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Anaṇa Sutta

Ānaṇya Sutta The Discourse on Debtlessness | A 4.62

Theme: The true benefits of worldly happiness

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003; rev 2010

1 Introduction

1.1 The title of the Sutta is simple enough: *anaṇa*,¹ meaning “without debt, independent.” The opposite is *sāṇa* = *sa* + *aṇa* [*iṇa*], meaning “with debt, indebted” (M 3:127,7), probably on account of vowel assimilation.² The World Tipiṭaka, following the Burmese Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyanā edition, gives the title as Ānaṇya Sutta. The word *ānaṇya* (Skt *ānṛṇya*) means “release or freedom from debt or obligation” (DP).

1.2 The message of the Anaṇa Sutta is that true wealth is not something we have, but the wholesomeness that we really are, our being rooted in moral virtue and mental joy. We cannot *have* happiness; we can only *be* happy. On a social level, we cannot be happy *alone*, but need to be happy *with* others and *for* others: this is a networking of positive beings truly happy with one another. This compassion-based and gladness-based happiness³ are the bases for what in right livelihood, we might call the “social family.”⁴

1.3 The Anaṇa Sutta teachings on **the 4 joys of wealth** can be broadly understood as having the following implications:

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

1.4 KEY TERMS

1.4.1 The benefits of this wealth is characterized by four key words: *atthi*, *bhoga*, *anaṇa* and *anavaṇṇa*. We need to be clear of the first two words as used here: **atthi** and **bhoga**. It should be noted from the start that these 4 joys or happiness (*sukha*) are those of **wealth** (*bhoga*) as a whole.

1.4.2 The first word, **atthi** [§2.2], by itself, simply means “is, there us,” but also encompasses the sense of “to have.” Unlike in English, there is almost no distinction between being and having here. This is an interesting problem of the idiosyncrasies of the two languages that is worthwhile reflecting on, as we read or translate Pali words and passages.

1.4.3 However, it is clear that in this context, *atthi, sukha* means “the joy (or happiness) of having,” that is, rightful possession of the wealth itself. Hence, *atthi* here has the sense of “wealth.” It is clear then

¹ Be Se often written as *anaṇa* (mfn) (Skt *anṛṇa*), resolved as *na* + *iṇa*, “debt” (Amg *id*, Skt *ṛṇa*; also *aṇa*).

² See V Trenckner, “Critical and philological notes to the first chapter (Bāhirakathā) of the Milinda-pañha,” *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1908:129; also W Geiger, *A Pāli Grammar* (tr B Ghosh; rev K R Norman), Oxford: Oxford Univ Press, 2000 §12.4

³ Compassion and gladness are the 2nd and 3rd of the 4 divine abodes: see **Brahma, vihāra**, SD 38.5.

⁴ On the social family, see SD 37.8 (6.2.2.2).

that it would be redundant to render the next word, *bhoga* [§2.2] as wealth, which is only its meaning by way of extension.

Bhoga is the noun of *bhuñjati* (he consumes), and this is clear from the phrase “enjoying (his) wealth” (*bhuñjam bhogam*) [§8c]. Hence, we should render *bhoga,sukha* as “the joy of enjoyment,” in the sense of having the benefit of the *use* of his wealth.

1.4.4 If *atthi,sukha* is the “having” aspect of our happiness, then, this is the “being” aspect of it. The wealth that we have should be diligently and properly obtained. This is what we have. However, this is not the true wealth. We may think we “own” this wealth, but it is not really wealth (originally meaning “the condition of being happy and prosperous; well-being” (OED).

We are *not* our wealth, what we have: for, if we *are* what we have, and we were to lose it, what are we, then? Our wealth *becomes* us, we *are* our wealth only when we happily use it for wholesome benefits and purposes. Hence, we cannot be truly wealthy by and for ourself: the worth of the wealth—the true wealth—lies in our utilizing that wealth for happiness, ours and that of others—this is “the joy of enjoyment.”

1.5 WEALTH AND WELFARE. The 4 bases of worldly welfare of the **Dīgha,jānu Sutta** (A 8.54) are here collated with the 4 worldly joys of a householder (*gihi,sukha*), and related to spiritual welfare, as described in the **Anaṇa Sutta** (A 4.62), thus:

<u>Dīgha,jānu Sutta (A 8.54)</u>	<u>Anana Sutta (A 4.62)</u>	<u>Spiritual welfare</u>
(1) The accomplishment of diligence	The joy of ownership	Faith
(2) The accomplishment of watchfulness	The joy of enjoyment	Moral virtue
(3) Spiritual friendship	The joy of blamelessness	Wisdom
(4) Balanced livelihood	The joy of debtlessness	Charity
	(A 8.54/4:281-285 @ SD 5.10; A 4.62/2:69 f @ SD 2.2)	

1.6 Details of their relationships are discussed in the Introduction to the **Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31).⁵

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The Discourse on Debtlessness

A 4.62

[69]

1 Then 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 Anāthapiṇḍika:

2 “Houselord, there are these **4 kinds of joy** [happiness] to be won from time to time, when the occasion arises, by a lay person who enjoys sense-pleasures.⁶

2.2 What are the four?

(1) The joy of ownership; *atthi,sukha*

⁵ D 31/3:180-193 (SD 4.1 (4)).

