

**A STRAND OF DHARMA JEWELS  
AS ADVICE FOR THE KING**

*The Rāja Parikathā Ratnāvalī*

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### GUIDANCE ESPECIALLY FOR RULERS

- IV. CHAPTER 4: GUIDANCE ESPECIALLY FOR RULERS
- A. NĀGĀRJUNA'S INTRODUCTION TO HIS INSTRUCTIONS
1. DIFFICULTIES SPECIFIC TO RULERS
- a. UNRELIABILITY OF UNDERLINGS

001

If a king practices what is contrary to Dharma  
Or perhaps acts in contradiction to principles according with the Path,  
Those serving the king will nonetheless praise those deeds.  
Hence it may be difficult to distinguish good from bad.

- b. DISINCLINATION TO ACCEPT REMONSTRATIVE TEACHING

002

Even common worldly people,  
Not being fond of goodness, may be difficult to instruct.  
How much the less might a great country's king  
Be able to accept the counsel of those devoted to goodness?

- c. MY MOTIVATION IN OFFERING ADVICE

003

Because I feel sympathetic concern for you  
And because I feel compassion for all in this world  
I therefore attempt here to skillfully instruct you  
In the genuinely beneficial, even though you may not find it pleasing.

- d. THE BUDDHA'S STANDARD FOR CORRECTNESS OF INSTRUCTION

004

Teachings should be true, gently presented, meaningful, salutary,  
Timely, and motivated by kindness and compassion.  
The Buddha enjoins us to instruct disciples in this manner.  
Guided by that, I offer these teachings for you.

- e. THE IDEAL STANCE FOR A RECIPIENT OF TEACHINGS

005

When listening to discourse reflecting reality,  
One should abide in a state free from anger.  
It is essential to accept in practice whatever one is able to grasp.  
This is just as when bathing where one accepts the use of clean water.

f. GOOD AND BENEFICIAL TEACHING SHOULD BE ACCEPTED FOR THE SAKE OF ALL  
006

I now set forth words devoted to goodness  
Which can be beneficial both now and in the future.  
On knowing their import, you should accept them in practice,  
Doing so for your own sake and for the sake of the world.

B. THE INSTRUCTIONS PROPER

1. ON THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING AND ACCOMPLISHING GREAT ENDEAVORS

a. GIVING AS THE CAUSE OF PRESENT WEALTH; GREED AS THE CAUSE OF ITS LOSS  
007

Through giving done in the past to the poor and the suffering,  
One has brought about the wealth one enjoys in the present.  
Through covetousness, failure to act out of a sense of gratitude,  
And neglecting giving, one might be caused to never obtain it again.

b. PRESENT GIVING AS THE CAUSE OF FUTURE EASE  
008

In the world, considering only the provisions for travel,  
If one fails to hire anyone, nobody will take up your burden.  
Still, through giving provided [now] to those of lesser station,  
They gratefully bear a hundred times greater burden in the future.

c. EXHORTATION TO GREAT RESOLVE, GREAT ENDEAVORS, GREAT FUTURE RESULTS  
009

One prays that you will bring forth the great resolve  
And constantly promote the establishment of great endeavors.  
Where one engages in endeavors flowing from the great resolve,  
Such a person will succeed in gaining the great result.

1) ENCOURAGEMENT TO UNDERTAKE FINE ENDEAVORS GUIDED BY THE THREE JEWELS  
010

[Endeavors] such as insular and inferior kings with lesser intellects  
Would not even conceive of in their aspirations—  
Auspicious endeavors conducing to a fine reputation—  
On should undertake them in reliance on the Three Jewels.<sup>118</sup>

a) ON THE NEED FOR RIGHT MOTIVATION IN ONE'S ENDEAVORS  
011

If one becomes concerned with inspiring awe in other monarchs,<sup>119</sup>  
But one's works contradict your own Dharma,  
Then, even in death, one might still develop a terrible reputation  
As the king who failed to accomplish what is most superior.

## b) ON THE NEED TO SELECT ENDEAVORS CAREFULLY

012

If one is able to initiate expansively great endeavors  
Which serve those rare uses conceived of by great men,  
And if one is able to block the aspirations of inferior persons,  
One should utilize one's edict to accomplish such endeavors.

