

# Everyman's Ethics

## Four Discourses of the Buddha

Adapted from the translations of

*Nārada Thera*

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Adapted from the translations and notes in *The Light of the Dhamma* by the Venerable Nārada Thera.

The introductory notes to the last three texts have been supplied by the editor of this series.

# Sigālovāda Sutta

## *The Layman's Code of Discipline*

Sigāla was the son of a Buddhist family residing at Rājagaha. His parents were devout followers of the Buddha, but the son was indifferent to religion. The pious father and mother could not by any means persuade their son to accompany them to visit the Buddha or his disciples and hear the noble Doctrine. The son thought it practically useless to pay visits to the Sangha, as such visits may entail material loss. He was only concerned with material prosperity; to him spiritual progress was of no avail. Constantly he would say to his father: "I will have nothing to do with monks. Paying homage to them would make my back ache, and my knees stiff. I should have to sit on the ground and soil and wear out my clothes. And when, at the conversations with them, after so sitting, one gets to know them, one has to invite them and give them offerings, and so one only loses by it."

Finally as the father was about to die, he called his son to his deathbed, and enquired whether he would at least listen to his parting advice. "Most assuredly, dear father, I shall carry out any order you may be pleased to enjoin on me," he replied. "Well then, dear son, after your morning bath worship the six quarters." The father asked him to do so hoping that one day or other, while the son was so engaged, the Buddha or his disciples would see him, and make it an occasion to preach an appropriate discourse to him. And since deathbed wishes are to be remembered, Sigāla carried out his father's wish, not, however, knowing its true significance.

Now, it was the custom of the Buddha to rise from his sleep at four o'clock and after experiencing Nibbānic bliss for an hour to pervade the whole world with his boundless thoughts of loving-kindness. It is at this hour that he surveys the world with his great compassion to find out to what fellow being he could be of service on that day. One morning Sigāla was caught in the net of the Buddha's compassion; and with his vision the Buddha, seeing that Sigāla could be shown a better channel for his acts of worship, decided: "This day will I discourse to Sigāla on the layman's Vinaya (code of discipline). That discourse will be of benefit to many folk. There must I go." The Buddha thereon came up to him on his way for alms to Rājagaha; and seeing him engaged in his worship of the six quarters, delivered this great discourse which contains in brief, the whole domestic and social duty of the layman.

Commenting on this sutta, the Venerable Buddhaghosa says, "Nothing in the duties of a householder is left unmentioned. This sutta is called the Vinaya of the householder. Hence in one who practices what he has been taught in it, growth is to be looked for, not decay." And Mrs. Rhys Davids adds: "The Buddha's doctrine of love and goodwill between man and man is here set forth in a domestic and social ethics with more comprehensive detail than elsewhere. And truly we may say even now of this Vinaya or code of discipline, so fundamental are the human interests involved, so sane and wide is the wisdom that envisages them, that the utterances are as fresh and practically as binding today and here as they were then at Rājagaha. 'Happy would have been the village or the clan on the banks of the Ganges where the people were full of the kindly spirit of fellow-feeling, the noble spirit of justice which breathes through these naive and simple sayings.' Not less happy would be the village, or the family on the banks of the Thames today, of which this could be said."

Thus have I heard:

On one occasion the Exalted One was dwelling in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Sanctuary, near Rājagaha.

Now at the time, young Sigāla, a householder's son, rising early in the morning, departing from Rājagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, worshipped with joined hands the various quarters—the East, the South, the West, the North, the Nadir, and the Zenith.

Then the Exalted One, having robed himself in the forenoon took bowl and robe, and entered Rājagaha for alms. Now he saw young Sigāla worshipping thus and spoke to him as follows:

“Wherefore do you, young householder, rising early in the morning, departing from Rājagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, worship, with joined hands these various quarters—the East, the South, the West, the North, the Nadir, and the Zenith?”

“My father, Lord, while dying, said to me: The six quarters, dear son, you shall worship. And I, Lord, respecting, revering, reverencing and honouring my father's word, rise early in the morning, and leaving Rājagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, worship with joined hands, these six quarters.”

“It is not thus, young householder, the six quarters should be worshipped in the discipline of the noble.”

“How then, Lord, should the six quarters be worshipped in the discipline of the noble? It is well, Lord, if the Exalted One would teach the doctrine to me showing how the six quarters should be worshipped in the discipline of the noble.”

“Well, young householder, listen and bear it well in mind; I shall speak.”—“Very good, Lord,” responded young Sigāla.

