

3

Dān'ānisaṃsa Sutta

The Discourse on the Benefits of Giving | A 5.35

Theme: The 5 benefits of giving

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2014

1 Sutta highlights

1.1 SUTTA VARIANTS

1.1.1 The Dān'ānisaṃsa Sutta (A 5.35) is a short discourse listing a set of 5 benefits of giving *dān'ānisaṃsa*) by a lay person [§2], but interestingly addressed to the monks [§1]. A variant of this short list—the **Pañcaka Saddha Sutta** (A 5.38)—is also taught to the monks, but its theme is faith (*saddha*). This shows that the same set of teachings can be used to present different aspects of the Dharma that is appropriate for the individual or the occasion.

1.1.2 The short list probably serves as a matrix (*mātikā*), a summary list, for the monks for their own training so that they can give this teaching to the laity as and when the occasion arises.

We can see here the Buddha using this very matrix, varying it and expanding on it, answering Sīha's question with this set of visible benefits of giving for general Sīha himself in **the (Pañcaka Dāna,phala) Sīha Sutta** (A 5.34) [1.2.1. Such an answer also benefits others.

1.2 COLLATION TABLE AND ANALYSIS

1.2.1 Table. Here we will compare the four related Suttas to see how their sets of benefits of giving are applied to different occasions, and how they are related to one another, that is,

A 5.34 (Pañcaka Dāna,phala) Sīha Sutta	SD 45.2,
A 5.35 Dān'ānisaṃsa Sutta	SD 45.3,
A 5.38 (Pañcaka) Saddha Sutta	SD 45.9, and
A 7.54 (Sattaka Dāna,phala) Sīha Sutta	SD 22.16:

<u>A 7.54</u> (SD 22.16)	<u>A 5.38 [§2]</u> ¹ (SD 45.9)	<u>A 5.35 [§2]</u> (SD 45.3)	<u>A 5.34 [§3]</u> (SD 45.2)
(1) the arhats would <u>show compassion</u> to him first [§2]	(1)	[] <i>same as</i> ² []	[]
(2) the arhats would <u>visit</u> him first [§3]	(2)	--	--
(3) the arhats would <u>accept alms from</u> him first [§4]	(3)	← (2) ³ ≈ (2) ⁴	(2) ⁴
(4) the arhats would <u>teach</u> him first [§5]	(4)	--	--
(5) <u>a good report</u> about him would spread about [§6]	--	(3)	(3)
(6) he would <u>approach any assembly</u> with confidence [§7]	--	[] ⁵	(4)
(7) after death, he will be reborn in <u>a happy destination</u> [§8]	(5)	(5)	(5)

TABLE 1.2 A collation of the 4 Suttas and their respective sets of benefits

1.2.2 Analysis. The **Dān'ānisaṃsa Sutta** (A 5.35) has the most basic (stand-alone) list, but closely paralleling that of **the (Pañcaka Dāna,phala) Sīha Sutta** (A 5.34) (taught to Sīha), except for factor (4), where **A 5.34** has “he approaches any assembly with confidence,” which, however, is the same as in **A 7.54** (also taught to Sīha).

Only **A 5.35** is unique in having “(4) one deviates not from the householder's code.”

¹ **(Pañcaka) Saddha S** (A 5.38) uses the term “the peaceful and the true individuals” (*santo sappurisā*) instead of arhats.

² Both have “(1) One is dear and agreeable to the multitude.”

³ “(2) The truly good individuals associate with one.”

⁴ “(2) The truly good individuals associate with the giver.”

⁵ Here, **A 5.35** has “(4) one deviates not from the householder's code.”

Only A 5.38 (1) is the same as that of A 7.54 (1). Both of these Suttas also share factors (2)-(4), all of which are summarized in A 5.34 (2), “the truly good individuals associate with the giver.” which closely parallels that of A5.35 (2) as “the truly good individuals associate with one.”

The most common denominator is factor (5), rebirth “in a happy destination,” which is common to all the four Suttas.

Hence, we can conclude that the basic list in A 5.35 is used to teach general Sīha on at least three occasions, that is, as reported in A 5.34 (the shortest list of 5 factors for Sīha), which is given a variation in A 5.38, and then expanded into a list of 7 factors (also taught to Sīha).

It is also possible that Sīha is taught these benefits of giving on same occasion, beginning with the short list of 5 qualities, then its variant, and finally the list of 7 factors. The reciters then listed them separately as we have them here, for our convenience.

2 Key words

2.1 “GIVING” [§11]

2.1.1 Etymology and usages. The Pali word for “giving” is *dāna*, which comes from the root √DĀ, “to give,”⁶ from which we get the verbs *dadāti*, “he gives, donates” and *dāti* or *dyāti*, “to deal out, distribute.” *Dāna* can refer any of these meanings or usages:

- what is given, hence a gift, alms;⁷
- an act of giving, hence charity, generosity,⁸ that is, *dāna* in its broadest sense,⁹ where more specifically, the word *cāga*, “charity,” is often used;¹⁰
- more abstractly, munificence, liberality, such as *dhamma,dāna*, “the gift of the Dharma”¹¹; or
- in a neutral sense of applying.¹²

2.1.2 Significance of Buddhist giving

2.1.2.1 A RENUNCIANT IS NOT FOR HIRE. Giving, in early Buddhism, whether to a renunciant or to others, is not merely a transference of goods, but a positive social relationship. When the giving is done between a Dharma-spirited lay party and a virtuous sangha member, or between a Dharma-moved person and a lay worker, it is a vital spiritual contract of sorts.

