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Ādiya Sutta

The Discourse on Uses | A 5.41
 Chinese Āgama MĀ 126* = T1.615a8-616a4
 Theme: The best benefits of wealth
 Translated by Piya Tan ©2003; rev 2010

1 Related suttas

1.1 The Ādiya Sutta belongs to the category of teachings specially given to the laity called the layman's discipline (*gihī,vinaya*). The importance of this Sutta's teachings is attested by its numerous appearances elsewhere in the Canon.

The Sutta seems to be an excerpt (later half) of a longer Sutta entitled **the Patta Kamma Sutta** (A 4.61)¹, also addressed to Anāthapiṇḍika, and which instructs on enjoying the benefits of both worlds. A special "counterpoint" version of the Ādiya Sutta is **the (Ādīnavā) Bhoga Sutta** (A 5.227), where the 5 disadvantages of wealth are mentioned as the danger of fire, water, the king, robbers, and bad heirs, and the 5 advantages of wealth are as in the Ādiya Sutta here.²

1.2 The first 3 prose sections [§§2-4] here appear twice in **the Aputtaka Sutta 1** (S 3.19)³ in connection with how a false person (*asappurisa*) fails to enjoy his wealth and how a true person (*sappurisa*) enjoys his wealth. The prose section of this Sutta has very similar ideas, but in abridged form, as **the (Mahā,-megha) Sappurisa Sutta** (A 8.38),⁴ and the closing verses of the Ādiya Sutta are also found in **the Patta Kamma Sutta** (A 4.61).⁵

1.3 An interesting comparison can be made between the Ādiya Sutta and **the Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** (D 31). The Ādiya Sutta follows the framework of concentric circles of human relationship beginning with the extended family (parents, children, spouse, family and workers), friends and companions (including work colleagues), economic security, social propriety and spiritual giving.

The Sigāl'ovāda Sutta, on the other hand, follows a directional framework of reciprocal social responsibilities: the east (parents), the south (teachers), the west (family), the north (friends and companions), the nadir (workers) and the zenith (spiritual teachers).⁶ **The Sigāl'ovāda Sutta's** section on true friendship,⁷ closes with this stanza:

He divides his wealth into four:
 one part he should enjoy,⁸
 and the fourth he should save

with two he invests in his work,
 should there be any misfortune.

(D 31,26/3:188), SD 4.1 (4).

* Partial or doubtful parallel.

¹ A 4.612:65-69 (SD 37.12).

² **(Ādīnavā) Bhoga S** (A 5.227/3:259), SD 100.3.

³ **Aputtaka S 1** (S 3.19,4-7/1:90 f), SD 22.4.

⁴ **(Mahā,megha) Sappurisa S** (A 8.38/4:244 f), SD 30.10(3.2b).

⁵ **Patta Kamma S** (A 4.61/2:68 f), SD 37.12.

⁶ D 31,27-34/3:188-193 (SD 4.1).

⁷ D 31,26/3:188 (SD 4.1).

⁸ Buddhaghosa thinks that of these four, the first is the best for doing skillful acts since one could both donate to monks, the destitute and travellers, and also pay the weavers, bathmen, etc [ie for personal services] (DA 3:952).

1.4 The “one part he should enjoy” (*ekena bhoge bhuñjeyya*) is here divided into “the 5 uses of wealth” (*pañca bhogānaṃ ādiyā*) of the *Ādiyā Sutta* [§2-6]. If this were the case, then we can say a fifth of one’s income⁹ should be used for the benefit of “all those recluses and brahmins who abstain from intoxication and heedlessness, who bear all things with patience and restraint, each taming himself, each calming himself, each cooling himself” [§6], that is, for the support of worthy religious practitioners.

2 The 5 offerings

2.1 The 5 offerings (*pañca, balī*) are mentioned only twice in the canon, that is, in **the Patta Kamma Sutta** (A 4.61)¹⁰ and **the Ādiyā Sutta** [§5 & concluding verse]. They are originally found in brahminical lore, where they are called “the 5 great sacrifices” (*pañca mahā, yajña*), namely:

(1) <i>deva, yajña</i>	the divine sacrifice	offering <i>ahuti</i> to devas;
(2) <i>pitṛ, yajña</i>	the ancestral sacrifice	offerings of libations to ancestors;
(3) <i>bhūta, yajña</i>	the sacrifice to beings	offering <i>balī</i> or foodstuffs to all creatures;
(4) <i>manuṣya, yajña</i>	the sacrifice to humans	feeding guests; and
(5) <i>brahma, yajña</i>	the perfect sacrifice	chanting of the Vedas.