And the Exalted One spoke as follows:

“Inasmuch, young householder, as the noble disciple (1) has eradicated the four vices in conduct,<sup>1</sup> (2) inasmuch as he commits no evil action in four ways, (3) inasmuch as he pursues not the six channels for dissipating wealth, he thus, avoiding these fourteen evil things, covers the six quarters, and enters the path leading to victory in both worlds: he is favoured in this world and in the world beyond. Upon the dissolution of the body, after death, he is born in a happy heavenly realm.

(1) “What are the four vices in conduct that he has eradicated? The destruction of life, householder, is a vice and so are stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying. These are the four vices that he has eradicated.”

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

“Killing, stealing, lying and adultery,  
These four evils the wise never praise.

(2) “In which four ways does one commit no evil action? Led by desire does one commit evil. Led by anger does one commit evil. Led by ignorance does one commit evil. Led by fear does one commit evil.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Kamma-kilesa*, lit., “action-defilement.” Commentary: “*Kammakilesa ti kammañca taṃ kilesasampayuttattā kilesa cāti kammakilesa. Sakilesoyeva hi pāṇaṃ hanati, nikkilesa na hanati, tasmā pāṇātīpāto “kammakilesa”ti vutto.*”

<sup>2</sup> These are the four *agati*, “evil courses of action”: *chanda, dosa, moha, bhaya*.

“But inasmuch as the noble disciple is not led by desire, anger, ignorance, and fear, he commits no evil.”

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

“Whoever through desire, hate or fear,  
Or ignorance should transgress the Dhamma,  
All his glory fades away  
Like the moon during the waning half.  
Whoever through desire, hate or fear,  
Or ignorance never transgresses the Dhamma,  
All his glory ever increases  
Like the moon during the waxing half.

(3) “What are the six channels for dissipating wealth which he does not pursue?

- (a) indulgence in intoxicants which causes infatuation and heedlessness;
- (b) sauntering in streets at unseemly hours;
- (c) frequenting theatrical shows;
- (d) indulgence in gambling which causes heedlessness;
- (e) association with evil companions; and
- (f) the habit of idleness.

(a) “There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in indulging in intoxicants which cause infatuation and heedlessness:

- (i) loss of wealth,
- (ii) increase of quarrels,
- (iii) susceptibility to disease,
- (iv) earning an evil reputation,
- (v) shameless exposure of body,
- (vi) weakening of intellect.

(b) “There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in sauntering in streets at unseemly hours:

- (i) he himself is unprotected and unguarded,
- (ii) his wife and children are unprotected and unguarded,
- (iii) his property is unprotected and unguarded,
- (iv) he is suspected of evil deeds,<sup>3</sup>
- (v) he is subject to false rumours,
- (vi) he meets with many troubles.

(c) “There are, young householdSelection.Style.er, these six evil consequences in frequenting theatrical shows. He is ever thinking:

- (i) where is there dancing?
- (ii) where is there singing?
- (iii) where is there music?
- (iv) where is there recitation?
- (v) where is there playing with cymbals?
- (vi) where is there pot-blowing?<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Crimes committed by others.

<sup>4</sup> A kind of amusement.

(d) “There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in indulging in gambling:

- (i) the winner begets hate,
- (ii) the loser grieves for lost wealth,
- (iii) loss of wealth,
- (iv) his word is not relied upon in a court of law,
- (v) he is despised by his friends and associates,
- (vi) he is not sought after for matrimony; for people would say that he is a gambler and is not fit to look after a wife.

(e) “There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in associating with evil companions, namely: any gambler, any libertine, any drunkard, any swindler, any cheat, any rowdy is his friend and companion.

(f) “There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in being addicted to idleness: He does no work, saying:

- (i) that it is extremely cold,
- (ii) that it is extremely hot,
- (iii) that it is too late in the evening,
- (iv) that it is too early in the morning,
- (v) that he is extremely hungry,
- (vi) that he is too full.

“Living in this way, he leaves many duties undone, new wealth he does not get, and wealth he has acquired dwindles away.”

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

“One is a bottle friend; one says, ‘friend, friend’ only to one’s face; one is a friend and an associate only when it is advantageous.

Sleeping till sunrise, adultery, irascibility, malevolence, evil companions, avarice—these six causes ruin a man.

The man who has evil comrades and friends is given to evil ways, to ruin does he fall in both worlds—here and the next.

Dice, women, liquor, dancing, singing, sleeping by day, sauntering at unseemly hours, evil companions, avarice—these nine<sup>5</sup> causes ruin a man.

Who plays with dice and drinks intoxicants, goes to women who are dear unto others as their own lives, associates with the mean and not with elders—he declines just as the moon during the waning half.

