

The Compassion Network Wiki-Canon

T01n0072 三歸五戒慈心厭離功德經

Sūtra on the Merits of the Three Refuges, Five Precepts, Loving-Kindness, and Dispassion

[Translator unknown.]

The Discourse on Merit

Thus I have heard. At one time, the Buddha was at Jeta Grove's Garden of Anāthapiṇḍika in the country of Śrāvastī.

The Buddha addressed the elder Anāthapiṇḍika about a spiritual ascetic named Virama who performed extraordinary acts of generosity by giving away vast amounts of his wealth and valuables.

Virama gave away:

- 84,000 gold bowls filled with silver nuggets, and 84,000 silver bowls filled with gold nuggets.
- 84,000 gold and silver bathing basins.
- 84,000 oxen whose horns were adorned with gold and silver.
- 84,000 maidens adorned with precious ornaments.
- 84,000 sitting cloths covered with a multitude of decorative ribbons, and the same number of fine pieces of clothing.
- 84,000 elephants and horses with gold and silver saddles.
- 84,000 mansions.

He donated everything he owned within the city limits, as people were allowed to take whatever they wished. Furthermore, he donated a magnificent building complex to the Buddhist community.

The Hierarchy of Blessings

The Buddha then taught the elder Anāthapiṇḍika the comparative merits of these deeds:

1. Generosity vs. Refuge:

The blessings resulting from all the above acts of charity are lesser than the blessings obtained from taking the Three Refuges (the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha). Those who take the Three Refuges bestow fearlessness upon all beings, which is why the blessings from taking refuge are uncountable.

2. Refuge vs. Precepts:

The combined blessings from the above acts of charity and taking the Three Refuges are lesser than the blessings resulting from upholding the Five Precepts. The merit from receiving the Five Precepts is more superior.

3. Precepts vs. Loving-Kindness:

The combined blessings from the above acts of charity, taking the Three Refuges, and upholding the Five Precepts are lesser than the blessings of holding a thought of loving-kindness towards all beings, even for as brief a moment as the time it takes to snap a finger.

4. Loving-Kindness vs. Dispassion:

The combined blessings from all the above acts of charity, taking the Three Refuges, upholding the Five Precepts, and practicing loving-kindness cannot compare with the blessings from being disenchanted with the world of conditioned existence.

The reason is that contemplating the unsatisfactory nature of the world leads the practitioner to finally end the suffering inherent in continual transmigration and realize Buddhahood. Hence, this kind of blessing is most supreme.

At that time, Anāthapiṇḍika heard what the Buddha said and joyfully followed the teaching.