The recipient (the sangha member or the lay Dharma worker) lives a morally virtuous and spiritually exemplary life that inspires faith in the giver. It is clearly stated in **the Kasi Bhāra,dvāja Sutta** (Sn 1.4), for example, that the Buddha rejects any offering that’s “sung over with verses” (*gāthā’bhigita*).¹³ In other words, he accepts no fees for his teachings and, as he himself declares, “I’m no hireling.”¹⁴

⁶ The Latin is *dōnum*, “a gift,” from which we get Eng “donate,” etc.

⁷ Eg **Pāyasi S** (D 23): “Then prince Pāyāsi made offerings to recluses, brahmins, the poor, the homeless, wayfarers and beggars” (*atha kho pāyāsi rajañño ~am paṭṭhapesi samaṇa,brāhmaṇa,kapaṇiddhika, vaṇṇibbaka,yācakānaṃ*, D 23,8/2:354,14), SD 39.4.

⁸ **Bilāra Kosiya J** (J 450) “Thus, on account of miserliness and heedlessness, they give not [they are not generous]” (*maccherā ca pamādā ca evaṃ ~am na diyyati*, J 450/4:64,8*).

⁹ Eg (**Saṅgha**) **Bala S** (A 9.5): “Bhikkhus, these are the 4 bases of conciliation, namely: generosity, pleasant speech, beneficent conduct, and impartiality” (*cattār’imāni bhikkhave saṅgha,vatthūni ~am peyya.vajjam attha,-cariyā samānattatā*, A 9.5,6/4:364) + SD 2.21 (1.2.2); also **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,1.11(4)/3:232,3). Cf Dh 354a.

¹⁰ Eg (**Aṭṭha**) **Dāna S** (A 8.31): “the 8 ways of giving” (*aṭṭha dāna*), “one gives impulsively; one gives out of fear...” (*āsajja dāna deti, bhayā dānaṃ deti...*) (A 8.31): see SD 6.6, esp 6.6a; also **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,3.1(6)/3:258,10 f).

¹¹ (**Dve**) **Dāna S** (It 98): “Bhikkhu, there are these 2 kinds of giving: material giving and the gift of the Dharma” (It 98/3.5.9/98,1), SD 88.8; “The gift of Dharma surpasses all gifts” (*sabba,dānaṃ dhamma,dānaṃ jināti*, Dh 354a).

¹² Eg **Vinaya**: “A former outside sectarian is given 4 months of probation” (*añña,titthiya,pubbassa cattāro māse parivāsassa ~am*, V 1:69,36).

¹³ Sn 4/1.4/12-16 = S 7.11/172 f @ SD 69.6. See also **Right livelihood**, SD 37.8 (1.4.3+1.5.1).

¹⁴ Sn 25a. Cf (**Arahatta**) **Nanda S** (U 22) where Nanda is jocularly referred to as a “hireling” (*bhataka*) after he accepts the Buddha “offer” of some celestial nymphs as a reward for living the renunciant’s life (U 22,19), SD 43.7.

2.1.2.2 WRONG VIEWS ABOUT WEALTH. The materialist and capitalist view of wealth is that whatever can be measured can be measured in money, and as such can be bought and sold, even what we do, that is, services that we provide. Such a measured system is also propelled by monetary profit and economic growth.

In a worst case scenario, it can turn into an asura-like situation where funds or help are given only in exchange for services rendered or for projected profits. If we were to seek help from such a materialist or capitalist, he is likely to ask, “What can you do for me?” or “What can you give me in return?” or “How much are you worth to me?” and so on. Such a person has clearly lost touch with the Dharma, and is best avoided.¹⁵

2.1.2.3 HELPING THE POOR AND NEEDY. **The Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda Sutta** (D 26) is a remarkable ancient document that uses mythical narrative to relate how equitable distribution of wealth at the proper time is vital in keeping society harmonious and progressive. The poor and needy should be help as soon as their problems are identified and confirmed.

Charity delayed is charity denied. Worse, if this neglect becomes habitual, or even a policy, then crimes and social strife is likely to grow, and the society will devolve in widespread violence and moral degradation.¹⁶

2.1.2.4 PROPER MANAGEMENT OF WEALTH. Teachings on the purpose and management of wealth by the laity are found in such discourses as **the Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** (D 31), **the Dīgha,jānu Sutta** (A 8.54), **the Patta Kamma Sutta** (A 4.61) and **the Ādiya Sutta** (A 5.41).¹⁷ In such Suttas, the emphasis is often on our saving about 25% (a quarter) of our income. Half of the income should be re-invested into the business that we are running (as right livelihood), and the last quarter we may spend for our personal purposes.

This last 25% of our budget given is meant as gifts or support for relatives, properly entertaining guests, offerings to the departed, as taxes to the government and public contributions, and for family and cultural festivities and occasions.¹⁸ These five areas each takes up about 5% of our personal budget.

A fifth of our personal budget should be spent for Dharma work, which includes giving alms to worthy monastics and to lay Buddhist workers. In other words, we are advised to set aside about 5% of our income for Dharma-spirited purposes.¹⁹

It should be noted that this is a culture-based teaching, meant for the Buddha's own times. Although much of its teachings still usefully apply to us today, some adjustments must still be made to reflect our own social and personal realities. The amount of taxes we pay, for example, depends on the country of which we are citizens or are liable to be taxed on our income.

Our amount of savings should also reflect our financial conditions, especially in an economy where borrowing from banks and financial institutions is an accepted and generally safe practice for purchasing homes, etc. One safe bet in wise financial management is clearly that of resorting to having good insurance policies as a means of saving, rather than merely keeping money in a bank or investing in what we are really sure about.