## 2. ON THE CORRECT AND TIMELY USES OF WEALTH

## a. ON HOW ONE MAY ENSURE FUTURE-LIFE AFFLUENCE

013

Bereft of any personal freedom, one casts off all possessions  
And, as a solitary individual, proceeds on into the future.  
If one establishes one's wealth in the Dharma,  
It proceeds on ahead, welcomes one, and awaits [one's future use].

## b. ON DEATH'S SEVERANCE OF THE BENEFITS OF POSSESSIONS

014

As for the assets of previous emperors,  
Having cast aside possessions, they belong then to the new king.  
Are they able then to provide to a former king,  
Dharma, happiness, or fine reputation, or not?

## c. WEALTH'S ROLE IN PRESENT OR FUTURE HAPPINESS

015

One may use wealth for joy in the present  
Or, through using it in giving, for one's happiness in the future.  
Where not used for either of these two, it is bound to be lost in vain,  
For it will only generate suffering and an absence of bliss.

## d. WHY WAITING TILL THE END TO GIVE WON'T WORK

016

If one waits till the end, only then aspiring to practice giving,  
The officials will interfere, and one will lose independent control.  
Because the reign is to be cut short, they withdraw their affections,  
And then accord instead with whatever will please the new king.

## e. GIVEN THE INEVITABILITY OF DEATH, BE DEVOTED TO PROPAGATING DHARMA

017

Since one is bound in any case to relinquish all possessions,  
You would best now commit them to propagation of Dharma,  
For one still always abides in conditions conducive to death  
And so is comparable in this to a lantern flame set out in the wind.

## 3. ON CORRECT GOVERNANCE POLICIES

## a. ON MAINTENANCE OF PRE-EXISTING MERIT-GENERATING ESTABLISHMENTS

018

As for places constructed by the former kings  
 As merit-generating locations equally available to all,  
 Namely those temples and halls honoring deities and spirits,  
 One prays they will be maintained in their original condition.

## b. ON THE CHARACTER OF STEWARDS OF SUCH ESTABLISHMENTS

019a

Their stewards should abandon killing, always practice goodness,  
 Uphold morality, be fondly inclusive of those who have long visited,  
 Skillfully foster increase of assets, remain free of contentiousness,  
 And be vigorous in constantly cultivating what is good.<sup>120</sup>

019b

They must be devoted to purity, free of personal hoarding,  
 And vigilant in preventing loss of assets to unrelated endeavors.  
 Such people should be appointed to serve there as leaders,  
 Taking in the funds for merit-generation kept in their treasuries.

## c. ON FAIRNESS IN ATTENDANCE AND IN DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD

020

The blind, the sick, those with disabilities,  
 The pitiable, beggars, and those with no one to rely on—  
 They must not be blocked from coming to the temples.  
 There must be uniform equality in providing them with food.

## d. ON FAIRNESS IN BESTOWING OFFERINGS ON PRACTITIONERS OF THE PATH

021

Those with Path-concordant virtues who may seek nothing at all,  
 Even though residing in another king's realm,  
 Should be treated equally in bestowing offerings,  
 Regardless of whether they abide here or there.

## e. ON THE CHARACTER OF THOSE FACILITATING DHARMA-RELATED ENDEAVORS

022

In all matters associated with the Dharma,  
 One should delegate responsibility to vigorous persons  
 Free of covetousness, intelligent, wise, devoted to goodness,  
 Not intrusive in the domain of Dharma, and fearful of misdeeds.

## f. ON CHARACTER AND COMPETENCE OF MINISTERS, OFFICIALS, AND SUCH

023a

[Officials must] comprehend right discourse, act from goodness,  
Behave congenially, maintain purity from all four standpoints,<sup>121</sup>  
Speak with eloquence, remain invulnerable to timidity,  
Be of superior lineage, and be able to uphold moral strictures.

023b

[They should] have a sense of gratitude, be aware of others' hardship,  
And be skillful in making judgments founded on right principles.  
Find eight such people inclined toward mutual humility and,  
For the sake of the country, appoint them to eight cabinet positions.<sup>122</sup>

024a

Those who are gentle, of magnanimous character,  
Brave, extremely fond of the King,  
Solid in their truthfulness, able to use wealth wisely,  
Free of any tendency to be negligent, and constant in goodness—

024b

If they thoroughly contemplate endeavors to be undertaken,  
Are able to make distinctions regarding the twelve-part cycle,  
And will constantly utilize the four types of skillful means—  
People such as these should be appointed as high officials.<sup>123</sup>

## g. ON CHARACTER, COMPETENCIES, AND TREATMENT OF FINANCIAL OFFICIALS

025a

Those who uphold the Dharma, observe moral precepts purely,  
Understand how things are done, possess extraordinary talent,  
Are able to raise funds and protect wealth,  
Know what is right, and are skilled in accounting and calculations—

025b

If they are fair in dealing with others,  
Are fearful of committing misdeeds, are personally fond of the King,  
And if they are already wealthy and have a large retinue—  
It is fitting that such people be appointed to governance.