Who is drunk, poor, destitute, still thirsty whilst drinking, frequents the bars, sinks in debt as a stone in water, swiftly brings disrepute to his family.

Who by habit sleeps by day, and keeps late hours, is ever intoxicated, and is licentious, is not fit to lead a household life.

Who says it is too hot, too cold, too late, and leaves things undone, the opportunities for good go past such men.

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<sup>5</sup> The Pali original has here “six causes”—two compound words and one double-term phrase are counted as units.

But he who does not regard cold or heat any more than a blade of grass and who does his duties manfully, does not fall away from happiness."

\* \* \*

"These four, young householder, should be understood as foes in the guise of friends:

- (1) he who appropriates a friend's possessions,
- (2) he who renders lip-service,
- (3) he who flatters,
- (4) he who brings ruin.

(1) "In four ways, young householder, should one who appropriates be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- (i) he appropriates his friend's wealth,
- (ii) he gives little and asks much,
- (iii) he does his duty out of fear,
- (iv) he associates for his own advantage.

(2) "In four ways, young householder, should one who renders lip-service be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- (i) he makes friendly profession as regards the past,
- (ii) he makes friendly profession as regards the future,
- (iii) he tries to gain one's favour by empty words,
- (iv) when opportunity for service has arisen, he expresses his inability.

(3) "In four ways, young householder, should one who flatters be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- (i) he approves of his friend's evil deeds,
- (ii) he disapproves his friend's good deeds,
- (iii) he praises him in his presence,
- (iv) he speaks ill of him in his absence.

(4) "In four ways, young householder, should one who brings ruin be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- (i) he is a companion in indulging in intoxicants that cause infatuation and heedlessness,
- (ii) he is a companion in sauntering the streets at unseemly hours,
- (iii) he is a companion in frequenting theatrical shows,
- (iv) he is a companion in indulging in gambling which causes heedlessness."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

"The friend who appropriates,  
the friend who renders lip-service,  
the friend that flatters,  
the friend who brings ruin —  
these four as enemies the wise behold,  
avoid them from afar as paths of peril.

"These four, young householder, should be understood as warm-hearted friends:

- (1) he who is a helpmate,
- (2) he who is the same in happiness and sorrow,

- (3) he who gives good counsel,
- (4) he who sympathises.

(1) "In four ways, young householder, should a helpmate be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- (i) he guards the heedless,
- (ii) he protects the wealth of the heedless,
- (iii) he becomes a refuge when one is in danger,
- (iv) when there are commitments he provides one with double the supply needed.

(2) "In four ways, young householder, should one who is the same in happiness and sorrow be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- (i) he reveals his secrets,
- (ii) he conceals one's own secrets,
- (iii) in misfortune he does not forsake one,
- (iv) his life even he sacrifices for one's sake.

(3) "In four ways, young householder, should one who gives good counsel be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- (i) he restrains one from doing evil,
- (ii) he encourages one to do good,
- (iii) he informs one of what is unknown to oneself,
- (iv) he points out the path to heaven.

(4) "In four ways, young householder, should one who sympathises be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- (i) he does not rejoice in one's misfortune,
- (ii) he rejoices in one's prosperity,
- (iii) he restrains others speaking ill of oneself,
- (iv) he praises those who speak well of oneself."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

"The friend who is a helpmate,  
the friend in happiness and woe,  
the friend who gives good counsel,  
the friend who sympathises too—  
these four as friends the wise behold  
and cherish them devotedly  
as does a mother her own child.

The wise and virtuous shine like blazing fire.  
He who acquires his wealth in harmless ways  
like to a bee that honey gathers,  
riches mount up for him  
like ant hill's rapid growth.

With wealth acquired this way,  
a layman fit for household life,  
in portions four divides his wealth:  
thus will he friendship win.

One portion for his wants he uses,  
two portions on his business spends,  
the fourth for times of need he keeps.”

\* \* \*

“And how, young householder, does a noble disciple cover the six quarters?

“The following should be looked upon as the six quarters. The parents should be looked upon as the East, teachers as the South, wife and children as the West, friends and associates as the North, servants and employees as the Nadir, ascetics and brahmins as the Zenith.<sup>6</sup>

“In five ways, young householder, a child should minister to his parents as the *East*:

- (i) Having supported me I shall support them,
- (ii) I shall do their duties,
- (iii) I shall keep the family tradition,
- (iv) I shall make myself worthy of my inheritance,
- (v) furthermore I shall offer alms in honour of my departed relatives.<sup>7</sup>

“In five ways, young householder, the parents thus ministered to as the *East* by their children, show their compassion:

- (i) they restrain them from evil,
- (ii) they encourage them to do good,
- (iii) they train them for a profession,
- (iv) they arrange a suitable marriage,
- (v) at the proper time they hand over their inheritance to them.

