
The Practical Ways of Righteous Individual's Donation

According to Sappurisa-dāna Sutta

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Abstract

This article investigates the practical approaches to righteous giving as outlined in the Sappurisa-dāna Sutta, a key teaching in Theravāda Buddhism. The study addresses three objectives: (1) to examine the general concept and significance of donation (dāna) from a Theravāda Buddhist perspective, (2) to analyze the characteristics and principles of righteous giving as prescribed in the Sappurisa-dāna Sutta, and (3) to explore the practical application of these principles in contemporary daily life. Utilizing a documentary research methodology, this study synthesizes insights from canonical Pāli scriptures and relevant secondary sources.

The findings reveal that the concept of dāna in Theravāda Buddhism extends beyond material generosity to encompass the cultivation of wholesome mental states, ethical conduct, and the intention behind the act of giving. The Sappurisa-dāna Sutta highlights several attributes of a righteous donor, including discernment of the recipient's virtues, understanding the value of the gift, awareness of the appropriate timing, and the donor's state of mind during the act of giving. These attributes emphasize not only the act of generosity but also the wisdom and ethical consideration underpinning it.

The study further explores how these principles can be integrated into contemporary life. For instance, by aligning giving practices with mindfulness, ethical awareness, and social responsibility, individuals can contribute meaningfully to their communities while fostering inner peace and spiritual growth. The study also identifies potential challenges in practicing righteous giving, such as misconceptions about altruism and societal influences on charitable behavior. It provides practical recommendations to overcome these obstacles, ensuring that the essence of dāna aligns with its intended spiritual and ethical goals.

This investigation highlights the transformative potential of *dāna* as an instrumental approach to nurturing compassion, mitigating egocentric inclinations, and fostering a cohesive society grounded in the doctrines of Theravāda Buddhism. By adhering to the precepts delineated in the Sappurisa-dāna Sutta, individuals are allowed to engage in acts of generosity that yield advantages for both themselves and the collective, thereby achieving an equilibrium between personal development and societal welfare. This synthesis of Buddhist philosophical insights with contemporary methodologies illustrates the persistent significance of Buddhist tenets in promoting a compassionate and ethically principled world.

Keywords: Practical ways; Righteous individual's Donation; Sappurisa-dāna Sutta.

Introduction

Donation (*dāna*) is a foundational practice in Buddhism and is regarded as a critical element for spiritual growth and ethical living (Bodhi, 2011). It is deeply rooted in Indian traditions, including Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism, where it represents the virtue of generosity and selfless giving. Within Buddhism, *dāna* is more than a mere act of charity; it embodies compassion and selflessness, reflecting an effort to help others while reducing one's attachment. In various discourses, the Buddha emphasized giving as a means of accumulating merit and cultivating spiritual virtues. For instance, in the *Dīghajānu Sutta* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the quality of generosity (*cāga*)—synonymous with *dāna*—is highlighted as one of the four qualities leading to happiness and prosperity, both in this life and beyond (Rhys Davids, 1899).

Despite its spiritual significance, contemporary practices of *dāna* often diverge from its ideal form. Many modern donors are motivated by desires for recognition or personal gain, which conflict with the altruistic essence of true generosity (Silk & House, 2016). Additionally, selective giving, where preferences are based on biases rather than genuine needs, undermines the universality and impartiality taught in Buddhist doctrines (Keown, 2020; Harvey, 2020). Furthermore, giving at inappropriate times, or in ways that cause harm or discomfort to recipients, compromises the dignity and purpose of the act, diminishing its spiritual value.

The Sappurisa-dāna Sutta, a discourse from the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, provides a detailed framework for righteous giving, emphasizing attributes such as firm conviction, mindfulness,

proper timing, compassionate intent, and non-harmfulness to both giver and receiver. This teaching highlights that effective giving not only addresses immediate needs but also promotes sustainable solutions and long-term well-being, thereby contributing to the alleviation of suffering (Hardy, 1976).