026

They should be questioned each month  
Regarding the income and outflow of all their forms of wealth.  
Query them as well about their own Dharma works and such.  
Then, responding with delighted attitude, skillfully instruct them.

## 4. ON CORRECT MOTIVATION AND ACTIONS AS KING

## a. HOW THE THRONE MAY GENERATE THE MOST SUPREME BENEFIT

027

Where one serves as the King for the sake of the Dharma  
 And refrains from seeking fame or the objects of the desires,  
 The King's throne is supreme in its ability to provide benefit.  
 If one strays from this, then the result will be misfortune.

## b. DEPENDENCE OF PEOPLE AND KING; ESTABLISHING BOTH DHARMA AND THRONE

028

The Great King's close relationship with the people of the world  
 Is one wherein each generally looks to the other for sustenance.  
 Here follow principles for establishing both Dharma and throne.  
 Listen attentively as I explain them for you.

## c. THOSE WHOM THE KING SHOULD ENTRUST WITH OVERSIGHT OF HIS AFFAIRS

029

Those who are senior in station and older than the King,  
 Who are of superior family and distinguish right and wrong,  
 Who fear doing what is bad and are generally agreeable—  
 One prays they will be appointed to watch over the King's affairs.

## d. ON JUDICIOUS KINDNESS AND COMPASSION TOWARD DETAINEES

## 1) THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SENTENCED TO RESTRAINTS OR FLOGGING

030

Where sentences call for punishment such as restraints or flogging,  
 Even if those sentences were rightfully ordered,  
 The King's constant mitigation with the great compassion  
 Should be even more inclined to bestow kindness on those cases.

## 2) ON THE NEED FOR COMPASSION EVEN TOWARD THE EXTREMELY EVIL

031

For the sake of benefiting all people,  
 One should constantly draw upon a mind imbued with kindness.  
 Even if they have committed the most grave sorts of evil,  
 One should nonetheless raise forth the great compassion.

032

Though the gravely evil possess extremely injurious minds,  
 One must definitely be compassionate in dealing with their cases.  
 It is they who are the vessels appropriate for receiving compassion.  
 Followers of right practice find them suitable objects of compassion.

## 3) ON LIMITING LENGTH OF DETENTION, ESPECIALLY AS REGARDS THE POOR

033

In cases where the poor have been subjected to detention,  
 [For minor offenses], they must be released within five days.  
 For all the others as well, they must be dealt with rightfully.  
 No matter what the case, one must not confine anyone indefinitely.

## 4) ON NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF INDEFINITE DETENTION AND IGNORING RIGHTS

034

If, in regard to any single person's case,  
 One might think they should be kept in long-term detention,  
 In each such case where one decides not to protect their interests,  
 Evil will then constantly flow forth due to this very case.<sup>124</sup>

## 5) ON PROVIDING BASIC COMFORTS TO PRISONERS

035

During that time when they have not yet been released,  
 Though detained, they should still be allowed happiness.  
 This extends even to issues of dress, bathing, drink, food,  
 Medicine, fans, and related concerns.

## 6) ON COMPASSION AND BIAS-FREE ATTITUDE TOWARD GOOD AND EVIL DETAINEES

036

As the King should wish them to become vessels [of righteousness],  
 He should institute instruction in goodness based on compassion.  
 As good and bad people are all to be treated with identical concern,  
 He should refrain from acting out of animosity or covetousness.

## 7) FOR THE INCORRIGIBLE, PREFER BANISHMENT TO TORTURE OR EXECUTION

037

Once one has thoroughly considered and truly knows their cases,  
 For those persons who increasingly commit grave transgressions,  
 Still do not put them to death nor subject them to torment.  
 One prays that the King would rather banish them to other regions.