Wealth, in other words, can be an effective tool for uplifting the individual and enriching society, at least by dispelling poverty and reducing, even exterminating, crimes. Every person, in other words, should have or be properly given the means of enjoying the basic needs of life (food, clothing, shelter and health

¹⁵ For a Buddhist view on the uses of wealth, see eg **Ādiya S** (A 5.41), SD 2.1. See also **Kasi Bhāra,dvāja S** (S 7.11 = Sn 1.4), SD 69.6.

¹⁶ D 26,8-20 @ SD 36.10.

¹⁷ See respectively D 31 @ SD 4.1, A 8.54 @ SD 5.10, A 5.41 @ SD 2.1 and A 4.61 @ SD 37.12.

¹⁸ **Ādiya S** (A 5.412) actually states this as “offerings to the devas.” This should *not* be misread as encouraging deva worship, but rather as the Buddha's accommodating a social duty (*dharma*) of his days, insofar as it does not conflict with the Buddha Dharma. For a further discussion of this point, see **Ādiya S** (A 5.41/3:45 f), SD 2.1(2-3). See also **Patta Kamma S** (A 4.61,12/2:68), SD 37.12.

¹⁹ On financial management, see SD 4.1, esp Fig 4.

care), so that he is able to be a contributive member of society. Besides these physical needs, this charity should also extend to education and mental health training.²⁰

2.1.3 “Master giver”

2.1.3.1 DEFINITION. The word *dāna,pati* comes from *dāna*, “giving” [2.1.1] + *pati*, “lord, master, owner, leader” (mostly in the compounds, *gavam~*, “cattle-owner,” *gaha~*, “household,” *dāna~*, “master giver,” *yūtha~*, “warlord,” *senā~*, “general”).²¹ Hence, a suitable translation of *dāna,pati* is “master giver” or “patron,” with a preference for the former, which is more descriptive of such a person. Such a term is usually applied to an especially generous donor and supporter of the sangha, the monastics as a community.

The best known of such a master giver is **Anātha,piṇḍika**,²² the donor and maintainer of the monastery park in Jeta, vana.²³ There are at least two suttas which describes the erstwhile Jain supporter, **general Sīha**, as a master giver, that is, **the (Pañcaka) Dāna,phala Sutta** (A 5.34) and **the (Sattaka Dāna,phala) Sīha Sutta** (A 7.54).²⁴ Another well known master giver is **the lady Visākhā**, the donor of **Migāra,mātu Pasāda** or “mansion of Migāra’s mother.”²⁵

2.1.3.2 COMMENTARIAL DEFINITIONS. According to **the Dīgha Commentary**, a donor (*dāyaka*) is said to be “courageous or heroic in giving” (*dāna,sūra*), meaning, one who does not merely stand in faith but is able to make sacrifices, too. The master giver, on the other hand, is one who gives offerings, and gives on account of being himself the owner of the gift. He is neither a slave nor a companion (of the giver).²⁶ (DA 1:298)

The Saṃyutta Commentary explains “a donor” is one who habitually gives (*dāna,sīla*). A “master giver,” on the other hand, gives knowing that he is the master of that giving, neither a slave nor a companion.²⁷ (SA 1:113)

The Aṅguttara Commentary, like the Dīgha Commentary, similarly defines “a donor” as one who is “courageous or heroic in giving” (*dāna,sūra*), meaning, one who does not merely stand in faith but is able to make sacrifices, too. The master giver, on the other hand, is one who gives offerings, and gives on account of being himself the owner of the gift. He is neither a slave nor a companion (of the giver).²⁸

For one who enjoys something sweet for oneself but gives what is not sweet to others, one gives as a slave of the gift in such a giving that one gives. Who oneself gives what one enjoys oneself, one is a companion in the giving. But one who gives whatever supports oneself, gives others what is sweet—one gives as the eldest (amongst men), as an owner. Such is said in connection with a “master giver.”²⁹ (AA 3:249).

²⁰ On the wholesome purpose of wealth, see **Right livelihood**, SD 37.8 (6.2.1). This is not advocating a welfare state, but a working method of giving wealth where it is needed and would empower the recipient to wholesomely realize and express potential and genius. In short, the spirit of such a giving to help others help themselves, and where wealth can inspire the expression and realization of goodness, ie, truth and beauty on all wholesome levels.

²¹ The other sense of *pati* (no applicable here) is “husband” (S 1:210; Sn 314; J 3:138; PvA 161).

²² On **Anātha,piṇḍika**, see M 143 @ SD 23.9 (1).

²³ V 2:158 f; J 1:92; see also SD 23.9 (1.1.3).

²⁴ A 5.34,3/3:39 f @ SD 45.2 & A 7.54,9/4:81 f @ SD 22.16. See SD 45.2 (1). Also E B Findly, *Dāna: Giving and getting in Pali Buddhism, Delhi*, 195-198.

²⁵ See SD 14.11 (1). For a list of major monastic parks and residences in ancient India, see SD 44.18 (2.1) n.

²⁶ **Dāyako’ti dāna,sūro. Na saddhā mattaken’eva tiṭṭhati, pariccajittum pi sakkotīti attho. Dāna,paṭīti yaṃ dānaṃ deti, tassa pati hutvā deti, na dāso, na saḥāyo.** (DA 1:298)

²⁷ **Dāyako’ti dāna,sīlo. Dāna,paṭīti yaṃ dānaṃ demi, tassa pati hutvā demi, na dāso na saḥāyo.** (SA 1:113)

²⁸ **Dāyako’ti dāna,sūro. Na so saddhā mattaken’eva tiṭṭhati, pariccajittum pi sakkotīti attho. Dāna,paṭīti yaṃ dānaṃ deti, tassa pati hutvā deti, na dāso, na saḥāyo** (AA 3:248)..

