

1

(Sumana) Dāna Sutta

The Discourse on Giving (with a happy mind)

Cha-ḷ-aṅga Dāna Sutta The Discourse on the Six-limbed Giving | **A 6.37**

Theme: How to give with wholesome intentions

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2006, 2024

Introduction

1.1 The Dhammapāda Commentary on Dh 112,¹ in the story cycle of the novice Sukha (DhA 10.11), relates how, in a past life, the labourer Bhatta,bhatika, in return for three years' work, obtains the privilege of enjoying the luxuries of the seth [merchant banker] Gandha. However, when he is ready to eat, a Pratyeka Buddha appears, and Bhatta,bhatika gives him all his food. When Gandha discovers this, he gives Bhatta,bhatika half of all his possessions, and they become firm friends. The king, in turn, makes Bhatta,bhatika a seth. After his death, he is reborn in the deva world, whence he is reborn in Sāvatti as the boy Sukha.

1.2 On Bhatta,bhatika's merit in offering his meal to the pratyeka-buddha, the Dhammapada Commentary explains how it is endowed with the 4 fulfillments (*catasso sampadā*), thus:

Catasso hi sampadā nāma:

vatthu,sampadā paccaya,sampadā cetanā,sampadā guṇātireka,sampadā ti.

Tattha nirodha,samāpatti,raho arahā vā anāgāmī vā dakkhiṇeyyo vatthu,sampadā nāma.

Paccayānaṃ dhammena samena uppatti paccaya,sampadā nāma.

*Dānato pubbe dāna,kāle pacchā bhāge ti tīsu kālesu cetanāya somanassa,sahagata,ñāṇa,-
sampayutta,bhāvo cetanā,sampadā nāma.*

Dakkhiṇeyyassa samāpattito vuṭṭhita,bhāvo guṇātireka,sampadā nāmā ti.

These are **the 4 fulfillments**: the fulfillment of the ground, the fulfillment of requisite [support], the fulfillment of intention, and the fulfillment of bonus virtue.

(1) Here, the fulfillment of the ground refers to the arhats who have attained the solitude of the attainment of cessation, to the non-returners, or to those worthy of gifts.

(2) The fulfillment of the requisite refers to the impartial arising of the requisites by righteous means.

(3) The fulfillment of the intention refers to the intention resulting from wisdom associated with mental joy during the 3 periods of giving, that is, before, during and after the giving.

(4) The fulfillment of bonus virtue refers to the acquisition of the state of a worthy recipient of offerings, after he has arisen from the formless attainments. (DhA 3:93)

1.3 In the **(Sumana) Dāna Sutta** (A 6.37), we can see at least the first 3 fulfillments in action, thus:

The fulfillment of the ground: the sangha headed by the arhats Sāriputta and Moggallāna;
The fulfillment of the requisite: the offering is properly gotten; and

¹ *Yo ca vassa,sataṃ jīve | kusīto hīna,vīriyo | Ekāhaṃ jīvitam seyyo | viriyam ārabhato dalham =* Though one should live for a hundred years, | being lazy and lacking effort, | better is a day's life | of one who makes firm effort (Dh 112).

The fulfillment of the intention: Veḷu,kaṇḍakī Nanda,mātā is happy-minded before, during and after her meal offering.

The fulfillment of bonus virtue would also be present if the offerings are made just after an arhat has arisen from meditating in the formless attainments.

1.4 The key teaching of **the (Sumana) Dāna Sutta** is that when one's offering to the noble sangha or to a noble disciple—or any kind of wholesome giving—is made with a happy mind (*somanassa*), that is, while preparing the meal (or, before the offering), while giving and serving, and after it is all over, the benefits are supreme.

1.5 This teaching is alluded to in the closing of **the Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 142) and its closing verse:

And how, Ānanda, is the giving purified on account of both the giver and the recipients?

Here, Ānanda, the giver is morally virtuous, good by nature, and the recipients, too, are morally virtuous, good by nature. Thus, Ānanda, is the giving purified on account of both the giver and the recipients.” (M 142,13/3:256), SD 22.1

When one passion-free gives to one passion-free,
With a truly faithful heart, a gift rightly obtained,
Firm in faith that its karmic fruit is abundant—
That material giving is a truly bountiful gift, I say.² (M 142,14/3:257), SD 22.1

*Dadato puññaṃ pavaḍḍhati
saṃyamato veram na cīyati
kusalo ca jahāti pāpakam
rāga,dosa,moha-k,khayā sanibbuto ti*

Merit grows for the giver,
enmity grows not for the restrained,
the skillful abandons bad:
with the destruction of lust, hatred and delusion,
he is cooled. (U 85)

— — —

² Comy: This last verse refers to non-returners, or to one arhat giving to another. Although the arhat believes in karmic fruition, since he is without desire and lust for existence, his giving is not productive of any fruit, but is merely a functional deed (*kiriya*) that has not been traced (MA 5:77). Comy is being a bit technical here; for, this may also include laity who are even momentarily free from desire (say during a good meditation retreat) and who give offerings to monastics who are virtuous practitioners. See §13 & n above.