While extensive research has explored the Buddhist perspective on *dāna*, the practical guidance offered in the Sappurisa-*dāna* Sutta remains underexamined. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the practical ways a righteous individual can give, as outlined in the Sappurisa-*dāna* Sutta. By elucidating these principles, the study aims to inspire individuals to practice *dāna* in alignment with Buddhist teachings, thereby fostering personal growth, social harmony, and progress toward *nibbāna*. The insights from this research aspire to enhance individual and collective well-being, contributing to a more compassionate and equitable society.

Research Objectives

1. To study the general concept and meaning of individual donation (*dāna*) in Theravāda Buddhist perspective
2. To analyze the practice of righteous individual's donation in Sappurisa-*dāna* Sutta
3. To apply the practical ways of righteous individual donation and its application to daily life.

Literature Review

This literature review evaluates key scholarly works relevant to the objectives of this study, focusing on the general concept of individual donation (*dāna*) in Theravāda Buddhism, the principles of righteous giving as outlined in the Sappurisa-*dāna* Sutta, and the practical application of these principles to daily life.

1. The General Concept of Donation (*Dāna*) in Theravāda Buddhism

Findly (2003) explores *dāna* as a multifaceted concept encompassing giving, receiving, and the transfer of merit. Findly categorizes *dāna* into various types, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the practice within Buddhist traditions. This work offers valuable insights into the ethical and spiritual dimensions of *dāna*, which form the foundation for this study.

Bhikkhu Bodhi (2011) compiles essays by prominent scholars, such as M. O’C. Walshe and Ācariya Dhammapāla, provide a detailed account of dāna as found in the Pāli Canon. This collection examines the intention behind giving and its transformative potential for donors and recipients, highlighting the doctrinal significance of dāna in the Theravāda tradition.

Harvey (2000) systematically introduces Buddhist ethics, including the principle of generosity. His work emphasizes that dāna is not merely an act of charity but a practice aimed at cultivating ethical behavior and reducing attachment. This perspective aligns with the study’s objective of examining dāna’s broader ethical implications.

2. The Practice of Righteous Giving in the Sappurisa-dāna Sutta

Bhikkhu Bodhi (1978) delves into the Brahmajāla Sutta and related texts, elaborating on the ten pāramīs, including the perfection of giving (dāna-pāramī). He emphasizes the volitional aspect of generosity, characterized by relinquishing personal attachments with compassion and wisdom. This work provides a critical lens through which to analyze the righteous individual’s donation as outlined in the Sappurisa-dāna Sutta.

Endo (1986) offers an in-depth exploration of dāna practices, emphasizing the Buddha’s teachings on the appropriate methods, timing, and intentions for giving. This analysis is instrumental in understanding the attributes of righteous giving as described in the Sappurisa-dāna Sutta.

3. Practical Applications of Righteous Giving in Daily Life

Janakabhivamsa (1999) highlights the accessibility of Buddhist teachings on dāna for lay practitioners, providing practical guidelines for integrating generosity into everyday life. His clear and relatable approach ensures the applicability of dāna principles to contemporary contexts, aligning with the study’s third objective.

Bhikkhu Bodhi (2002) reiterates that the practice of dāna serves not only as a means of ethical cultivation but also as a practical tool for fostering societal harmony. By addressing the root causes of suffering, dāna transcends mere charitable acts to become a sustainable solution for individual and communal well-being.

The reviewed literature underscores the centrality of dāna in Theravāda Buddhist practice, emphasizing its ethical, spiritual, and practical dimensions. The Sappurisa-dāna Sutta provides a nuanced framework for righteous giving, characterized by mindfulness, compassion, and ethical discernment. By synthesizing these insights, this study aims to bridge theoretical understanding and practical application, contributing to a comprehensive appreciation of dāna’s role in personal and societal transformation.

