

1.3B ☸ TEXT <i>Numerical Discourses 4.61</i>	1.3B ❁ PALI <i>Aṅguttara Nikāya 4.61</i>
<p>With wealth acquired by energetic striving, amassed by the strength of one's arms, earned by the sweat of one's brow, righteous wealth righteously gained, a noble person undertakes four worthy deeds:</p> <p>1) One makes oneself, one's mother and father, one's wife, children and workers, one's friends and companions, happy and pleased, and properly maintains them in happiness.</p> <p>2) One makes provisions against the losses that might arise from fire, floods, kings, thieves, or displeasing heirs. One makes oneself secure.</p> <p>3) One takes care of the five obligations: to relatives, guests, ancestors, the king, and the deities.</p> <p>4) One establishes an uplifting offering of alms, —a spiritual offering, resulting in happiness, conducive to rebirth in heaven— to those ascetics and sages who refrain from intoxication and heedlessness, who are settled in patience and mildness, who tame themselves, calm themselves, and train themselves for extinguishing the toxins.</p> <p>When anyone spends their wealth on these four worthy deeds, that wealth is said to have gone to good use, to have been properly used, to have been utilized for a worthy cause.</p>	<p><i>idha ariyasāvako uṭṭhānavīriyādhigatehi bhogehi bāhābalaparicitehi sedāvakkhittehi dhammikehi dhammaladdhehi cattāri pattakammāni kattā hoti:</i></p> <p>1) <i>attānaṃ... mātāpitaro... puttadāradāsakammakaraporise... mittāmacce sukheti piṇeti sammā sukhaṃ pariharati.</i></p> <p>2) <i>yā tā honti āpadā aggito vā udakato vā rājato vā corato vā appiyato vā dāyādato, tathārūpāsu āpadāsu pariyodhāya saṃvattati. sothhiṃ attānaṃ karoti.</i></p> <p>3) <i>pañcabaliṃ kattā hoti - ñātībaliṃ, atithībaliṃ, pubbaṇṇabaliṃ, rājābaliṃ, devatābaliṃ.</i></p> <p>4) <i>ye te samaṇabrāhmaṇā madappamādā paṭiviratā khantisoracce nivīṭṭhā ekamattānaṃ damenti, ekamattānaṃ samenti, ekamattānaṃ parinibbāpentī, tathārūpesu samaṇabrāhmaṇesu uddhaggikaṃ dakkhiṇaṃ patīṭṭhāpetī sovaggikaṃ sukhavipākaṃ saggasaṃvattanikaṃ...</i></p> <p><i>yassa kassaci imehi catūhi pattakammehi bhogā parikkhayaṃ gacchantī, ime vuccanti bhogā ṭhānagatā pattagatā āyatanaso paribhuttā' ti.</i></p>

### 1.3B ❖ COMMENT

A. Many of the Buddha's lay-followers were merchants or members of a wealthy aristocracy. Although he himself lived a life of great simplicity and scrupulous austerity, he had no problem with the affluence of many of his followers. It is necessary to place the teachings of generosity in the context of his general views on wealth and property, for in spite of what has been said in the last unit {1.3A} about non-material forms of generosity, we can see here that he also encouraged people to share their wealth with others and offered clear guidelines for doing so.

B. The first thing to notice is that the source of one's wealth is an important factor. It needs to be honestly obtained by one's own efforts. Financial practices that exploit others would be frowned upon, as would any kind of misrepresentation or fraud. The second general point, expressed in the final lines, is that wealth is well-spent when used for a worthy cause. So while monks and nuns will have nothing to do with money, it is a natural part of the layperson's life and is to be handled skillfully. Learning what is a worthy use of wealth is part of gaining wisdom, and implementing that wisdom in one's life is part of exemplifying and practicing integrity.

C. The financial plan the Buddha suggests is elegant in its simplicity: A quarter to make yourself, family and friends 'happy and pleased'; a quarter put away in reserve against trouble; a quarter for civic obligations such as taxes; and a quarter given away to others. We can't help but wonder whether this is a formula that works as well today as it did in the very different world of ancient India in the fifth century BCE. The guidelines for taxes and savings seem comparable, but only people of means can get by on spending only a quarter of their income. In the modern context giving away a quarter of one's wealth seems steep compared to Western guidelines such as tithing (10%), but less so in light of recent billionaire pledges to give away half of their holdings.

D. Notice that the criteria for where *dāna* is given is not specified objectively, but is couched rather in language that emphasizes certain qualities of mind and character. *Dāna* in this context is not an expression of gratitude for the teachings, but a 'spiritual offering' meant to help further those who are seeking diligently to purify their minds. It seems we are being encouraged to support anything that is 'uplifting' in the sense of enhancing integrity and strengthening the more noble strands of human nature, wherever they are found and however they are expressed.

### 1.3B ♦ LANGUAGE

A. Here we find the word *dhamma* once again, this time applied in the sense not only of what is 'natural' but also what is 'proper' or 'appropriate' or, as rendered here, 'righteous wealth righteously gained (*bhogehi... dhammikehi dhammaladdhehi*).