“In these five ways do children minister to their parents as the East and the parents show their compassion to their children. Thus is the East covered by them and made safe and secure.

“In these five ways, young householder, a pupil should minister to a teacher as the *South*:

- (i) by rising from the seat in salutation,
- (ii) by attending on him,
- (iii) by eagerness to learn,
- (iv) by personal service,
- (v) by respectful attention while receiving instructions.

“In five ways, young householder, do teachers thus ministered to as the *South* by their pupils, show their compassion:

- (i) they train them in the best discipline,
- (ii) they see that they grasp their lessons well,

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<sup>6</sup> “The symbolism is deliberately chosen: as the day in the East, so life begins with parents’ care; teacher’s fees and the South are the same word: *dakkhina*; domestic cares follow when the youth becomes man, as the West holds the later daylight; North is “beyond” (*uttara*), so by help of friends, etc., he gets beyond troubles.”—(Rhys Davids)

<sup>7</sup> This is a sacred custom of the Aryans who never forgot the dead. This tradition is still faithfully observed by the Buddhists of Sri Lanka who make ceremonial offerings of alms to the monks on the eighth day, in the third month, and on each anniversary of the demise of the parents. Merit of these good actions is offered to the departed after such ceremony. Moreover after every *puñña-kamma* (good action), a Buddhist never fails to think of his parents and offer merit. Such is the loyalty and the gratitude shown to parents as advised by the Buddha.

- (iii) they instruct them in the arts and sciences,
- (iv) they introduce them to their friends and associates,
- (v) they provide for their safety in every quarter.

“The teachers thus ministered to as the South by their pupils, show their compassion towards them in these five ways. Thus is the South covered by them and made safe and secure.

“In five ways, young householder, should a wife as the *West* be ministered to by a husband:

- (i) by being courteous to her,
- (ii) by not despising her,
- (iii) by being faithful to her,
- (iv) by handing over authority to her,
- (v) by providing her with adornments.

“The wife thus ministered to as the *West* by her husband shows her compassion to her husband in five ways:

- (i) she performs her duties well,
- (ii) she is hospitable to relations and attendants<sup>8</sup>
- (iii) she is faithful,
- (iv) she protects what he brings,
- (v) she is skilled and industrious in discharging her duties.

“In these five ways does the wife show her compassion to her husband who ministers to her as the *West*. Thus is the *West* covered by him and made safe and secure.

“In five ways, young householder, should a clansman minister to his friends and associates as the *North*:

- (i) by liberality,
- (ii) by courteous speech,
- (iii) by being helpful,
- (iv) by being impartial,
- (v) by sincerity.

“The friends and associates thus ministered to as the *North* by a clansman show compassion to him in five ways:

- (i) they protect him when he is heedless,
- (ii) they protect his property when he is heedless,
- (iii) they become a refuge when he is in danger,
- (iv) they do not forsake him in his troubles,
- (v) they show consideration for his family.

“The friends and associates thus ministered to as the *North* by a clansman show their compassion towards him in these five ways. Thus is the *North* covered by him and made safe and secure.

“In five ways should a master minister to his servants and employees as the *Nadir*:

- (i) by assigning them work according to their ability,
- (ii) by supplying them with food and wages,
- (iii) by tending them in sickness,

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<sup>8</sup> lit., “the folk around” (*parijana*).

- (iv) by sharing with them any delicacies,
- (v) by granting them leave at times.

“The servants and employees thus ministered to as the *Nadir* by their master show their compassion to him in five ways:

- (i) they rise before him,
- (ii) they go to sleep after him,
- (iii) they take only what is given,
- (iv) they perform their duties well,
- (v) they uphold his good name and fame.

“The servants and employees thus ministered to as the *Nadir* show their compassion towards him in these five ways. Thus is the *Nadir* covered by him and made safe and secure.

“In five ways, young householder, should a householder minister to ascetics and brahmins as the *Zenith*:

- (i) by lovable deeds,
- (ii) by lovable words,
- (iii) by lovable thoughts,
- (iv) by keeping open house to them,
- (v) by supplying their material needs.

“The ascetics and brahmins thus ministered to as the *Zenith* by a householder show their compassion towards him in six ways:

- (i) they restrain him from evil,
- (ii) they persuade him to do good,
- (iii) they love him with a kind heart,
- (iv) they make him hear what he has not heard,
- (v) they clarify what he has already heard,
- (vi) they point out the path to a heavenly state.

“In these six ways do ascetics and brahmins show their compassion towards a householder who ministers to them as the *Zenith*. Thus is the *Zenith* covered by him and made safe and secure.”