⁶ *Cattārimāni gahapati sukhāni adhigamanīyāni gihinā kāma,bhoginā kālena kalaṃ samayena samayaṃ upādāya*. On “a layperson who enjoys sense-pleasures,” see **Mahā Vaccha,gotta S** (M 73,13.4+6/1:493), SD 27.4 & SD 21.9 (3).

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|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| (2) The joy of enjoying his wealth; | <i>bhoga,sukha</i> |
| (3) The joy of debtlessness; | <i>anaṇa,sukha</i> |
| (4) The joy of blamelessness. | <i>anavajja,sukha</i> |

3 (1) And what, houselord, is the joy of ownership?

Here, houselord, a noble youth [a son of family]⁷ has wealth gained by work and zeal, \ gathered by the strength of arm, earned by the sweat of the brow, justly obtained in a lawful way.

At the thought, 'Wealth is mine gained by work and zeal, gathered by the strength of arm, earned by the sweat of the brow, justly obtained in a lawful way,'

he gains happiness, he gains mental ease [satisfaction].⁸

This, houselord, is the joy of ownership.

4 (2) And what, houselord, is the joy of enjoying his wealth?

Here, houselord, a noble youth has wealth thus gained, both enjoys his wealth and does meritorious deeds.

At the thought, 'By means of wealth thus gained, I both enjoy my wealth and do meritorious deeds,'

he gains happiness, he gains mental ease.

This, houselord, is the joy of enjoyment.

5 (3) And what, houselord, is the joy of debtlessness?

Here, houselord, a noble youth owes no debt, great or small, to anyone.

At the thought, 'I owe no debt, great or small, to anyone,'

he gains happiness, he gains mental ease.

This, houselord, is the joy of debtlessness.

6 (4) And what, houselord, is the joy of blamelessness?

Here, houselord, a noble disciple is endowed with

blameless actions of body, blameless actions of speech, blameless actions of mind.

At the thought, [70] 'I am endowed with blameless actions of body, blameless actions of speech, blameless actions of mind,'

he gains happiness, he gains mental ease.

This, houselord, is the joy of blamelessness.

7 These, houselord, are the 4 kinds of joy to be won from time to time, when the occasion arises, by a lay person who enjoys sense-pleasures.

8 *Ānaṇya,sukhaṃ ñatvāna*⁹
*atho atthi,sukhaṃ sare*¹⁰

Enjoying [knowing] the joy of debtlessness,
and the joy of possession, too,

⁷ "A noble youth," *kula,putta*, sometimes "the son of a good or noble family, young noble youth" (V 1:15; D 1:93; M 1:85, 192; A 2:249; Kvu 268); cf (German) Haussohn.

⁸ *Adhigacchati sukhaṃ adhigacchati somanassaṃ*. This is a refrain, recurring with each of the 4 passages on the benefits of truly happy life. While "happiness" (*sukha*) refers to his physical well being, "mental ease," refers to his mental well being.

⁹ Be WT so; Ce *aṇṇa,sukhaṃ katvā*; Ee *anaṇa,sukhaṃ katvāna*; Se *anaṇaṃ sukhaṃ tvāna*.

¹⁰ Be WT *atho atthi,sukhaṃ paraṃ*; Ee Se *atho atthi,sukhaṃ sare*.

- bhuñjam bhogam macco*¹¹
tato paññā vipassati enjoying his wealth, a mortal
thereby sees with wisdom.
- 9 *Vipassamāno jānāti*
ubho bhoge sumedhaso While seeing with wisdom,
anavajja, sukhassetam the wise knows both shares of his wealth,
kalam nāgghati solasin ti of this joy of blamelessness,¹²
they are not worth a sixteenth part.¹³

— evam —

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¹¹ Se *bhujam bhogam sukham macco*.

¹² These 2 lines should be reversed, and read: "They are not worth a sixteenth [an iota] | of the joy of blamelessness."

¹³ Comy: The wise one divides the types of happiness into two parts: the first three comprises one part; the happiness of blamelessness is a part of its own. Then he sees with wisdom and knows that the former three types of happiness combined are not worth a sixteenth part [ie a tiny fraction] of the happiness of blamelessness. (AA 3:101)