(Sumana) Dāna Sutta

The Discourse on Giving (with a happy mind)

A 6.37

1 At one time the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika's Park in Jeta's Grove near Sāvathī.

The 6-limbed giving

1.2 Now at that time, the laywoman **Veḷu,kaṇḍakī Nanda,mātā** [mother of Nanda], established [introduced] a giving endowed with 6 limbs³ for the sangha headed by Sāriputta and Moggallāna.

1.3 Now the Blessed One, by means of the divine eye [clairvoyance],⁴ purified and surpassing the human, saw that the lay woman Veḷu,kaṇḍakī Nanda,mātā, had established the giving endowed with 6 limbs for the sangha headed by Sāriputta and Moggallāna.

1.4 Seeing this, the Blessed One addressed the monks, thus,
“Bhikshus, this laywoman Veḷu,kaṇḍakī Nanda,mātā has established the giving endowed with 6 limbs for the sangha headed by Sāriputta and Moggallāna.

And what, bhikshus, is the giving endowed with 6 limbs?

2 Here, bhikshus, the giver has 3 limbs, the recipients have 3 limbs.

2.2 What are the limbs of the giver?

Here, bhikshus,

- (1) the giver gives with a happy mind;
- (2) while giving her mind is joyful with faith;
- (3) having given, her mind is joyful.⁵

These are the limbs of the giver.

2.3 What are the limbs of the recipients?

Here, bhikshus,

- (1) the recipients have removed lust, or are practising to remove lust; or
- (2) they have removed hatred, or are practising to remove hatred; or
- (3) they have removed delusion, or are practising to remove delusion.

These are the limbs of the recipients.

2.4 Thus, bhikshus, the giving endowed with 6 limbs.

The immeasurability of the merit of giving

3 Bhikshus, it is not easy to grasp the measure of the merit of such a giving endowed with 6 limbs, thus,⁶

³ “A giving endowed with 6 limbs,” *cha-l-aṅga,samannāgataṃ dakkhiṇaṃ*.

⁴ *dibba,cakkhu*, clairvoyance, not to be confused with the Dharma-eye (*dhamma,cakkhu*) (see n in §102).

⁵ *Idha bhikkhave pubb'eva dānā sumano hoti, dadarṃ cittaṃ pasādeti, datvā attamano hoti*.

⁶ *Evaṃ cha-l-aṅga,samannāgatāya bhikkhave dakkhiṇāya ba sukaraṃ puññaṃ pamāṇaṃ gehaturṃ*.

‘To this extent is the yield of merit, the yield of wholesomeness, the bringing of happiness, the heavenly, fruiting in happiness, leading to heaven, conducive to what is longed for, wished for, lovely, beneficial and happy.’⁷

3.2 Bhikshus, just as it is not easy to grasp the measure of water in the great ocean, [337] thus,

‘There are so many bucketfuls, so many hundred bucketfuls, so many thousand bucketfuls, so many hundreds of thousand bucketfuls’ —

for, that great mass of water is regarded as incalculable, immeasurable;

3.3 even so, bhikshus, it is not easy to grasp the measure of merit of such a giving endowed with six limbs, thus,

‘To this extent is the yield of merit, the yield of wholesomeness, the bringing of happiness, the heavenly, fruiting in happiness, leading to heaven, conducive to what is longed for, wished for, lovely, beneficial and happy.’

3.4 Indeed, bhikshus, the great mass of merit is incalculable, immeasurable.”

The verses on true giving

3.5 Even before the giving, the mind is happy; while giving, the mind is bright with faith; having given, the mind is joyful: this is the fulfillment of the offering.
Having removed lust, hatred and delusion, free from the influxes:
the self-restrained brahmacharis [celibates] are the fulfillment of the offering’s field.

3.6 Cleansing⁸ oneself, one gives with one’s own hands;
and the offering bears great fruit in the hereafter, too, for oneself.
The faithful wise, having given thus, with a free mind,
the wise will arise in the affliction-free happy world.⁹

— evaṃ —

Bibliography

- Bodhi, Bhikkhu
1978 *The All-embracing Net of Views* [Brahmajāla Sutta (D 1) tr & exegeses]. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1978:256 f, 260, 273-278, 313-316.
1990 *Dana: The Practice of Giving*, ed Bhikkhu Bodhi. Wheel Publication 367/369. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1990. 114k/38pp.
<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/various/wheel367.html>
- de Silva, Lily
1990 “Giving in the Pali Canon.” In *Dana: The Practice of Giving*, ed Bhikkhu Bodhi. Wheel Publication 367/369. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1990. 114k/38pp.
- Findly, Ellison Banks
2003 *Dāna: Giving and getting in Pāli Buddhism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2003.

060323 071217 080510 110127 131125 180401 211109 241227

⁷ *Ettako puññābhisando kusalābhisando sukhasāhāro sovaggiko sukha, vipāko sagga.sāmvattaniko iṭṭhāya kantāya manāpāya hitāya sukhāya sāmvattatī ti.*

⁸ “Cleansing,” *ācamayitvāna*, absol of *ācameti* (Skt *ācamayati*, *ācamayati*, caus of *ācamati*, “he rinses (by sipping water, esp ceremonial purification; or washing, ablution, after evacuation). A religious and ritual term is given a deeper spiritual dimension by the Buddha here.

⁹ This last line at It 16, 82.