(Taittīriya Āraṇyaka 2.10)

2.2 The *balī* or *bhūta, yajña* is one of the 5 daily sacrifices (*yajña*) to be performed by a brahminical householder (Manu, *smṛti* 3.67, 91). It consists of a portion of the daily meal (rice, grain, ghee etc) to all creatures, and is usually performed by throwing the offering up into the air near the main door before consuming the meal.¹¹

2.3 In Buddhism, **the 5 offerings** can be regarded as traditional social duties by way of offerings to relatives and guests, civic duty to the government (paying taxes, etc), and religious duties to the departed and the deity. These duties or offerings are not instituted by the Buddha but common non-Buddhist practices that were tolerated.¹²

2.4 Although “**offering to deity**” (*devatā, balī*) is included, it does not mean that the Buddha approves of deva-worship. It clearly goes against the non-theistic spirit of early Buddhism. Here, “offering to deity” is only a “bridge,” a skillful means, for those Buddhists who, for some reason, still show allegiance to their old beliefs or dominant beliefs. [3]

It should also be stressed that the “offering to deity” is especially for God-believers who are attracted to the Dharma. They may continue with such worship and offerings so long as they do not go against the spirit of the Dharma, but is harmoniously done. Above all, it serves as an inspiring meditation to deepen their mind training. As they become more familiar with the benefits of Buddhist meditation, they are encouraged to reduce, even abandon, those practices that are unhelpful in spiritual progress.¹³

⁹ This, of course, assumes that the 5 uses entail equally divided portions or budgeting. On financial management, see **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31), SD 4.1 (4).

¹⁰ A 4.61, 12/2:68 (SD 37.12).

¹¹ See Piyasilo 1990c:17, 71.

¹² See eg **(Alabhanīya) Tḥāna S** (A 5.48 stanzas) for the Buddha’s tolerant approach, see (4) below. On “transfer of merit,” see **(Saddha) Jāṇussoṇi S** (A 10.177/5:269-273), SD 2.6a, esp Intro.

¹³ See **Devatā’nussati**, SD 15.13 & SD 52.1 (18.3.2.4).

3 Where prayer does not help

3.1 The Ādiya Sutta (A 5.41)—and **the Patta Kamma Sutta** (A 4.61)¹⁴—refer to “offering to deity” (*devatā, balī*) [5.5], which is somewhat problematic. The Pali Canon clearly records the Buddha as declaring that **prayer** does not bring one spiritual release, although there is no clear evidence that he forbids the worship of devas, at least amongst the Buddhist laity. **The Iṭṭha Sutta** (A 5.43), given by the Buddha to Anātha, piṇḍika, however, is very instructive:

Houselord, there are these 5 things that are desirable, beloved and agreeable but difficult to obtain in the world. What are the five?

Long life, beauty, happiness, fame, and rebirth in heaven. Of these 5 things, houselord, I do not teach that they are to be obtained through prayer (*āyācana, hetu*) or through wishing (*patthanā, hetu*).¹⁵ If one could obtain them through prayer or through wishing, who would not obtain them?

For a noble disciple, houselord, who wishes to have long life, it is not proper that he should pray for long life or take delight in doing so. He should rather follow a way of life that is conducive to long life [such as the practice of giving, moral conduct and mental cultivation]. By following such a path, he would obtain long life, be it divine or human.

For a noble disciple, houselord, who wishes to have beauty ,...

For a noble disciple, houselord, who wishes to have happiness ,...

For a noble disciple, houselord, who wishes to have fame, it is not proper that he should pray for *them* or take delight in doing so. He should rather follow a way of life that is conducive to *them* [such as the practice of giving, moral conduct and mental cultivation]. By following such a path, he would obtain beauty,... happiness,...fame, be it divine or human.

For a noble disciple, houselord, who wishes to have rebirth in heaven, it is not proper that he should pray for rebirth in heaven or take delight in doing so. He should rather follow a way of life that is conducive to rebirth in heaven [such as the practice of giving, moral conduct and mental cultivation]. By following such a path, he would obtain rebirth in heaven.