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

“The mother and father are the East,  
The Teachers are the South,  
Wife and children are the West,  
The friends and associates are the North.

Servants and employees are the *Nadir*,  
The ascetics and brahmins are the *Zenith*;  
Who is fit to lead the household life,  
These six quarters he should salute.

Who is wise and virtuous,  
Gentle and keen-witted,  
Humble and amenable,  
Such a one to honour may attain.

Who is energetic and not indolent,  
In misfortune unshaken,  
Flawless in manner and intelligent,  
Such a one to honour may attain.

Who is hospitable, and friendly,  
Liberal and unselfish,  
A guide, an instructor, a leader,  
Such a one to honour may attain.

Generosity, sweet speech,  
Helpfulness to others,  
Impartiality to all,  
As the case demands.

These four winning ways make the world go round,  
As the linchpin in a moving car.  
If these in the world exist not,  
Neither mother nor father will receive,  
Respect and honour from their children.

Since these four winning ways  
The wise appraise in every way,  
To eminence they attain,  
And praise they rightly gain."

When the Exalted One had spoken thus, Sigāla, the young householder, said as follows:

"Excellent, Lord, excellent! It is as if, Lord, a man were to set upright that which was overturned, or were to reveal that which was hidden, or were to point out the way to one who had gone astray, or were to hold a lamp amidst the darkness, so that those who have eyes may see. Even so, has the doctrine been explained in various ways by the Exalted One.

"I take refuge, Lord, in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. May the Exalted One receive me as a follower; as one who has taken refuge from this very day to life's end.

# Mahā-maṅgala Sutta<sup>9</sup>

## *Blessings*<sup>10</sup>

This famous text, cherished highly in all Buddhist lands, is a terse but comprehensive summary of Buddhist ethics, individual and social. The thirty-eight blessings enumerated in it are an unflinching guide on life's journey. Rightly starting with "avoidance of bad company" which is essential to all moral and spiritual progress, the Blessings culminate in the achievement of a passion-free mind, unshakeable in its serenity. To follow the ideals put forth in these verses is the sure way to harmony and progress for the individual as well as for society, country and mankind.

"The Mahā-maṅgala Sutta shows that Buddha's instructions do not always take negative forms, that they are not always a series of classifications and analysis, or concerned exclusively with monastic morality. In this sutta we find family morality expressed in most elegant verses. We can imagine the happy blissful state of household life attained as a result of following these injunctions." (From *The Ethics of Buddhism* by S. Tachibana, Colombo 1943, Bauddha Sahitya Sabha).

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Exalted One was dwelling at Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery, in Jeta's Grove,<sup>11</sup> near Sāvathī.<sup>12</sup> Now when the night was far spent, a certain deity whose surpassing splendour illuminated the entire Jeta Grove, came to the presence of the Exalted One and, drawing near, respectfully saluted him and stood at one side. Standing thus, he addressed the Exalted One in verse:

*The Deity:*

Many deities and men, yearning after good, have pondered on blessings. Pray, tell me the greatest blessing!

*The Buddha:*

Not to associate with the foolish,<sup>13</sup> but to associate with the wise; and to honour those who are worthy of honour—this is the greatest blessing.

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<sup>9</sup> (Notes derived mainly from the Commentaries)

<sup>10</sup> This Sutta appears in the Sutta-Nipāta (v. 258ff) and in the Khuddakapāṭha. See Mahā-maṅgala Jātaka (No. 453). For a detailed explanation see *Life's Highest Blessing* by Dr. R. L. Soni, Wheel No. 254/256.

<sup>11</sup> Anāthapiṇḍika, lit., "He who gives alms to the helpless"; his former name was Sudatta. After his conversion to Buddhism, he bought the grove belonging to Prince Jeta, and established a monastery which was subsequently named Jetavana. It was in this monastery that the Buddha observed most of his *vassāna* periods (rainy seasons—the three months' retreat beginning with the full-moon of July). Many are the discourses delivered and many are the incidents connected with the Buddha's life that happened at Jetavana. It was here that the Buddha ministered to the sick monk neglected by his companions, advising them: "Whoever, monks, would wait upon me, let him wait upon the sick." It was here that the Buddha so poignantly taught the law of impermanence, by asking the bereaved young woman Kisā Gotamī who brought her dead child, to fetch a grain of mustard seed from a home where there has been no bereavement.

<sup>12</sup> Identified with modern Sahet-Mahet, near Balrampur.

<sup>13</sup> This refers not only to the stupid and uncultured, but also includes the wicked in thought, word and deed.

