buddha admonishes that wealth is for the benefit of family, friends and religious. “Family” here refers to the extended family, including “slaves, labourers and and workers,” that is, the whole household. While this represents the enjoyment of the fruit of our goodness, making offerings to “the recluses and brahmans,” that is, worthy and virtuous religious practitioners, is our spiritual investment of present welfare and future happiness [§4].

The foolish—here called “the false individual” (asappurisa)—does not enjoy his wealth at all, and loses everything in the end. The wise—here called “the true individual” (sappurisa)—not only enjoys his wealth and benefits others, but safeguards it from being seized by the authorities or thieves, from being destroyed by the elements, and from being wasted away from bad heirs.

The message here is that true wealth is not something you have, but what you really are, your being. You cannot have happiness; you can only be happy. And you cannot be happy alone, but be happy for them: this is a networking of positive beings truly happy with one another. The Anaṇa (or Anna,ṇātha) Sutta (A 4.62), for example, speaks of the four joys of wealth, namely:

1. the joy of ownership
2. the joy of enjoying
3. the joy of debtlessness
4. the joy of blamelessness

(1) the joy of ownership (the joy of having (the result of diligence),
(2) the joy of enjoying (the joy of being (the result of watchfulness),
(3) the joy of debtlessness (the joy of giving (the result of balanced livelihood), and
(4) the joy of blamelessness (the joy to come (spiritual friendship and spirituality). (A 4.62/2:69-71) = SD 2.2

This teaching regarding wealth is given in more detail in such discourses as the Dīgha,jānu Sutta (A 8.54) and the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta (D 31).
The First Discourse on the Childless
(S 3.19/1:89-91)

1 Originating in Sāvatthī.

Pasenadi’s escheat

2 Then rajah Pasenadi of Kosala in the middle of the day approached the Blessed One. Having approached the Blessed One, he saluted him and the sat down at one side.

Seated thus at one side, the Blessed One said this to rajah Pasenadi of Kosala:

“Now, maharajah, where have you come from in the middle of the day?”

3 “Bhante, a seth householder has died here in Sāvatthī. He had no son; so after conveying his property into the royal palace—80,000,000 pieces of gold, bhante, not [90] to speak of silver!

And yet, bhante, the seth householder’s meals were like this: he ate red rice along with sour gruel!

His clothes were like this: he wore a three-piece hemp garment!

His vehicle was like this: he went about in a little old cart rigged with a leaf awning!”

The false person and his wealth

4 THE FALSE PERSON’S WEALTH. “So it is, maharajah! So it is, maharajah!

When a false person [an inferior person] gains abundant wealth,

he does not enjoy it nor is pleased with it;

his parents do not enjoy it nor are pleased with it;

his wife and children do not enjoy it nor are pleased with it;

his slaves, labourers and servants do not enjoy it nor are pleased with it;

his friends and colleagues do not enjoy it nor are pleased with it.

He places in the recluses and brahmins no offering, that which raises him upwards, heavenward, fruiting in happiness, conducive to the heavens.

Since his wealth is not being properly used,

kings take it away, or

thieves take it away, or

fire burns it away, or

water washes it away, or

6 In other words, he dies intestate, childless and heirless; hence, his property goes to the crown through escheat.

In English feudal law, escheat is the falling back or reversion of lands to the lord of the fee (heritable estate) upon the failure of heirs capable of inheriting under the original grant; or, in our own times, the lapsing or reverting of land to the crown in England, or to the state in the US as original and ultimate proprietor by reason of failure of persons legally entitled to such land. It is a common law doctrine that operates to ensure that property is not left in limbo and ownerless.

7 Asīti, bhante, sata,sahassāni hiraññass’eva, ko pana vādo rūpiyassa.

8 Kaṇājakam bhūjijati bilanga,duṭiyaṁ. Comy explains kaṇājakams as rice with the red powder from the husk (sakuṇḍaka,bhatta) (SA 1:159; AA 2:241). It is a kind of gritty gruel made from broken grains of husked rice (incl the rice dust) (VA 580; DA 814; AA 4:179; DhA 4:77; J 1:228); almost always accompanied by bilanga (“sour gruel”) (f 1:228, 3:299; DhA 3:10; SnA 94; VvA 222). Cf V:RO 3:9.

9 Sānam dhāreti ti,pakkhava,vasanām. The three-piece garment is made by sewing together three pieces of cloth (SA 1:159).

10 Jajjara,rathakena yāti paṇṇa-c,chatṭakena dhāriyaṁāṇena.

11 Asappurisa, “a mean fellow, an unworthy person” (CPD). His qualities (asappurisa,dhamma) are listed in Sappurisa S (M 113/3:37-45) = SD 29.6.