(A 5.43/3:47-49 abridged), SD 12.4(2)

3.2 A similar spirit is reflected in **the Brahma,deva Sutta** (S 6.3), where Brahmā Sahampati himself comes down from his heaven and appears before a brahminee (the monk Brahma,deva’s mother), who was a Brahmā devotee, admonishing her on the futility of her offerings, since brahmās do not partake of earthly offerings, but subsist on dhyanic joy. More importantly, Brahmā instructs the brahminee that her offerings would yield great fruit if she were to offer them to her own arhat son, Brahma,deva.¹⁶

4 Where prayer helps

4.1 On the other hand, we have at least one passage, in the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta (D 16), where the Buddha mentions 7 reasons for the solidarity of the Vajjī clan, the sixth being that they keep up their offering (*balī*) to their ancestral shrines (D 16,1.4/2:76). However, this practice concerns social and political stability rather than spiritual cultivation.

¹⁴ A 4.61,12/2:68 (SD 37.12).

¹⁵ “Wishing,” *patthanā*, also “desire, request, aspiration, request, prayer, vow”.

¹⁶ S 6.3/1:140-142 (SD 12.4).

4.2 The (Alabhanīya) Ṭhāna Sutta (A 5.48 stanzas) provides Buddhists with a wide range of spiritual resources to solve or cope with their problems:

Neither by grieving nor by weeping Knowing him to be grieving and suffering,	does one gain any benefit here, not even a little. enemies become delighted.
But he who is wise, when facing misfortunes His enemies are afflicted,	is unshaken, knowing how to analyze himself, seeing his face of old untroubled.
If by speech, wise thought, well spoken words, by which he would gain his goal,	by regular giving, ¹⁷ or tradition, ¹⁸ he should exert himself through such means.
If he should know, “Not to be attained then, ungrieving, he should bear it thus:	is this goal by me, nor by any other,” “What shall I do now with resolve?” ¹⁹

(A 5.48/3:54; also at J 3:204 & Chinese Sn (JPTS 1906-7:51))

4.3 Devas do have a place even in early Buddhism. In fact, one of the traditional meditations is the “re-collection of deity” (*devatā’nussati*).²⁰ It is a helping meditation for those who are inclined towards believing in some kind of God or gods. Most traditional Theravāda Buddhists in Sri Lanka and SE Asia, for example, often believe in spirits and devas.²¹ The focus here is the quality of godliness (*devatā*).²²

4.4 However, this is not an endorsement that they exist or that we should worship them, but it is our starting-point or launching-pad, as it were, towards higher goals. We can best begin our spiritual journey from where we are, or with what we are most comfortable with, and move on from there. What we believe in, what we habitually do, how we habitually speak, are trying to tell and teach us something about ourselves. We simply need to listen carefully to them and to move on.

5 Anātha,piṇḍika’ silence

5.1 The Ādiya Sutta records an example of the Buddha’s discourse where he initiates the teaching himself. It is said that Anāthapiṇḍika never asks the Buddha a question because he neither wants to weary the Buddha nor wants to make the Buddha feel obliged to answer him out of gratitude for all his contributions (DhA 1:3). The Aṅguttara, for example, contains numerous teachings given by the Buddha to him.²³ **The Anāthapiṇḍik’ovāda Sutta** (M 143) records Ānanda’s consoling Anāthapiṇḍika at the latter’s deathbed.²⁴

¹⁷ Comy: “By regular giving and for the thousands” (*satassa vā sahaṣṣassa vā dānena*, AA 1:255).

¹⁸ Such as by way of keeping to a family tradition (AA 1:255): see eg **Dāna Maha-p,phala S** (A 7.49,5/4:61), SD 2.3. On types of donors, see **(Aṭṭha) Dāna S 1+2** (A 8.31 f) @ SD 6.6 (2).

¹⁹ Lit, “What firm action do I take now?”

²⁰ See **(Tad Ah’) Uposatha S** (A 3.70/1:205-215), SD 4.18, **(Agata,phala) Mahā,nāma S** (A 6.10/3:284-288), SD 15.3; **(Anussati) Mahā,nāma S** (A 11.12/5:328-332). See also *Devatānussati*, SD 15.13.

²¹ Piyasilo 1992a:1, 56-58, 168; Gombrich 1971a:46-80, 187-90, passim; 1988b:23 f, passim.

²² See SD 52.1 (18.3.2.4).

²³ A 1:162 f, 2:64 ff, 3:47 f, 204, 206 f, 4:392 ff, 405 f, 5:177 f; cf A 1:62 f; S 5:387 f.