To reside in a suitable locality,<sup>14</sup> to have done meritorious actions in the past and to set oneself in the right course<sup>15</sup> this is the greatest blessing.

To have much learning, to be skilful in handicrafts,<sup>16</sup> well-trained in discipline,<sup>17</sup> and to be of good speech<sup>18</sup> this is the greatest blessing.

To support father and mother, to cherish wife and children, and to be engaged in peaceful occupation—this is the greatest blessing.

To be generous in giving, to be righteous in conduct,<sup>19</sup> to help one's relatives, and to be blameless in action—this is the greatest blessing.

To loathe more evil and abstain from it, to refrain from intoxicants,<sup>20</sup> and to be steadfast in virtue—this is the greatest blessing.

To be respectful,<sup>21</sup> humble, contented and grateful; and to listen to the Dhamma on due occasions this is the greatest blessing.

To be patient and obedient, to associate with monks and to have religious discussions on due occasions—this is the greatest blessing.

Self-restraint,<sup>22</sup> a holy and chaste life, the perception of the Noble Truths and the realisation of Nibbāna—this is the greatest blessing.

A mind unruffled by the vagaries of fortune,<sup>23</sup> from sorrow freed, from defilements cleansed, from fear liberated<sup>24</sup> this is the greatest blessing.

Those who thus abide, ever remain invincible, in happiness established. These are the greatest blessings.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Any place where monks, nuns and lay devotees continually reside, where pious folk are bent on the performance of the ten meritorious deeds, and where the Dhamma exists as a living principle.

<sup>15</sup> Making the right resolve for abandoning immorality for morality, faithlessness for faith and selfishness for generosity.

<sup>16</sup> The harmless crafts of the householder by which no living being is injured and nothing unrighteous done; and the crafts of the homeless monk, such as stitching the robes, etc.

<sup>17</sup> *Vinaya* means discipline in thought, word and deed. The commentary speaks of two kinds of discipline—that of the householder, which is abstinence from the ten immoral actions (*akusala-kamma-patha*), and that of the monk which is the non-transgression of the offences enumerated in the *Pātimokkha* (the code of the monk's rules) or the “fourfold moral purity” (*catu-parisuddhi-sīla*).

<sup>18</sup> Good speech that is opportune, truthful, friendly, profitable and spoken with thoughts of loving-kindness.

<sup>19</sup> Righteous conduct is the observance of the ten good actions (*kusala-kamma-patha*) in thought, word and deed: freeing the mind of greed, ill-will and wrong views; avoiding speech that is untruthful, slanderous, abusive and frivolous; and the non-committal of acts of killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.

<sup>20</sup> Total abstinence from alcohol and intoxicating drugs.

<sup>21</sup> Towards monks (and of course also to the clergy of other religions), teachers, parents, elders, superiors, etc.

<sup>22</sup> Self-restraint (*tapo*): the suppression of lusts and hates by the control of the senses; and the suppression of indolence by the rousing of energy.

<sup>23</sup> *Loka-dhamma*, i.e., conditions which are necessarily connected with life in this world; there are primarily eight of them: gain and loss, honour and dishonour, praise and blame, pain and joy.

<sup>24</sup> Each of these three expressions refers to the mind of the arahant: *asoka*: sorrowless; *vīraja*: stainless, i.e., free from lust, hatred and ignorance; *khema*: security from the bonds of sense desires (*kāma*), repeated existence (*bhava*), wrong views (*ditṭhi*) and ignorance (*avijjā*).

<sup>25</sup> The above-mentioned thirty-eight blessings.

# Parābhava Sutta

## *Downfall*

While the Maṅgala Sutta deals with the way of life conducive to progress and happiness, the Parābhava Sutta supplements it by pointing out the causes of downfall. He who allows himself to become tarnished by these blemishes of conduct blocks his own road to worldly, moral and spiritual progress and lowers all that is truly noble and human in man. But he who is heedful of these dangers keeps open the road to all those thirty-eight blessings of which human nature is capable.

Thus have I heard. Once the Exalted One was dwelling at Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery, in the Jeta Grove, near Sāvathī.

Now when the night was far spent, a certain deity whose surpassing splendour illuminated the entire Jeta Grove, came to the presence of the Exalted One and, drawing near, respectfully saluted him and stood at one side. Standing thus, he addressed the Exalted One in verse:

*The Deity:*

Having come here with our questions to the Exalted One, we ask thee, O Gotama, about man's decline. Pray, tell us the cause of downfall!

*The Buddha:*

Easily known is the progressive one, easily known he who declines. He who loves Dhamma progresses; he who is averse to it declines.