12 This passage on the 5 ways wealth is lost is stock: M 13.10/1:86, 14.19/92; S 139/1.41/1:32, 3.19.4/1:90 (×3), 91; Nm 1.4; Ne:VRI 238.

13 It is ironic (an example of wry humour) that both “kings” (rājāno) and “thieves” (corā) “take it away” (haranti). See S:RD 1:115 n5.

http://dharmafarer.googlepages.com or http://www.dharmafarer.net
Such being the case, maharajah, that wealth, not being properly used, goes to waste, not to enjoyment.

5 PARABLE OF THE USABLE WATER. Suppose, maharajah, in a place uninhabited by human beings, there is a lotus pond with clear, cool, sweet and clean water, with good shallows [fords], and delightful.

But no people were to take that water, nor drink it, nor bathe in it, nor use it for any purpose; even so, maharajah, that water, not being properly used, goes to waste, not to enjoyment.

Even so, maharajah, when an inferior person gains abundant wealth,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>who</th>
<th>action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>does not enjoy it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his parents</td>
<td>do not enjoy it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his wife and children</td>
<td>do not enjoy it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his slaves, labourers</td>
<td>do not enjoy it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his friends and colleagues</td>
<td>do not enjoy it</td>
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He places in the recluses and brahmins no offering, that which raises him upwards, heavenward, fruiting in happiness, conducive to the heavens.

Since his wealth is not being properly used,

<table>
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<td>thieves</td>
<td>take it away, or</td>
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<tr>
<td>fire</td>
<td>burns it away, or</td>
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<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>washes it away, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unloving heirs</td>
<td>take it away</td>
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</table>

Such being the case, maharajah, that wealth, not being properly used, goes to waste, not to enjoyment.

The true individual and his wealth

6 THE TRUE PERSON’S WEALTH. But, maharajah, when a true person [a superior person] gains abundant wealth,

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>who</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>enjoys it and is pleased with it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his parents</td>
<td>enjoy it and are pleased with it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his wife and children</td>
<td>enjoy it and are pleased with it</td>
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<td>his slaves, labourers</td>
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He places in the recluses and brahmins offerings, which raises him upwards, heavenward, fruiting in happiness, conducive to the heavens.

Since his wealth is being properly used,

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<tbody>
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Such being the case, maharajah, that wealth, being properly used, is enjoyed, goes not to waste.

7 PARABLE OF THE UNUSABLE WATER. Suppose, maharajah, in a place uninhabited by human beings, there is a lotus pond with clear, cool, sweet and clean water, with good shallows [fords], and delightful.

And people were to take that water, or drink it, or bathe in it, or use it for any purpose; even so, maharajah, that water, being properly used, is enjoyed, goes not to waste.

Even so, maharajah, when true individual [a superior person] gains abundant wealth,

he enjoys it and is pleased with it;

14 “Uninhabited by humans,” amanussa-ṭhāne, sometimes wrongly tr as “a place of non-humans.”
15 Sappurisa, a worthy person. His qualities (sappurisa,dhamma) are listed in Sappurisa S (M 113/3:37-45) = SD 29.6. On this true individual as a good worldling (kalyāṇa puthujjana), see Dhammaṅņū S (A 7.64) = SD 30.10 Intro (2.3).
his parents enjoy it and are pleased with it;

his wife and children enjoy it and are pleased with it;

his slaves, labourers and servants enjoy it and are pleased with it;

his friends and colleagues enjoy it and are pleased with it.

He places in the recluses and brahmins offerings, which raises him upwards, heavenward, fruiting in happiness, conducive to the heavens.

Since his wealth is being properly used,

kings do not take it away, or

thieves do not take it away, or

fire does not burn it away, or

water does not wash it away, or

unloving heirs do not take it away.

Such being the case, maharajah, that wealth, being properly used, is enjoyed, goes not to waste.

8a Amanussa-ṭṭhāne udakaṁ va sītaṁ
tad apeyyamānaṃ parisosameti
evaṁ dhanaṁ kāpuriso labhitvā
n’ev’attanā bhuñjati no dadāti

Like cool water in a place free from man
dries up without ever being drunk,
so, an inferior person, having gained wealth,
neither enjoys it himself nor does he give. 414

8b Dhīro ca viññū adhigamma bhoge
so bhuñjati kicca,karo ca hoti
so rāti,saṅghaṁ nisabho bharitvā
anindito saggam upeti ṭhānan ti

But when the steady and wise gains wealth,
he enjoys himself and does his duties;
his, the best of man, supports his circle of kin,
free from blame, finds a place in heaven. 415

— evaṃ —

Bibliography

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