Conceptual Framework

This research is a research study of documentary research. The researcher defines the research conceptual framework based on the concept or theory together with the details

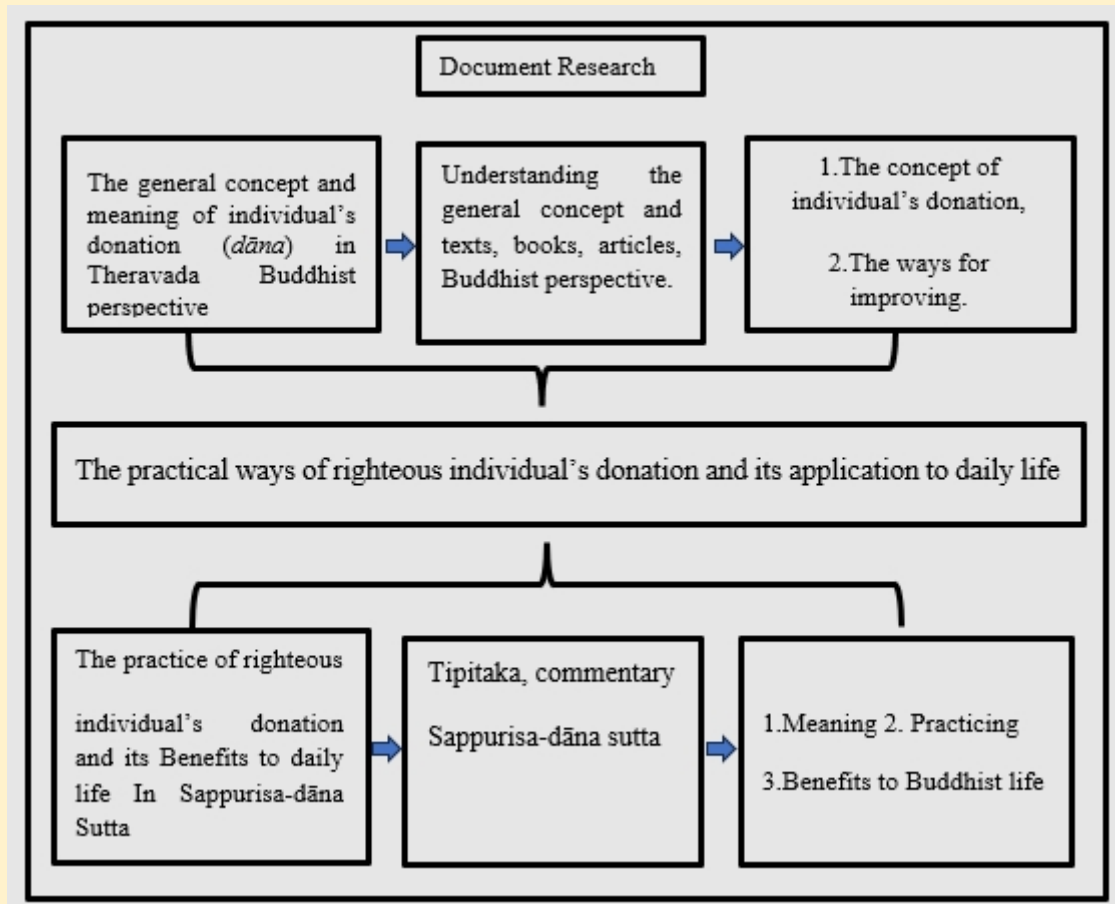


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This study is documentary research, and the methodology used in this research can be divided into the following areas:

Step 1: The general concept and meaning of individual donation from Theravāda Buddhist perspective

1.1 Issues for Search:

- 1) The General Concept of Donation in Theravāda Buddhism
- 2) The Significance of Individual Donation in Theravāda Buddhism
- 3) The Volition (cetanā) of Individual's Donation Gifts
- 4) The Advantages of Individual's Donation Gifts

1.2 Method: Documentary Study

1.3 Sources of Data: Theravāda Scriptures, Pāṭi Canon (we use English word), Sappurisa-dāna Sutta, Commentaries, and Sub-Commentaries, Textbooks, Theses, Dissertations, Scholar's Books, Article, Journals, Research Works, Websites.