*The Deity:*

Thus much do we see: this is the first cause of one's downfall. Pray, tell us the second cause.<sup>26</sup>

*The Buddha:*

The wicked are dear to him, with the virtuous he finds no delight, he prefers the creed of the wicked—this is a cause of one's downfall.

Being fond of sleep, fond of company, indolent, lazy and irritable—this is a cause of one's downfall.

Though being well-to-do, not to support father and mother who are old and past their youth—this is a cause of one's downfall.

To deceive by falsehood a Brahmin or ascetic or any other mendicant—this is a cause of one's downfall.

To have much wealth and ample gold and food, but to enjoy one's luxuries alone—this is a cause of one's downfall.

To be proud of birth, of wealth or clan, and to despise one's own kinsmen—this is a cause of one's downfall.

To be a rake, a drunkard, a gambler, and to squander all one earns—this is a cause of one's downfall.

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<sup>26</sup> These lines are repeated after each stanza, with the due enumeration.

Not to be contented with one's own wife, and to be seen with harlots and the wives of others—this is a cause of one's downfall.

Being past one's youth, to take a young wife and to be unable to sleep for jealousy of her—this is a cause of one's downfall.

To place in authority a woman given to drink and squandering, or a man of a like behaviour—this is a cause of one's downfall.

To be of noble birth, with vast ambition and of slender means, and to crave for rulership—this is a cause of one's downfall.

Knowing well these causes of downfall in the world, the noble sage endowed with insight shares a happy realm.

# Vyagghapajja Sutta

## *Conditions of Welfare*

In this sutta, the Buddha instructs rich householders how to preserve and increase their prosperity and how to avoid loss of wealth. Wealth alone, however, does not make a complete man nor a harmonious society. Possession of wealth all too often multiplies man's desires, and he is ever in the pursuit of amassing more wealth and power. This unrestrained craving, however, leaves him dissatisfied and stifles his inner growth. It creates conflict and disharmony in society through the resentment of the underprivileged who feel themselves exploited by the effects of unrestrained craving.

Therefore the Buddha follows up on his advice on material welfare with four essential conditions for spiritual welfare: confidence (in the Master's enlightenment), virtue, liberality and wisdom. These four will instil in man a sense of higher values. He will, then, not only pursue his own material concern, but also be aware of his duty towards society. To mention only one of the implications: a wisely and generously employed liberality will reduce tensions and conflicts in society. Thus the observing of these conditions of material and spiritual welfare will make for an ideal citizen in an ideal society.

Thus have I heard. Once the Exalted One was dwelling amongst the Koliyans,<sup>27</sup> in their market town named Kakkarapatta. Then Dīghajānu, a Koliyan, approached the Exalted One, respectfully saluted him and sat on one side. Thus seated, he addressed the Exalted One as follows:

“We, Lord, are laymen who enjoy worldly pleasure. We lead a life encumbered by wife and children. We use sandalwood of Kāsi. We deck ourselves with garlands, perfume and unguents. We use gold and silver. To those like us, O Lord, let the Exalted One preach the Dhamma, teach those things that lead to weal and happiness in this life and to weal and happiness in future life.”

## *Conditions of Worldly Progress*

“Four conditions, Vyagghapajja,<sup>28</sup> conduce to a householder's weal and happiness in this very life. Which four?

“The accomplishment of persistent effort (*uṭṭhāna-sampadā*), the accomplishment of watchfulness (*āraṅkha-sampadā*), good friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*) and balanced livelihood (*sama-jīvitā*).

“What is the accomplishment of persistent effort?

“Herein, Vyagghapajja, by whatsoever activity a householder earns his living, whether by farming, by trading, by rearing cattle, by archery, by service under the king, or by any other kind of craft—at that he becomes skilful and is not lazy. He is endowed with the

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<sup>27</sup> The Koliyans were the rivals of the Sākyaans. Queen Mahā Māyā belonged to the Koliyan clan and King Suddhodana to the Sākyaan clan.

<sup>28</sup> “Tigers' Path”; he was so called because his ancestors were born on a forest path infested with tigers. Vyagghapajja was Dīghajānu's family name.

power of discernment as to the proper ways and means; he is able to carry out and allocate (duties). This is called the accomplishment of persistent effort.

“What is the accomplishment of watchfulness?

“Herein, Vyagghapajja, whatsoever wealth a householder is in possession of, obtained by dint of effort, collected by strength of arm, by the sweat of his brow, justly acquired by right means—such he husbands well by guarding and watching so that kings would not seize it, thieves would not steal it, fire would not burn it, water would not carry it away, nor ill-disposed heirs remove it. This is the accomplishment of watchfulness.