²⁹ *Yo hi attanā madhuraṃ bhuñjati, paresaṃ amadhuraṃ deti, so dāna,saṅkhātassa deyya,dhammassa dāso hutvā deti. Yo yaṃ attanā bhuñjati, tad eva deti, so saḥāyo hutvā deti. Yo pana attanā yena kenaci yāpeti, paresaṃ madhuraṃ deti, so pati jeṭṭhako sāmī hutvā deti. Tādisaṃ sandhāya vuttam dāna,paṭīti.* (AA 3:249,7-11). Quoted in Ānanda’s *Upāsaka.jan’ālankāra* (12th cent), 1965:293; Siddhattha’s *Sāra,saṅgaha* (13th cent), 1992:178; Ariyavaṃsa’s *Sutta,saṅgah’aṭṭhakathā* 1929;11. See M Hein, *Theories of the Gift in South Asia*, NY, 2004:127 f.

The Sutta Nipāta Commentary says that a *dāna,pati* is both a giver and a master giver. For, he gives without owing anyone anything, is a “donor” (*dāyaka*), but one who gives in this way without being truly free, is not a “master giver.” This kind of giving one gives is only limited to oneself. This is the meaning here when it is said, “For I, master Gotama, is a giver, a master giver!”³⁰ But, elsewhere, it is said, too, that the master giver is a donor who is not overcome by (even) occasional miserliness.³¹ (SnA 2:413)

2.1.3.3 COMMENTS ON THE COMMENTARIAL DEFINITIONS. From the commentarial viewpoints, we see some significant differences between the “giver” (*dāyaka*) and the “master giver” (*dāna,pati*). A **giver** refers to a donor whose generosity is limited by his means and social status, that is, he may have limited means or limited freedom or both. A poor person is neither able to make big donations nor give often. He could be burdened with debts, which in ancient India, might make him liable to fall into debt slavery, that is, to serve as a slave to the family of his creditor.³²

A **master giver**, on the other hand, is both a wealthy, socially free person, and one of good standing. that is, one of great or even almost unlimited means, not a debtor, nor one of low morals. One interesting point here is that the commentarial definitions seem to suggest that it is best to give individually, and not “as a companion.” This clearly goes against the sutta teaching that exhorts us to “delight in having a share in giving” (*dāna,samvibhāga,rato*),³³ and also encourages others to give, which are defining qualities in the “accomplishment of charity” (*caga,sampadā*).³⁴

Both the **(Pañcaka Dāna,phala) Sīha Sutta** (A 5.34) and the **(Sattaka Dāna,phala) Sīha Sutta** (A 7.54) present general Sīha as exulting that he is a “master giver,” testifying to his wise faith in the Buddha. His “wise faith” (*avecca-p,pasāda*) is clarified in his declaration in both Suttas that he knows for himself the various benefits of giving, except that of his future rebirth, which he accepts on faith what the Buddha has to say.³⁵

2.1.3.5 THE BEST OF GIVERS. Despite all the virtues of a “master giver” listed here, he is still not the best of givers. As a rule, the true lay practitioner is not only generous at home and outside, but he also encourages others to give, and enjoys having a share in communal giving [2.1.3.5].³⁶ Even nobler than the giving of a master giver is that of a saint’s giving, as exemplified by **Ugga in the (Hatthi,gāmaka) Ugga Sutta** (A 8.22).

The Sutta relates how although Ugga knows that there are those of “unvirtuous, bad nature” in the community, he gives equally to all the monks as a sangha.³⁷ This is also called “the true individual’s giving.”³⁸ Elsewhere, the disciple is admonished to practise “discriminate giving” (*viceyya,dāna*), that is, giving to the giftworthy first.³⁹

And the highest giver, or rather the greatest gift, is one that can be given by anyone, not necessarily a master giver. This is **the “gift of the Dharma”** (*dhamma,dāna*) (Dh 354), the foremost of gifts.⁴⁰ This is

³⁰ **(Pañcaka Dāna,phala) Sīha S** (A 5.34,3), SD 45.2 ≈ **(Sattaka Dāna,phala) Sīha S** (A 7.54.9), SD 22.16.

³¹ *Dāna,patīti dāyako c’eva dāna,pati ca. Yo hi aññassa santakam tenāṇatto deti, so’pi dāyako hoti, tasmim pana dāne issariyābhāvato na dāna,pati. Ayam pana attano santakam yeva deti. Ten’āha “ahañ hi, bho gotama, dāyako dāna,patīti. Ayam eva hi ettha attho. Aññatra pana antar’antarā maccherena abhibhuyyamāno dāyako anabhibhūto dāna,patīti,ādīnā’pi nayena vattum vaṭṭati.* (SnA 2:413)

³² On slavery in ancient India, see **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31,35) n on “slaves” @ SD 4.1.

³³ *Dāna,samvibhāga = dāna* (“giving”) + *sam* (together) + *vi* (divided) + *bhāga* (“division, part”): for refs, see **Thapati S** (S 55.6) @ SD 42.7 (3.2.1). See also **Sappurisa Dāna S** (A 5.148) @ SD 22.15 (2), esp 4.

³⁴ **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54.14), SD 5.10. See also Sāriputta’s comment at DhA 1.7/1:78 & **Group karma**, SD 39.1 (2.5).

³⁵ **A 5.34,3/3:39 f** @ SD 45.2 & **A 7.54,9/4:81 f** @ SD 22.16.

³⁶ See **(Upāsaka,sampadā) Mahānāma S** (S 55.37/5:395), SD 6.2.

³⁷ A 8.22,10/4:215 @ SD 45.18.

³⁸ See **Sappurisa,dāna S** (A 5.148/3:172 f), SD 22.15 (2).