1.4 Instruments: Study literature Sutta.

1.5 Data Collecting: Reading and Conclusion.

Step 2: The Practice of Righteous Individual Donation in Sappurisa-dāna Sutta

2.1 Issues for Search:

- 1) Introduction and Structures of Sappurisa-dāna Sutta
- 2) The Meaning of True Individual (Sappurisa)
- 3) Five Qualities of the True Individual's Donation
- 4) Righteous Individual's Donation

2.2 Method: Documentary Study

2.3 Sources of Data: Theravāda Scriptures, Pāṭi Canon (we use English word), Sappurisa-dāna Sutta, Commentaries, and Sub-Commentaries, Textbooks, Theses, Dissertations, Scholar's Books, Articles, Journals, Research Works, Websites.

2.4 Instruments: Analysis literature sutta.

2.5 Data Collecting: Reading and Conclusion.

Step 3: The Practical Ways of Righteous Individual Donation and its application to daily life.

3.1 Issues for Search:

- 1) Significance of Practical Application in Daily Life
- 2) Understanding Practical Righteous Individual's Donation
- 3) Benefits of Incorporating Righteous Individual's Donation
- 4) Challenges and Solutions in Implementing Practical Donation into Sappurisa-dāna Sutta in Daily Life

5) Wise Donation Deeding the Thighs Benefit

3.2 Method: Documentary Study

3.3 Sources of Data: Theravāda Scriptures, Pāṭi Canon (we use English word), Sappurisa-dāna Sutta, Commentaries, and Sub-Commentaries, Textbooks, Theses, Dissertations, Scholar's Books, Articles, Journals, Research Works, Websites.

3.4 Instruments: Practical studies of literature.

3.5 Data Collecting: Reading and Conclusion.

Research Results

Objective 1: The Concept and Meaning of Donation (Dāna) in Theravāda Buddhism.

In Theravāda Buddhism, *dāna*, or donation, is a fundamental practice that embodies the virtue of generosity, significantly influencing spiritual development. This intentional act of giving not only benefits the recipient but also transforms the giver, fostering a mindset of selflessness and compassion. It encourages the abandonment of greed and selfishness, promoting a harmonious. The act of giving purifies the mind and fosters selflessness, as explained in the *Dighajānu Sutta* of the Pāli Canon, where *dāna* is identified as a factor contributing to happiness and material wealth in future lives (Hardy, 1958).

As one of the ten perfections (*pāramitās*), *dāna* goes beyond material giving. It encompasses unconditional acts of generosity to reduce acquisitive tendencies and ego-driven suffering (Tsong-Kha-pa, 2002). The highest form of giving, *dhamma-dāna* (the gift of the Buddha's teachings), surpasses all material gifts. Acts such as teaching meditation or encouraging ethical precepts are considered noble forms of generosity, as are material offerings like food, robes, and medicines (Bodhi Bhikkhu, 2011).

Donation extends beyond tangible contributions. Wilcox and Dew (2016) emphasize generosity as a form of care and affection that enhances the well-being of both givers and recipients. Unlike altruism, which is solely others-focused, *dāna* fosters mutual benefit. Studies by Smith and Davidson (2014) highlight the reciprocal rewards of donation, such as happiness, health, and personal growth. The notion of “win-win” generosity underscores its non-zero-sum nature, where giving often leads to unexpected returns, such as emotional or material benefits (Dwidienawati & Abdinagoro, 2018).

Challenges in *dāna* practices arise when fundamental principles like faith, respect, and non-attachment are overlooked. Donations driven by skepticism or conditions can undermine their selfless essence and lead to unintended consequences. Encroachment—when donors impose conditions or preferences—can compromise the autonomy of recipients, emphasizing the need for respectful and unconditional giving (Hardy, 1958).