“What is good friendship?

“Herein, Vyagghapajja, in whatsoever village or market town a householder dwells, he associates, converses, engages in discussions with householders or householders’ sons, whether young and highly cultured or old and highly cultured, full of faith (*saddhā*),<sup>29</sup> full of virtue (*sīla*), full of charity (*cāga*), full of wisdom (*pañña*). He acts in accordance with the faith of the faithful, with the virtue of the virtuous, with the charity of the charitable, with the wisdom of the wise. This is called good friendship.

“What is balanced livelihood?

“Herein, Vyagghapajja, a householder knowing his income and expenses leads a balanced life, neither extravagant nor miserly, knowing that thus his income will stand in excess of his expenses, but not his expenses in excess of his income.

“Just as the goldsmith,<sup>30</sup> or an apprentice of his, knows, on holding up a balance, that by so much it has dipped down, by so much it has tilted up; even so a householder, knowing his income and expenses leads a balanced life, neither extravagant nor miserly, knowing that thus his income will stand in excess of his expenses, but not his expenses in excess of his income.

“If, Vyagghapajja, a householder with little income were to lead an extravagant life, there would be those who say—‘This person enjoys his property like one who eats udumbara figs.’<sup>31</sup> If, Vyagghapajja, a householder with a large income were to lead a wretched life, there would be those who say—‘This person will die like a starveling.’

“The wealth thus amassed, Vyagghapajja, has four sources of destruction: debauchery, drunkenness, gambling, and friendship, companionship and intimacy with evil-doers.

“Just as in the case of a great tank with four inlets and outlets, if a man should close the inlets and open the outlets and there should be no adequate rainfall, decrease of water is to be expected in that tank, and not an increase; even so there are four sources for the destruction of amassed wealth—debauchery, drunkenness, gambling, and friendship, companionship and intimacy with evil-doers.

“There are four sources for the increase of amassed wealth: abstinence from debauchery, abstinence from drunkenness, non-indulgence in gambling, and friendship, companionship and intimacy with the good.

“Just as in the case of a great tank with four inlets and four outlets, if a person were to open the inlets and close the outlets, and there should also be adequate rainfall, an increase

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<sup>29</sup> *Saddhā* is not blind faith. It is confidence based on knowledge.

<sup>30</sup> *Tulādhara*, lit., “carrier of the scales.”

<sup>31</sup> *Udambarakhādaka*. The Commentary explains that one who wishes to eat udumbara figs shakes the tree, with the result that many fruits fall but only a few are eaten, while a large number are wasted.

in water is certainly to be expected in that tank and not a decrease, even so these four conditions are the sources of increase of amassed wealth.

“These four conditions, Vyagghapajja, are conducive to a householder’s weal and happiness in this very life.

### *Conditions of Spiritual Progress*

“Four conditions, Vyagghapajja, conduce to a householder’s weal and happiness in his future life. Which four?

“The accomplishment of faith (*saddhā-sampadā*), the accomplishment of virtue (*sīla-sampadā*), the accomplishment of charity (*cāga-sampadā*) and the accomplishment of wisdom (*pañña-sampadā*).

“What is the accomplishment of faith?

“Herein a householder is possessed of faith, he believes in the Enlightenment of the Perfect One (*Tathāgata*): ‘Thus, indeed, is that Blessed One: he is the pure one, fully enlightened, endowed with knowledge and conduct, well-gone, the knower of worlds, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, the teacher of gods and men, all-knowing and blessed.’ This is called the accomplishment of faith.

“What is the accomplishment of virtue?

“Herein a householder abstains from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and from intoxicants that cause infatuation and heedlessness. This is called the accomplishment of virtue.

“What is the accomplishment of charity?

“Herein a householder dwells at home with heart free from the stain of avarice, devoted to charity, open-handed, delighting in generosity, attending to the needy, delighting in the distribution of alms. This is called the accomplishment of charity.

“What is the accomplishment of wisdom?

“Herein a householder is wise: he is endowed with wisdom that understands the arising and cessation (of the five aggregates of existence); he is possessed of the noble penetrating insight that leads to the destruction of suffering. This is called the accomplishment of wisdom.

“These four conditions, Vyagghapajja, conduce to a householder’s weal and happiness in his future life.

Energetic and heedful in his tasks,  
Wisely administering his wealth,  
He lives a balanced life,  
Protecting what he has amassed.

Endowed with faith and virtue too,  
Generous he is and free from avarice;  
He ever works to clear the path  
That leads to weal in future life.

Thus to the layman full of faith,  
By him, so truly named 'Enlightened,'  
These eight conditions have been told  
Which now and after lead to bliss."

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