³⁹ See eg **Sādhu S** (S 1.33/1:20-22 @ SD 22.10c); **(Dāna) Vaccha,gotta S** (A 3.57/1:160-162 @ SD 22.12 (2)); **Āditta J** (J 424 @ SD 22.10a (1.3)).

⁴⁰ See **SD 38.6** (1.2.4.3): The true individual, & **SD 38.4** (2.3): Three kinds of joy.

considered the highest, and *is* the highest because we are giving more than what we *have*: we are what we *are*. The Dharma gift is a teaching that inspires and empowers us to cultivate and liberate ourselves, a teaching that is given with joy so that we are also happy here and now, whether we are faith-inclined or wisdom-inclined.

2.1.3.5 By commentarial times (300-500 years after the Buddha), the monastics, especially the monks, had become more domesticated, more socially engaged, living more settled and well-endowed lives in urban monasteries that sometimes serve as an independent town.⁴¹ To sustain such worldliness and fend off competitions, the key actors tend to reinterpret, even disparage, early Buddhism and the suttas, and innovate their own teachings and scriptures to reinforce their social and economic status. Religion, in short, has become a means of attracting wealth and worldliness.

Clear hints of this dark shadow of our materialistic past can still be seen today where temples, centres and groups are set up and run by individuals of means and influence who define their own Buddhisms and propagate their personal ideologies. Such enterprises tend to stress on certain rituals and dogmas which would domesticate devotees and others as a pool of funds and talents to serve a parochial agenda.

The two best tools we need to correct such serious aberrations and abuse of Buddhism is that of a proper approach to the suttas and a wholesome practice of mental cultivation. A good understanding of the suttas presents us with the Buddhist **truth** which goes back as close to the Buddha himself as possible. Wholesome meditation sustains us with the food of **joy** needed to inspire others to follow the path of personal development, mental health and liberating wisdom. The purpose of the Dharma is to liberate us from mental slavery of any kind.⁴²

2.2 “TRULY GOOD INDIVIDUALS” [§2(2)]

2.2.1 *Santo sappurisā*

2.2.1.1 *Santo*. Here, *santo*—as the present participle of *atthi*, “there is”—in the phrase *santo sappurisā*, “truly good individuals,”⁴³ has the meaning of “good.” It is in the plural 3rd person, which is common enough in the suttas.⁴⁴ (The singular 3rd person is also *santo*.) *Sappurisa* is best rendered as “true individual,” but we will discuss this later [2.2.1.2]. Hence, literally, the phrase would read “good true individual.” However, as the phrase here clearly refers to the arhat [§4d], it should be rendered as “truly good individual.

Santo also has another sense which is equally applicable here. As the past participle of *sammati*, “to be appeased; to rest,” it can be “good” as well as “peaceful.”⁴⁵ Hence, we can render the phrase *santo sappurisā* as “peaceful true individuals,” which also well describes the arhats.

2.2.1.2 *Sappurisa* means “good person,” true individual,” also “superior person,” “virtuous person,” “ideal person.” Often, it is a synonym of “noble disciple” (*ariya, sāvaka*), that is, any of the saints of the path, including the arhat. This is of course the sense used here in the Dān’ānisaṃsa Sutta [§4d].

In some contexts, however, *sappurisa* has a specific senses, referring to two kinds of streamwinners, that is, the first stage of the path to awakening, that is, a faith-follower (*saddhā’ nussarī*) and a truth-follower (*dhammānussarī*) at the moment of becoming a streamwinner.⁴⁶

Sappurisa, on a more general level, refers to a true lay individual. **The (Saṅkhitta) Sappurisa Dāna Sutta** (A 8.37), for example, briefly defines such a true lay follower as a true giver, that is, one who gives

⁴¹ In Tibet, some monastery-centre townships actually had clerics as their potentates: they were ruled by monastics who owned wealth, property, and slaves, and had families. See eg M B P Lee, “Tibetan Buddhism: Serfdom to Emancipation” [Internet], ver 43, Knol 2010: <http://knol.google.com/k/mbp-lee/tibetan-buddhism-serfdom-to-emancipation/1123x9udotn1a/2>.

⁴² On “mental slavery”: **The person in Buddhism**, SD 29.6b (7.4).

⁴³ M 3:187* = A 1:142*; A 2:193, 3:39×3, 41×2, 42, 43; J 6* (Deva, dhamma J); Kvu 349*; also SA 1:130; AA 3:251; SnA 2:422; ThaA 1:40.

⁴⁴ Here *santo* is pl nom as in S 384d/1:71,22* = Dh 151d (Comy: *santo buddh’ādayo*, “the Buddha, etc,” DhA 3:-123); Sn 450a (Comy: *buddh’ādayo*, SnA 398,23), 453d, 932d.

⁴⁵ V 1:4; D 1:12; S 1:5; A 2:18; Sn 746; Pv 4.1.34.

⁴⁶ On the qualities of a “true individual,” see **Sappurisa S** (M 113), SD 23.7 (3).& **Bāla Paṇḍita S** (M 129,27-50), SD 2.22. See also **D 33.2.2(6)/3:252**, **34.1.8(7)/3:283**; **M 110.14-24/3:23 f**; **A 7.64/4:113**, **8.38/4:144**.

alms that is pure, choice, at the right time, what is allowable, repeatedly, discriminately [after careful examination]; while giving, his mind is radiant with faith, and after the giving he is happily satisfied.⁴⁷ **The (Mahā,megha) Sappurisa Sutta** (A 8.38) declares that a true lay individual arises for the good of all beings: the family, society, religion, and even the gods.⁴⁸

2.3 “HOUSEHOLDER’S CODE” [§2(4)]

2.3.1 According to the Dān'ānisaṃsa Sutta, the fourth benefit of giving is that “One deviates not from the householder’s code” (*gihi,dhammā anapagato*).⁴⁹ The Commentary glosses this as “He does not break (any of) the 5 precepts” (*akhaṇḍa,pañca.sīlo hoti*, AA 3:249). Although this is a commentarial gloss, we have sutta references to the practice of the 5 precepts. [2.3.2]

2.3.2 The householder’s codes (*gihi,dhamma*), as the 5 precepts is prominently stated in **the Dīgha,-jānu Sutta** (A 8.54) as follows:

What is the accomplishment of moral virtue (*sīla,sampadā*)?

Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family
 abstains from harming life,
 abstains from taking the not-given,
 abstains from sexual misconduct,
 abstains from false speech,
 abstains from strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness.

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of moral virtue. (A 8.54,13/4:281),SD 5.10

2.3.3 Now, **the Dān'ānisaṃsa Sutta** speaks of the fourth benefit of giving as that “one deviates not from the householder’s code” [2.3.1]. What does this mean? How does this work? The answer lies in **the Puñña,kiriya,vatthu Sutta** (A 8.36), which discusses the 3 grounds of merit-making, that is, giving (*dāna*), moral virtue (*sīla*) and mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*) in some helpful detail.

A person who rarely practises generosity, has little moral virtue, and *no* mental cultivation, says the Sutta, is reborn amongst humans, but into unfavourable circumstances (A 8.36,3). Similarly, where the person does have *some* moral virtue, he is reborn as a human into *favourable* circumstances (A 8.36,4).

In the case of those of who show great generosity *and* great moral virtue, they are reborn in any of the sense-world heavens (A 8.36,5-10). The Sutta further notes that in each heaven, their celestial leader surpasses the other devas of their respective realms in ten blessings.⁵⁰ All this is the result of practising the 3 grounds for merit.⁵¹

In short, for really good heavenly rebirth, we need to have great track record of generosity, moral virtue and mental cultivation. And it is all based on the humble act of giving.

3 An analysis of the 5 benefits of giving

3.1 “ONE IS DEAR AND AGREEABLE TO THE MULTITUDE” (*bahunō janassa piyo hoti manāpo*) [§2]

3.1.1 Motivations and benefits. **The (Aṭṭha) Dāna Suttas 1+2** (A 8.31+32) and **the Dāna Vatthu Sutta** (A 8.33) list various reasons and motives for giving,⁵² namely, out of love, out of fear, out of delusion, out of fear, out of habit, out of gratitude, for the sake of gain, for a good feeling, out of pity, for the

⁴⁷ A 8.37/4:243 f.

⁴⁸ A 8.38/4:244 f @ SD 30.10 (3.2).

⁴⁹ *Gihi,dhammā anapagato* [Be Se so; Ce Ee *gihi,dhammā anapeto*; Ke *gihi,dhammam anupagato*] *hoti*. Here, *anapagata* (mfn) = *anapeta* (VA & VAT ad V 1:359,8*; MA ad M 3:25,23; A 3:41,5 = AA 3:27,3). See CPD: *anapagata* & *anapeta*. On the significance of this line, see Intro (2.3).

⁵⁰ That is, in divine lifespan, divine beauty, divine happiness, divine fame, divine lordship, divine form, divine sound, divine fragrance, divine taste, and divine touch.

⁵¹ A 8.36/4:241-243 @ SD 22.17.

⁵² **(Aṭṭha) Dāna S 1+2** (A 8.31+32), SD 6.6 (6a+b); **Dāna Vatthu S** (A 8.33), SD 6.6c.

sake of prestige, for the sake of better rebirth, for the sake of personal satisfaction, and the best motive is said to be when “one gives for the sake of adorning the mind, as a support for the mind.”⁵³

Interestingly, the first of the 5 benefits mentioned in **the Dān’ānisaṃsa Sutta** (A 5.35)⁵⁴ is not found in any of those listed in the above three Suttas on giving. This is not surprising as these are actual benefits arising *naturally* from giving rather than some hoped-for benefits coming from it.

3.1.2 Right livelihood. Here the vital assumption is that generosity is a true virtue, and that people feel free and happy in giving and in receiving, especially as a gesture of love, respect, gratitude, or appreciation. Such a state of affairs is easily observed in traditional Thai society, for example. This is also a key spirit that underlies right livelihood of the laity, and the spirit of an extended spiritual family.⁵⁵

Charity begins at home, but does not end there. Where charity is well given and well received, it builds a rapport that inspires a spirit of an extended family, especially when it is imbued with trust on all sides. Trust (*vissāsa*) makes us the best kinsmen (Dh 204c).⁵⁶

3.1.3 Giving and the 4 divine abodes

3.1.3.1 True giving, then, is a cultivation of lovingkindness, that is, unconditionally accepting others as they are, empowering to growth intellectually, emotionally, creatively and spiritually. Here, giving is an appreciation of being.

3.1.3.2 Buddhist giving as a cultivation of compassion is to give to others even when they do not deserve it, but when such generosity empowers them to better themselves. While it is obvious that the victims of poverty, of natural disasters and other misfortune would certainly *deserve* proper help, there are always those who are unable to obtain training or tools for realizing their wholesome potential or genius.

3.1.3.3 Clearly we should express our gladness at the wholesome qualities and goodness of other by giving them what would enhance their wholesome contributions so that they are able to do more for a greater number of people, for society, and the environment as a whole.