The practice of *dāna* in Theravāda Buddhism is a profound act of generosity that purifies the mind, cultivates selflessness, and fosters social harmony. By adhering to principles of faith, respect, and non-attachment, *dāna* transcends material generosity, becoming a transformative practice for both givers and recipients. Future research could explore contemporary applications of *dāna* principles, such as ethical philanthropy, and their integration into global sustainability and community-building initiatives.

Objective 2: The Practice of Righteous Individual's Donation in the Sappurisa-dāna Sutta

The Sappurisa-dāna Sutta in the Anguttara Nikāya outlines five key qualities that define the righteous act of donation by a person of integrity. These principles not only reflect ethical giving but also detail the positive outcomes associated with such acts (Hardy, 1958).

The Buddha emphasized that a righteous individual practices donation with the following attributes:

1. Conviction (saddhāya dānaṃ deti): A person of integrity gives with deep faith. The fruits of such giving lead to wealth, possessions, and a pleasing appearance in future lives.
2. Attentiveness (sakkaccaṃ dānaṃ deti): A donation made attentively ensures harmony within one's household, as family members, workers, and associates listen with care and understanding.
3. Timeliness (kālena dānaṃ deti): Giving in due season brings about wealth and the timely achievement of one's goals.
4. Empathy (anaggahitacitto dānaṃ deti): A gift offered with an empathetic heart inclines the donor's mind toward sensual joy, fostering a contented and enriched life.
5. Non-harmfulness (attānaṃ ca paraṃ ca anupabhacca dānaṃ deti): Donations made without harming oneself or others ensure protection of wealth and possessions from natural or external threats, such as fire, water, theft, or conflict (Hardy, 1976; Bodhi Bhikkhu, 2017).

The Buddha encouraged the practice of these principles to cultivate a comprehensive and righteous approach to donation. As elaborated by Mingun Tipitakadhara Sayadaw (1345), individuals should give with full faith, respect, timeliness, a hospitable heart, and without encroachment. These qualities ensure that acts of giving are free from attachment and self-interest, aligning with the ethical foundations of Theravāda Buddhism.

In conclusion, the Sappurisa-dāna Sutta provides a structured framework for ethical giving that benefits both the giver and the recipient. By adhering to these five principles, individuals foster generosity that promotes spiritual growth, social harmony, and material well-being. Future research could explore how these timeless principles of righteous donation can inform contemporary philanthropic practices, particularly in fostering sustainable and ethical giving models.

Objective 3: The Practical Ways of Righteous Individual's Donation and Its Application to Daily Life

The Suppurisa-dāna Sutta provides profound insights into the principles of righteous giving, emphasizing selflessness, generosity, and the transformative power of altruistic acts (Hardy, 1976). Central to its teachings are five principles for righteous donation: giving with faith, respect, appropriate timing, a hospitable heart, and without harm to oneself or others. These principles underscore the moral and spiritual benefits of giving while advocating for mindfulness and empathy in philanthropic practices.

In contemporary society, integrating these ideals into daily life presents unique challenges. Individuals face hurdles such as time constraints, financial limitations, and societal pressures that prioritize material accumulation over altruism (Kuhn, 2024). Moreover, the complexity of sustaining charitable endeavors often stems from mental preparation, the transition from intent to action, and the difficulty of giving freely without attachment or regret (Manli Sayadaw, 1976). Despite these challenges, the teachings of the Suppurisa-dāna Sutta offer pathways for overcoming obstacles and embedding generosity into modern living.

According to Buddhist teachings, donation practices are not bound by wealth. Even small acts, such as offering animal food scraps, are recognized as meaningful contributions (Bhikkhu Sujato, 2018). The emphasis is not on the magnitude of the gift but on the intention and spirit of giving. In the Vacchagotta Sutta, the Buddha highlights that acts of giving, no matter how modest, create merit and cultivate compassion (Bhikkhu Sujato, 2018).