B. The word *sukha* has a wide range, which will be explored more fully later on, and slides easily from 'pleasure' to 'happiness' to 'well-being'. Here we find it in a causative construction with the sense of 'making' or 'causing' the happiness of oneself and others. It is entirely appropriate to use your well-earned resources to make yourself happy and to please the people you care about. Discernment is required, however, to know the difference between pleasure, which may be indulgent or even unhealthy, and happiness, which does not consist only of the attainment of

pleasure. As one's understanding matures, and as one pays more careful attention to the effects of action, the ability to discern this distinction between different levels of happiness evolves.

C. 'Striving' has come to have a negative connotation in many contexts, suggesting as it does a sense of straining or yearning. The phrase 'energetic striving' is being used to translate *utthāna-vīriya* in the second line of the text. The word *vīriya* means 'energy' in any number of contexts, and is related to the Pāli word *vīra* (hero) and the English word 'virile', suggesting the heroic quality of putting forth great effort to accomplish great deeds. The other word is based on the verb 'to stand' (*√ṣṭhā*) coupled with the prefix *ut-* which mean 'up'. So literally we have the phrase 'having the energy to stand up' to what needs to be done. Perhaps we can equate this to getting up in the morning to go to work?

D. Careful readers will notice that I have translated the compound word '*samaṇa-brāhmaṇā*' as 'ascetics and sages', which is unconventional. The *samaṇa*(s) were 'wanderers' who lived a renunciate lifestyle, so it is natural enough to call them ascetics, but the word '*brāhmaṇa*' is more literally and commonly rendered by the English 'brahmin'. I call them by the more generic word 'sages' because I don't think the main point here is their caste affiliation, but rather their role as forest-dwelling practitioners. In many places throughout the *Nikāyas* the Buddha uses the word '*brāhmaṇa*' as a generic term for a wise practitioner, and I would not want us to get distracted by issues of caste in places where that information is tangential.

### 1.3B ★ INVESTIGATION

A. What do you make of this distinction between wealth gained by one's own 'energetic striving' and wealth that might be acquired in other ways? In English we have the phrase 'ill-begotten wealth', which usually refers to something illegal or unethical. Other than this, does it really feel different that wealth has multiple sources, including inheritance, investment income, lottery winnings, or a bill found on the sidewalk? If you run a business that employs other people, is that resource acquired by your own efforts? A case can be made either way, and there may be no right answer—the call is just to investigate experientially your relationship to wealth acquired in different ways. Is there a certain distinguishable experiential quality to earning one's money through hard work, as compared with acquiring in by some other means? This might be something to explore.

B. What does it feel like to 'make people happy' by providing something for them in one way or another? Later in the course we will explore the relationship between gladness for the good fortune of others (*muditā*) and its opposite, feelings of jealousy or resentment. The Buddha is suggesting here that we have it in our power to uplift both oneself and others by simple acts of generosity. See if this is true. When you give something to someone, no matter if it is something very modest, does it make you feel good? Conversely, if you find yourself feeling bad about letting go or giving something away, can the experience be re-framed as an act of generosity to yield a different emotional effect? Some call this a 'faking it 'till you make it' strategy, whereby if you have to part with something, whether an object of value or a preferred way of dispensing your attention, perhaps trying to frame it as an act of generosity will at least make it a little less odious and maybe even render it more enjoyable and meaningful.

C. Investigate the difference between numbers one and three in the passage above. Which of your expenses would you put in the category of ‘the five obligations’? Taxes, surely, but perhaps also such things as insurance, utilities, and even rent. What can you identify as ‘making you happy’? Perhaps this is the difference between basic rent and a higher rent to live in a place you truly enjoy, or similar differences in transportation, clothing, or eating expenses. The Buddha seems to be making a distinction between four different emotional relationships to wealth: enjoyment, concern for safety, a sense of duty, and something rising above the mundane. See if you can make sense of this distinction in your own life.

### 1.3B ✪ PRACTICE

A. Don’t worry, I am not going to suggest you give away a quarter of your net worth as a Buddhist practice of generosity, but I would encourage you to work with some of the ideas presented in this text in your own experience. For example, notice when you are spending to make yourself happy, or to make happy someone you know and care about, and see if you can feel that this is an appropriate thing to do with your money. Many in our culture are trained to feel guilty or ill at ease in such circumstances, and the Buddha here is inviting us to move in a different direction. This is not a license for indulgence, of course, but explore the notion that it is okay and even healthy to use your wealth, whether great or small, to bring happiness.

B. The language may be somewhat unfamiliar, but see if you can make sense of this idea of making a ‘spiritual offering’. One may or may not find it reassuring that such a gift is ‘conducive to rebirth in heaven’, but surely we can all relate to the associated idea that certain acts of generosity can ‘result in happiness’. Even gifts you give yourself can be uplifting. See if you can find in your life a way of offering something that propels yourself or someone you care about in the direction of greater well-being. ‘Spiritual’ here means ‘in the direction of heaven’, and can be understood figuratively to point us toward something that does not merely gratify our lower senses, but inspires and encourages us to be a better person or contribute to making a better world. It involves looking beyond the personal self toward something larger than oneself, which can be construed in religious or secular ways. Such reaching beyond oneself, the Buddha seems to be saying here, is good for us.