3.1.3.4 Giving, finally, must be tempered with equanimity, where we cannot be biased by fear or favour in being generous to others. At the same time, we should work to prevent misuse and abuse of generosity so that the solution does not itself become a problem. If generosity is a celebration of wealth, then we should be constantly aware that we are celebrating together as a community in a friendly and wholesome manner so that generosity is, as a rule, the basis for greater happiness and spiritual liberation.⁵⁷

3.2 “THE TRULY GOOD INDIVIDUALS ASSOCIATE WITH ONE” (*santo sappurisā bhajanti*) [§2]

3.2.1 Appreciation of being. Giving, as we have noted, is an appreciation of being [3.1.3.1]. As such, it is also a means of communication, especially towards someone from whom we have an opportunity to learn something wholesome, whether academically, emotionally or spiritually—or simply as a friend.

The Dān’ānisaṃsa Sutta specifically refers to “the truly good individuals, or peaceful true individual” (*santo sappurisā*). They are said to be “the peaceful...brahmacharis who are restrained” (*santo...saññatā brahmā, carayo*) [§3cd], and they are arhats [§4]. The best recipients of our giving well given are of course the arhats.

3.2.2 Recognizing an arhat. However, we have a fundamental problem here. How do we recognize an arhat? Since we are ourselves unawakened, it is unlikely that we would be able to know an arhat if we met one. Or worse, on account of our lust and bias, we could project such a quality to someone we admire or someone who is clever in putting on airs or who endorses our pet views.

⁵³ *Cittālaṅkāra, citta, parikkhār’attham dānam deti*. As at (**Maha-p,phala**) **Dāna S** (A 7.49.4(7)). See SD 6.6 Intro.

⁵⁴ Similarly, none of the benefits in (**Pañcaka Dāna,phala**) **Siha S** (A 5.38), SD 45.9, and (**Sattaka Dāna,phala**) **Siha S** (A 7.54), SD 22.16, include the motives for giving as found in the above 3 suttas. See SD 45.2 (Table 1.4) for a collation of the various benefits.

⁵⁵ See **Right livelihood**, SD 37.8 (6.2.2.2).

⁵⁶ On trust as an expression of love, see SD 38.4 (4.2).

⁵⁷ On the 4 divine abodes and wealth, see SD 37.8 (2.5).

We can turn to two instructive discourses for help here, that is, **the Satta Jaṭila Sutta** (S 3.11) and **the (Cātu) Ṭhāna Sutta** (A 4.192).⁵⁸ In both suttas, the Buddha teaches us how to truly know a person's character, thus:

The character of another can be known thus:

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) through <u>living with another</u> , | one knows his moral virtue (<i>sīla</i>); |
| (2) through <u>dealing with another</u> , | one knows his honesty (<i>soceyya</i>); |
| (3) through <u>adversities</u> , | one knows his fortitude [emotional strength] (<i>thāma</i>); |
| (4) through <u>discussing with another</u> , | one knows his wisdom (<i>paññā</i>). |

That is, only through careful observation over time by one who is attentive and wise.

(S 3.11/1:78 f = U 6.2/65 f; detailed in **the (Cātu) Ṭhāna Sutta**, A 4.192/2:187-190)

This is, of course, not a foolproof way of knowing an arhat (since we might be blindsided to someone's faults or simply lack the wisdom for character analysis). However, if we are mindful enough, and honest enough, we might not know if the person is an arhat, but we could easily know that he is *not* one if his actions suggest any greed, hate or delusion.⁵⁹

3.2.3 Approaching a teacher. Even if we are unable to recognize an arhat or is unable to meet one, we should make every effort to learn proper Dharma from a wise, compassionate and experienced teacher, whether monastic or lay. We could begin by asking around about a teacher, and generally we will get a very good idea of how good, or how bad, a teacher is from those he has taught.

Another way is to attend a public teaching by a teacher and see if he is really calm as a person, one who does not put on airs, who is clear and kind in his teachings, and who is adept in answering the audience's questions.⁶⁰ At the end of the talk, we might try to approach the teacher to see if he is just as wise and compassionate in dealing with an individual (and not merely a crowd-pleaser).⁶¹

3.3 "ONE'S GOOD REPUTATION SPREADS" (*kalyāṇo kitti,saddo abbhuggacchati*) [§2]

3.3.1 How does giving spread our reputation? From the Dān'ānisaṃsa Sutta [§§3-4] and the commentaries [2.1.3], we can say that this reputation has to do the fact that we are big and regular donors of alms to the monastics. The perception the public would have is that we are very wealthy and also deeply virtuous persons. Hence, the public would generally respect us whenever we are before them.

Anātha,piṇḍika is so called because he regularly gives almsfood (*piṇḍa*) to those who are destitute, those without a refuge (*a-nātha*).⁶² If we, like Anātha,piṇḍika, were to also regularly give alms, not just to monastics, but to anyone who needs it, then our reputation would grow even greater.

3.3.2 More important than gaining mere fame, when we give alms to monastics we give them life, health and strength. Arhats, for example, would not complain even if they were not to receive any almsfood. However, if they do not take food over a prolonged period, they would starve to death. The regular offerings of almsfood by the laity sustain the arhats and other saints so that they are able to live on, teaching the Dharma, so that the teaching is propagated and established for long time.

Those who offer alms regularly to the Buddha and his monastics therefore build for themselves a reputation of propagating and preserving the Buddha's teachings. Even without teaching themselves, such dedicated donors, such as Anātha,piṇḍika and general Sīha, are contributing to the life and health of the

⁵⁸ Respectively, S 3.11 @ SD 14.11 & A 4.192 @ SD 14.12.

⁵⁹ Further see **Vīmaṃsaka S** (M 37) + SD 35.6 (3.2).

