

Suitable Deeds



The Discourse about Suitable Deeds

(Pattakammasuttaṃ, Aṅg 4.61)

Translated by Ānandajoti Bhikkhu

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Then the householder Anāthapiṇḍika approached the Gracious One, and after approaching and worshipping the Gracious One, he sat down on one side. While sitting on one side the Gracious One said this to the householder Anāthapiṇḍika:

Four Rarities

“(There are) these four things, householder, which are wished for, agreeable, pleasing, and rare in the world.

Which four?

‘May wealth arise to me in a righteous way,’ this is the first thing wished for, agreeable, pleasing, and rare in the world.

‘The wealth that has been gained in a righteous way, may it bring fame for me and for my relatives and preceptors,’ this is the second thing wished for, agreeable, pleasing, and rare in the world.

‘The wealth has been gained in a righteous way, and the fame has been gained for my relatives and preceptors, (now) may I live long,

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may I have a long lifespan,' this is the third thing wished for, agreeable, pleasing, and rare in the world.

'The wealth has been gained in a righteous way, and the fame has been gained for my relatives and preceptors, having lived long, and having had a long lifespan, may I, at the break-up of the body, after death, re-arise in a fortunate destiny, in a heavenly world.' this is the fourth thing wished for, agreeable, pleasing, and rare in the world.

These are the four things wished for, agreeable, pleasing, and rare in the world.

Four Proficiencies

To the attainment of these four things, householder, (which are) wished for, agreeable, pleasing, and rare in the world, four (more) things lead.

Which four?

Proficiency in faith, proficiency in virtue, proficiency in generosity, proficiency in wisdom.

Now what, householder, is proficiency in faith?

Here, householder, a Noble Disciple has faith, he believes in the Awakening of the Realised One (thus):

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‘Such is he, the Gracious One, the Worthy One, the Perfect Sambuddha, the one endowed with understanding and good conduct, the Fortunate One, the one who understands the worlds, the unsurpassed guide for those people who need taming, the Teacher of gods and men, the Buddha, the Gracious One.’

This, householder, is said to be proficiency in faith.

Now what, householder, is proficiency in virtue?

Here, householder, a Noble Disciple

refrains from killing living creatures,
refrains from taking what has not been given,
refrains from sexual misconduct,
refrains from false speech,
refrains from liquors, wines, or intoxicants which cause
heedlessness.

This, householder, is said to be proficiency in virtue.

Now what, householder, is proficiency in generosity?

Here, householder, a Noble Disciple, with a mind devoid of the stain of selfishness, lives in the house, free and generous, with pure hands,¹

¹ Sometimes translated *open-handed*, but *payata* is defined in PED thus: *restrained, composed, purified, pure*.

delighting in relinquishment, bound to help those who ask, delighting in the distribution of gifts.

This, householder, is said to be proficiency in generosity.

Now what, householder, is proficiency in wisdom?

He who dwells, householder, with a mind overcome by excessive greed and avarice² does what should not be done, and fails to do what should be done. Doing what should not be done and failing to do what should be done his fame and happiness perish.

He who dwells, householder, with a mind overcome by ill-will does what should not be done, and fails to do what should be done. Doing what should not be done and failing to do what should be done his fame and happiness perish.

He who dwells, householder, with a mind overcome by sloth and torpor does what should not be done, and fails to do what should be done. Doing what should not be done and failing to do what should be done his fame and happiness perish.

He who dwells, householder, with a mind overcome by agitation and worry does what should not be done, and fails to do what should be

² The four factors that follow below are the last four factors of the hinderances (*nīvaraṇa*), which makes it appear that *excessive greed and avarice* is being used as a synonym for *kāmacchanda, sensual desire*, here.

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done. Doing what should not be done and failing to do what should be done his fame and happiness perish.

He who dwells, householder, with a mind overcome by doubt does what should not be done, and fails to do what should be done. Doing what should not be done and failing to do what should be done his fame and happiness perish.

The Noble Disciple, householder, having understood that 'excessive greed and avarice is a defilement of the mind' gives up that excessive greed and avarice which is a defilement of the mind.

Having understood that 'ill-will is a defilement of the mind' gives up that ill-will which is a defilement of the mind.

Having understood that 'sloth and torpor is a defilement of the mind' gives up that sloth and torpor which is a defilement of the mind.

Having understood that 'agitation and worry is a defilement of the mind' gives up that agitation and worry which is a defilement of the mind.