²⁴ M 143/3:258-263 (SD 23.9); cf S 5:380-87. Compare the structure of this Sutta with of the 6 directions of **Sigā’ovāda S** (D 31), SD 4.1 (1).

5.2 The Chinese **Mādhyama Āgama** (MĀ 126*) has a near-parallel of the Ādiya Sutta. The Āgama verin, however, records Anātha,piṇḍika as initiating the discourse with a question, thus:

爾時,給孤獨居士往詣佛所,稽首佛足,卻坐一面。白曰:“世尊,世中為有幾人行欲?”

Then, the lay disciple Anātha,piṇḍika went to the Buddha’s quarters. He bowed his head down to the ground at the Buddha’s feet. Then, sitting down at side, he said to the Blessed One: “In the world, how many people follow their desire?” (MĀ 126* = T1.615a10-12)

5.3 The Chinese version is much longer than the Pali, and seems to be an expanded text based on this shorter Pali Ādiya Sutta. The Chinese version speaks of 10 kinds of people who seek wealth, that is, whether they do this in a Dharma-based manner or not (or both), whether they provide a refuge for their family and others, whether they live a balanced life, whether they offer alms to recluses and brahmins, performing merit for happiness and heavenly rebirth or not.

5.4 The true lay disciple is the tenth kind of person who seeks wealth in a Dharma-based manner, provides a refuge for his family and others, lives a balanced life, gives alms to recluses and brahmins, and performs acts of merit for the sake of happiness here and rebirth in the heavens.²⁵ This is a good place to begin our reflections on being a true lay follower, or to teach others how to be true lay followers. It is a good place to begin, which means we must work to discover what to do next. And there will be a right time for that—this is a right time to give ourselves that chance to take a step further in our Dharma journey.

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Ādiyā Sutta

The Discourse on Uses

A 5.41

1 [45] At one time, the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika’s Park, in Jeta’s Grove, near Sāvattthī.

Now on that occasion, the houselord Anātha,piṇḍika, approached the Blessed One, and having gone up to the Blessed One, saluted him and sat down at one side.

As he was sitting thus at one side, the Blessed One said this to him:²⁶

2 “Houselord, there are **these 5 uses of wealth**.²⁷ What are the five?²⁸

²⁵ For a more details on Anātha,piṇḍika’s silence, see SD 44.2 (2.7).

²⁶ On Anātha,piṇḍika’s silence, see (5).

²⁷ *Pañc’ime gaha,pati bhogānam ādiyā*. The word **ādiya** is the noun of *ādiyati* (he takes, accepts or receives), and means “taking, accepting, or use, using.”

²⁸ Compare this section onwards with **Patta,kamma S** (A 4.61): see Intro. The first 3 prose sections [§(2)1-3] here appear twice in **Aputtaka Sutta 1** (S 3.19) in connection with how a false person (*asappurisa*) fails to enjoy his wealth and how a true person (*sappurisa*) enjoys his wealth. See (**Ādīnavā**) **Bhoga S** (A 5.227), where 5 disadvantages or dangers from wealth and the 5 advantages are both listed. See also (1) above.

(1) THE BLESSING OF EFFORT

2.1 Here, houselord, a noble disciple, with wealth

gotten by work and zeal,
gathered by the strength of arm,
earned by the sweat of the brow,
justly obtained in a lawful way,

makes himself happy and zestful,²⁹ and keeps up that rightful happiness,

he makes his parents happy and zestful, and keeps them rightfully happy,

he makes his children and wife, his servants,³⁰ labourers and workers, happy and zestful, and keeps them rightfully happy.

This is the first use of wealth.

(2) THE BLESSING OF FRIENDSHIP

3 Furthermore, houselord, with wealth gotten by work and zeal, gathered by the strength of arm, earned by the sweat of the brow, justly obtained in a lawful way,

he makes friends and companions happy and zestful, and keeps them rightfully happy.

This is the second use of wealth.

(3) THE BLESSING OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

4 Furthermore, houselord, with wealth gotten by work and zeal, gathered by the strength of arm, earned by the sweat of the brow, justly obtained in a lawful way,

he makes himself secure against all misfortunes whatsoever, such as may arise from fire, from water, from the king, from robbers, and from bad heirs.³¹ He makes himself secure, keeping his goods in safety.

This is the third use of wealth.