## e. ON SECURITY MONITORING OF ACTIVITIES EVEN OF ONE'S OWN CLAN

038

Watch even your own clan with circumspection due an adversary,  
 Employing eyes investigating the purity of people's actions.  
 One must be constantly mindful and free of negligence in this.  
 One prays such endeavors will be carried out in a lawful manner.<sup>125</sup>

## f. ON COMMENDING MERITORIOUS SERVICE

039

Repeatedly bestow gifts commending meritorious service,  
 Ordering that those demonstrating kindness shall receive them.  
 Base this on evaluating the superiority of meritorious qualities,  
 Making the rewards presented be commensurate with that.

## g. THE RULER'S GIVING REWARDS: LIKE A FRUIT-BEARING SHADE TREE AND BIRDS

040

Escorting off and welcoming back are blossoms of beneficence.  
 Bestowals of rewards in commendation are its great fruits.  
 If the royal tree casts the shade of forbearance,  
 Then the people, like birds, will all flock there, rendering service.

## 5. PERSONAL PRACTICES AFFECTING GOVERNANCE

## a. MORALITY, GIVING, AND MAJESTY, LIKE A UNIQUELY FLAVORFUL CONFECTION

041

If the King upholds moral virtue, is able to practice giving,  
 And projects awe-inspiring majesty, he is favored by his subjects  
 Like a granular-sugar confection  
 Yielding pungent fragrance and flavor in a pleasing mutual blend.

## b. THE IMPORTANCE OF REMAINING GROUNDED IN PATH-CONCORDANT PRINCIPLES

042

If the King relies on Path-concordant principles,  
 Then the dharma of "[the big fish eats the little] fish" won't ensue.<sup>126</sup>  
 Being thus free of difficulties or actions contradicting Dharma,  
 He will always possess the joy and bliss arising from the Dharma.

## c. THE FRAGILITY OF THE THRONE AND ITS BASIS IN DHARMA

043

It is not something brought forth from a previous life,  
 Nor is it something one can take on to the future life.  
 As the King's throne is gained by way of the Dharma,  
 So as to preserve that position, one must not violate the Dharma.<sup>127</sup>

## d. KINGSHIP LIKE A MERCHANT DEALING IN EITHER SUFFERING OR ROYAL PRIVILEGE

044

Comparing the King's throne to the business of a merchant,  
 It could be suffering becomes the commodity in which one deals.<sup>128</sup>  
 To avoid the likelihood of having to continually undergo yet more,  
 You must carry forth with these correct uses of this position.

045

Comparing the King's throne to the business of a merchant,  
 It could be kingship itself is the commodity in which one deals.  
 To facilitate one's wish to gain it yet again,  
 One must cultivate these correct uses of this position.<sup>129</sup>

6. ON LIMITS AND ILLUSORINESS OF AVAILABLE PLEASURES AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT  
 a. THE LIMITED SCOPE OF BLISS: PHYSICAL AND MENTAL. ALL ELSE IS FALSE

046

Although the wheel-turning king's acquisition of territory  
 May extend to include even the four continents,  
 Still, there are only the two types of bliss: physical and mental.  
 Hence all remaining aspects of wealth and noble birth are false.

- b. PHYSICAL BLISS IS BUT LESSENERED PAIN, MENTAL BLISS IS MERELY A PERCEPTION

047

It is only through the counteraction of the multitude of sufferings  
 That one speaks of the pleasurable feelings in physical delights.  
 As mental bliss belongs to the category of mental perceptions,  
 It is in every case but a creation of discriminating thought.

- c. THIS BEING SO, ALL WORLDLY PLEASURES ARE DEVOID OF REALITY

048

In instances where its essence is but counteraction of suffering,  
 And also where it is merely in the sphere of discriminations,  
 All such forms of worldly blisses,  
 Because inherently false, are devoid of any reality.

- d. THOUGH POSSESSIONS ARE MULTIFARIOUS, ONE CAN FOCUS ON ONLY ONE THING

049

One's continent, the land in which one lives, where one resides,  
 Where one sits, the robe one wears, and so forth—  
 Also: one's drink, food, bedding, carriage,  
 Wife, elephants, and horses—one can focus on but a single thing.

050

Since the mind, based on the one objective condition it focuses on,  
 Just then generates bliss solely from that [single objective condition],  
 Because the other sense objects aren't just then focused upon,  
 They are just then mere false [conceptions] devoid of any function.