Moreover, the concept of wise donation promotes informed and thoughtful giving, focusing on aligning contributions with values and societal needs. This approach encourages donors to engage in research, careful planning, and sustained evaluation to maximize the impact of their gifts (Kuhn, 2024). Aligning such practices with the Buddhist emphasis on non-harm and respect ensures ethical integrity and societal benefit. Donation is also a cornerstone of merit-making in Buddhist traditions. Offerings to the Saṅgha, particularly under the guidance of the Buddha, are deemed the highest field of merit, producing immense spiritual rewards (Ubeysekara, 2023)

The principles of righteous giving from the Suppurisa-dāna Sutta remain relevant today, guiding integrating generosity into daily life despite modern challenges. By adhering to these timeless values—faith, respect, timeliness, empathy, and non-harm—individuals can navigate the complexities of giving with compassion and purpose. This alignment of ancient wisdom with practical realities fosters personal growth, societal well-being, and spiritual fulfillment, ultimately transforming acts of donation into profound expressions of humanity.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the practice of *dāna* as presented in the Sappurisa-*dāna* Sutta and its relevance to Theravāda Buddhist ethics and daily life. This discussion compares these findings with previous research to highlight their theoretical and practical implications.

Previous studies, such as those by Bodhi Bhikkhu (2002), emphasize that *dāna* serves as a foundational step toward spiritual cultivation in Theravāda Buddhism, preparing practitioners for higher ethical and meditative practices. Similarly, Findly (2003) highlights the dual significance of *dāna* in fostering social cohesion and reducing individual attachment. This study aligns with these perspectives, reaffirming that *dāna* is not merely a ritualistic act but a transformative practice rooted in ethical intentionality and compassion.

However, this study further elaborates on the role of *dāna* as a practical method for addressing material inequalities, as outlined in the Pāli Canon. Unlike earlier works, which often focus on the doctrinal aspects, this study highlights the practical benefits of generosity in promoting individual well-being and social harmony.

The Sappurisa-*dāna* Sutta delineates essential qualities that characterize righteous giving, emphasizing mindfulness, timeliness, and an empathetic understanding of the recipients' needs. This framework aligns with Endo's (1986) assertion that the proper timing and intention are crucial for effective giving, as these elements ensure that the act of generosity is both meaningful and impactful (Deeter-Schmelz, 2015). Furthermore, Bhikkhu Bodhi (1978) highlights the volitional aspect of generosity, which is a defining feature of *dāna-pāramī*, reinforcing the notion that the intention behind giving significantly influences its ethical implications (Adomavičiūtė & Urbonavičius, 2023).

The present study builds upon these foundational insights by exploring the nuanced interplay between these qualities and their practical applications in contemporary charitable practices. Notably, it underscores the importance of ensuring that donations do not inadvertently cause harm or foster dependency among recipients. This ethical consideration is often underexplored in existing literature, yet it is vital for promoting sustainable and responsible giving practices (Dellaportas, 2006). Janakabhivamsa (1999) emphasizes that the principles of *dāna* are accessible to lay practitioners, suggesting that acts of generosity can be seamlessly integrated into daily routines, enhancing their relevance in modern contexts (Boninsegni et al., 2021). Similarly, Harvey (2000) posits that *dāna* serves as a practical tool for cultivating a compassionate and harmonious society, a perspective that resonates with the findings of this study (Nonnis et al., 2020).

The present study explores the multifaceted challenges inherent in contemporary charitable practices, revealing critical issues that may compromise the authenticity of true generosity. Among these challenges, the study identifies the prevalence of ego-driven donations and selective giving, which risk distorting the altruistic essence that underpins charitable acts. Building upon earlier critiques by Keown (2020), this research extends the discourse by offering practical recommendations centered on cultivating mindfulness and ethical discernment in philanthropic endeavors (Saeri et al., 2023). These considerations hold profound moral significance, as the implications extend beyond immediate beneficiaries to influence societal norms and values surrounding generosity and altruism (Caviola et al., 2021). Through this lens, the study underscores the necessity of aligning charitable actions with principles that foster genuine and inclusive benevolence.