(4) THE BLESSING OF CHARITY

5 Furthermore, a houselord, with wealth gotten by work and zeal, gathered by the strength of arm, earned by the sweat of the brow, justly obtained in a lawful way,

the noble disciple makes the fivefold offerings (*pañca, balī*),³² namely:

- (a) offering to relatives,
- (b) offering to guests,³³
- (c) offering to the departed,

²⁹ "Makes ... zestful," *pīṇeti*, "gladdens, pleases, satisfies, cheers; invigorates, makes strong" (D 1:51, 3:130 f; S 1:90, 4:331). It occurs in the definition of *pīti* (zest) (Vism 143 = DhsA 115).

³⁰ "Servants," *dāsā*, lit "slaves".

³¹ This is stock. **Mahā Dukkha-k, khandha S** (M 13) lists these five as the causes of suffering for one who has to protect his wealth (M 13,10/1:86), SD 6.9. (**Satta, dhana) Ugga S** (A 7.7) declares how worldly wealth is subject to these five dangers, but not the 7 treasures (*satta dhana*), namely, faith (*saddhā*), moral virtue (*sīla*), moral shame (*hiri*), moral fear (*ottappa*), learning (*suta*), charity (*cāga*) and wisdom (*paññā*) (D 3:163; M 3:99; A 7.5,6/4:7; cf A 1:210 f).

³² "The fivefold offerings" (*pañca, balī*), as in **Patta Kamma S** (A 4.61,12/2:68), SD 37.12. The *balī* or *bhūta, yajña* is one of the five daily sacrifices (*yajña*) to be performed by a householder (Manu, *smṛti* 3.67, 91). It consists of a portion of the daily meal (rice, grain, ghee etc) to all creatures, and is usually performed by throwing the offering up into the air near the main door before consuming the meal. Such practices are not accepted in the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha instead secularized them to become more meaningful social or religious acts. See Intro (3) & Piyasilo 1990c:17, 71.

³³ See **Love**, SD 38.4 (6.2.2).

- (d) offering to the king [the government],³⁴ and
 (e) offering to deity.³⁵

This is the fourth use of wealth.

(5) THE BLESSING OF CULTIVATING DHARMA

6 (5) Furthermore, houselord, with wealth gotten by work and zeal, gathered by the strength of arm, earned by the sweat of the brow, justly obtained in a lawful way, **[46]**

he makes offerings³⁶ to all those **recluses and brahmins**

who refrain from intoxication and heedlessness,
 who bear all things with patience and restraint,³⁷
 each taming himself,
 each calming himself,
 each cooling himself³⁸

—to such he offers a gift that has the highest fruit, a heavenly gift, resulting in happiness, leading to heaven.

This is the fifth use of wealth.

Houselord, these are the 5 uses of wealth.

7 Now, houselord, if, after having enjoyed these 5 uses of wealth, the wealth of that noble disciple comes to destruction, let him consider thus: ‘Truly my wealth is gone, but at least I have enjoyed the uses of wealth!’—thus he regrets not.

And if, after having enjoyed these 5 uses of wealth, the wealth of that noble disciple increases, let him consider thus: ‘Truly I have enjoyed the uses of wealth and my wealth has grown!’—thus in either case he regrets not.

Wealth I’ve enjoyed;	supported are my charges.
The best of gifts have been offered,	and the 5 offerings made, too.
Supported are the virtuous,	the restrained, living the holy life.

The wealth that is a wise householder’s goal,
 That wealth I have won, never to be regretted—

Recalling such deeds, a mortal man in the noble Dharma stands,
 They praise him right here in this world, thereafter he rejoices in heaven.³⁹

— evaṃ —

³⁴ *Rāja, balī*, ie, a way of paying due taxes and levies, building public projects, etc.

³⁵ “Offering to deity,” *devatā, balī* [2-3].

³⁶ “Offerings,” *dakkhiṇā*, Skt *dakṣiṇā*: both meaning “south = right hand direction, the right,” ie, the right hand, the giving hand, and by extension, “gift,” especially fees donated to a teacher. On this passage, cf D 3:61; A 4:45.

³⁷ “Patience and kind restraint [gentleness]” (*khanti, soracca*) are that which beautify us or are gracing virtues (V 1:349; A 2.164/1:94). See **Vepa, citti S** (S 11.4, 20 f), SD 54.6.

³⁸ This important passage throws clear light on who are worthy of offerings, as against the schedules of “worthy recipients” given on **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142, 5-8/3:255-257).

³⁹ These verses recur in **Patta, kamma S** (A 4.61/2:68 f), SD 37.12.

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