Having understood that 'doubt is a defilement of the mind' gives up that doubt which is a defilement of the mind.

Since, householder, the Noble Disciple having understood that 'excessive greed and avarice is a defilement of the mind' he has given up that excessive greed and avarice which is a defilement of the mind.

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Having understood that 'ill-will is a defilement of the mind' he has given up that ill-will which is a defilement of the mind.

Having understood that 'sloth and torpor is a defilement of the mind' he has given up that sloth and torpor which is a defilement of the mind.

Having understood that 'agitation and worry is a defilement of the mind' he has given up that agitation and worry which is a defilement of the mind.

Having understood that 'doubt is a defilement of the mind' he has given up that doubt which is a defilement of the mind.

This Noble Disciple is said, householder, to be one of great wisdom, of extensive wisdom, one who sees the (full) range, one endowed with wisdom.

This, householder, is said to be proficiency in wisdom.

To the attainment of these four things, householder, (which are) wished for, agreeable, pleasing, and rare in the world, these four (more) things lead.

Four Suitable Deeds

The Noble Disciple, householder, with the wealth he has attained through industry and effort, accumulated through the strength of his arms, through the sweat of his brow, righteously, in accordance with the Dhamma, performs four suitable deeds.

Which four?

Here, householder, a Noble Disciple, with the wealth he has attained through industry and effort, accumulated through the strength of his arms, through the sweat of his brow, righteously, in accordance with the Dhamma, makes himself happy and satisfied, and he looks after (himself) in a correct and pleasant way, he makes his mother and father happy and satisfied, and he looks after (them) in a correct and pleasant way, he makes his children, wife, workers and servants happy and satisfied, and he looks after (them) in a correct and pleasant way, makes his friends and comrades happy and satisfied, and he looks after (them) in a correct and pleasant way. This is the first suitable way of using what he has attained through his exertion.³

Moreover, householder, a Noble Disciple, with the wealth he has attained through industry and effort, accumulated through the strength of his arms, through the sweat of his brow, righteously, in

³ For *āyatana* with this meaning s.v. PED, second definition.

accordance with the Dhamma, from whatever dangers there are: from fire or from water or from kings or from thieves or from unloved heirs, defends his wealth from such dangers, and he keeps himself safe. This is the second suitable way of using what he has attained through his exertion.

Moreover, householder, a Noble Disciple, with the wealth he has attained through industry and effort, accumulated through the strength of his arms, through the sweat of his brow, righteously, in accordance with the Dhamma, makes five offerings: offerings to relatives, offerings to guests, offerings to the departed, offerings to kings, and offerings to the gods. This is the third suitable way of using what he has attained through his exertion.

Moreover, householder, a Noble Disciple, with the wealth he has attained through industry and effort, accumulated through the strength of his arms, through the sweat of his brow, righteously, in accordance with the Dhamma, (towards) whatever ascetics and brāhmaṇas have put aside pride and heedlessness, who are established in patience and gentleness, who tame themselves, calm themselves, and emancipate themselves, he establishes a beneficial donation for those ascetics and brāhmaṇas, which is heavenly (itself) and has a happy result leading to heaven. This is the fourth suitable way of using what he has attained through his exertion.

The Noble Disciple, householder, with the wealth he has attained through industry and effort, accumulated through the strength of his

arms, through the sweat of his brow, righteously, in accordance with the Dhamma, performs these four suitable deeds.

For anyone, householder, whose wealth goes to destruction, except through these four suitable deeds, these are said, householder, to be riches that have disappeared in an unsuitable way through using what he has attained through his exertion.

For anyone, householder, whose wealth goes to destruction on these four suitable deeds, these are said, householder, to be suitable ways of using that wealth he has attained through his exertion.⁴

Wealth enjoyed by servants, brothers, for removing dangers, (or)
by me,

Given in beneficial donations, also through making the five
offerings,

Has been established by the virtuous, skilful one who lives
spiritually.

The wise one who lives in a house will wish for wealth and welfare
(thinking):

‘That prosperity attained by me causes lack of remorse.’

A man remembering this, a person established in Nobility,

They praise right now, and after dying he rejoices in heaven.”

⁴ Ādiyasutta (Aṅg 5.41) throws light on this, there it says: *If for a Noble Disciple, householder, from the usage of these five uses of wealth his wealth goes to destruction, this occurs to him: ‘Whatever (good) uses for wealth there are I have used them (in that way), let my wealth go to destruction!’ He is not remorseful.*