In conclusion, the synthesis of these perspectives illustrates that the qualities outlined in the Sappurisa-dāna Sutta are not only timeless but also adaptable to contemporary charitable practices. By addressing the ethical consequences of giving and promoting a more mindful approach, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of dāna and its role in fostering a compassionate society.

Knowledge from Research

The study of individual donation (dāna) in Theravāda Buddhism encompasses several key objectives that illuminate its significance and practice. Firstly, the general concept and meaning of dāna within this tradition highlight it as an essential virtue that fosters generosity and compassion. It is viewed not merely as an act of giving but as a fundamental practice that cultivates merit and spiritual growth.

Secondly, the Sappurisa-dāna Sutta provides a framework for understanding the righteous practice of donation. This sutta emphasizes the importance of several critical elements in the act of giving: faith, respect, the right time, a hospitable heart, and offering gifts that do not cause harm. Each of these elements ensures that the donation is performed with the right intention and mindfulness, thereby maximizing its positive impact.

Applying these principles in daily life involves integrating these elements into one's routine acts of generosity. For instance, giving with faith and respect ensures that the donor is sincere and honors the recipient while choosing the right time, and maintaining a hospitable heart ensures that the act is considerate and warm. Additionally, ensuring that gifts do not

harm anyone highlights the importance of ethical considerations in the practice of *dāna*. Through these practical applications, individuals can cultivate a deeper sense of generosity and compassion, fostering personal growth and contributing positively to the well-being of others.

Conclusion

This study provides a nuanced understanding of *dāna* as a foundational practice in Theravāda Buddhism. The research highlights three core dimensions: the general concept of *dāna*, the characteristics of righteous giving as described in the Sappurisa-*dāna* Sutta, and the practical applications of these principles in daily life.

The findings reaffirm that *dāna* is more than an act of material generosity; it is a transformative practice that cultivates selflessness, compassion, and ethical responsibility. By integrating the teachings of the Sappurisa-*dāna* Sutta, this study identifies key attributes of righteous giving—intentionality, mindfulness, timeliness, and empathy—while addressing contemporary challenges such as ego-driven and selective donations. These insights not only align with traditional Buddhist teachings but also provide practical frameworks for fostering social harmony and individual well-being in the modern context.

In sum, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of *dāna* as both a spiritual and social practice, bridging doctrinal wisdom with practical relevance. It also emphasizes the potential of righteous giving to create a ripple effect of generosity and ethical living in society.

Suggestions

By extending the scope of research to these areas, scholars can further enrich the understanding and application of *dāna*, making it an even more vital tool for fostering ethical living and societal well-being in contemporary contexts.

1. Comparative Analysis of *dāna* Across Buddhist Traditions: While this study focuses on Theravāda Buddhism, future research could explore the concept and practice of *dāna* in Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions. Such a comparative analysis may reveal diverse interpretations and applications of generosity within the broader Buddhist context.

2. Exploration of Psychological and Social Impacts of *dāna*: Further studies could examine how practicing *dāna* influences mental health, emotional well-being, and social cohesion. Empirical studies combining Buddhist ethical frameworks with psychological research would offer valuable insights.

3. Application of *dāna* Principles in Modern Philanthropy: Future research could investigate how the ethical dimensions of *dāna* can inform contemporary philanthropic practices, especially in addressing systemic inequalities and promoting sustainable giving.

4. Digital Transformation and *dāna*: With the increasing prevalence of digital donations and online charity platforms, future studies could explore how *dāna* principles can guide ethical giving in the digital age.

5. Interdisciplinary Studies Linking *Dāna* and Sustainable Development: As global challenges like poverty and climate change demand ethical solutions, exploring the role of *dāna* in sustainable development practices would provide innovative approaches to global issues.

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