⁶⁰ A bad teacher, monastic or lay, may answer off the point, or evade a question, or worse get upset, even angry, at a questioner who is seen as annoying. The size of an audience does not reflect the wisdom or compassion of a teacher, but simply reflects what a crowd sees as attractive. Teachings given to crowds are usually more watered down and heavy on entertainment value while personal teachings tend to better help us in our own understanding of the Dharma and practice in mental cultivation. A good teacher is also able to answer our questions so as inspire us to better study the suttas or understand ourselves better through our meditation.

⁶¹ On the 12-step approach to a good teacher, see **Caṅkī S** (M 95,21.2-33) + SD 21.15 (5).

⁶² It is said in his house, 500 seats are always ready in his house for any guests who might come (DA 1:303), and 2000 seats always ready for monks (DhA 1:4).

Buddha and the monastics so that they live on usefully and effectively as Dharma teachers and healers to those who need their help.

3.4 “ONE DEVIATES NOT FROM THE HOUSEHOLDER’S CODE” (*gihi,dhammā anapagato*) [§2]. We have already noted [2.3.1] that “the householder’s code” (*gihi,dhamma*) refers to the 5 precepts of the lay person [2.3.2]. The giver does not deviate from the 5 precepts on account of the merits and spiritual power he gains from giving. When the giver gives joyfully, this joy grows in him to become a support for keeping to the precepts. A joyful person is unlikely to break any of the precepts, or do any bad. [2.3.3]

3.5 A GOOD REBIRTH [§2]

3.5.1 While benefits (1)-(4) are enjoyed in this life, this fifth benefit will come in the future life or lives.⁶³ This fifth benefit of giving, according to **the Dān’ānisaṁsa Sutta**, is that **“when the body breaks up, after death, one is reborn in a happy heavenly world”** (*kāyassa bhedā param maraṇā sugatim saggam lokam upapajjati*). We have noted how, with giving as basis, we are strengthened to keep the precepts [3.4].

The joy of giving and the merit of moral virtue in turn work together as the bases for mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*), whether this means the practice of something as simple as the perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*),⁶⁴ or cultivating satipathana to gain dhyana. While the perception of impermanence leads to streamwinning in this life itself, the attaining of dhyana leads to rebirth in one of the form heavens. It is also possible for the streamwinner to be reborn in one of the lower heavens, if not he will certainly gain rebirth on earth in circumstances conducive to his Dharma cultivation, which is of course, better than a heaven rebirth.

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The Discourse on the Benefits of Giving

A 5.35

The 5 benefits of giving

- 1 Bhikshus, there are these 5 benefits of giving.
What are the five?
- 2 (1) One is dear and agreeable to the multitude.⁶⁵
(2) The truly good individuals [peaceful true individuals]⁶⁶ associate with one.⁶⁷
(3) One’s good reputation spreads.⁶⁸
(4) One deviates not from the householder’s code.⁶⁹
(5) When the body breaks up, after death, one is reborn in a happy heavenly world.⁷⁰

⁶³ See (**Pañcaka Dāna,phala**) **Sīha S** (A 5.34) @ SD 45.2 (1.5.2).

⁶⁴ See eg (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

⁶⁵ *Bahunō janassa piyo hoti manāpo*. See Intro (3.1).

⁶⁶ *Santo sappurisā bhajanti*. Comy: *santo nam bhajanti*. Here, “the peaceful...brahmacharis who are restrained” (*santo...saññatā brahmā,carayo*) [§3cd], and they are arhats [§4]. See Intro (2.2; 3.2).

⁶⁷ See (**Upagantabba**) **Kula S** (A 9.17), where the Buddha instructs monastics to avoid approaching a household for alms with any of 9 qualities. Essentially, these points centre around disrespect for the Dharma and the monastics (A 9.17), SD 37.11.

⁶⁸ *Kalyāṇo kitti,saddo abbhuggacchati*. See Intro (3.3).

⁶⁹ *Gihi,dhammā anapagato* [Be Se so; Ce Ee *gihi,dhammā anapeto*; Ke *gihi,dhammam anupagato*] *hoti*. Here, *anapagata* (mfn) = *anapeta* (VA & VAṬ ad V 1:359,8*; MA ad M 3:25,23; A 3:41,5 = AA 3:27,3). See CPD: an-apa-gata & anapeta. On the significance of this line, see Intro (2.3; 3.4).

These, bhikshus, are the 5 benefits of giving.

The verses of the benefits of giving

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>3 <i>Dadamāno piyo hoti
sataṃ dhammaṃ anukkamaṃ.
Santo naṃ sadā bhajanti⁷¹
saññatā brahma, cārayo.</i></p> | <p>By giving one becomes beloved.
One follows the nature of the good.
The peaceful always associate with one,⁷²
the brahmacharis who are restrained.</p> |
| <p>4 <i>Te tassa dhammaṃ desenti
sabba, dukkhā, panūdanaṃ
Yaṃ so dhammaṃ idha-ñ, ñāya⁷³
parinibbāti anāsavo 'ti.</i></p> | <p>They teach one the Dharma
that dispels all suffering,
the Dharma, having understood which,
the influx-destroyed attain nirvana.</p> |

— evaṃ —

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⁷⁰ *Kāyassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā sugatīṃ saggaṃ lokam upapajjati.* While benefits (1)-(4) are enjoyed in this life, this fifth benefit will come in the future life or lives. See Intro (3.5) & **(Pañcaka Dāna, phala) Sīha S** (A 5.34) @ SD 45.2 (1.5.2).

⁷¹ Be Ee Se so; Ce *santo bhajanti sappurisā.*

⁷² Idiomatically, lines cd should read: “The good brahmacharis who’re restrained | always associate with one.”

⁷³ These last 2 lines also at V 2:148, 164; J 1:94.