

# XIX Dharmadāna (and Buddhist) perspectives

This chapter is the etic counterpart of the emic chapter VI. In most sections, I venture to provide microeconomic “explanations” for *dānadharma* concepts like *śraddhā*, *śakti*, and *punya*. Buddhist perspectives are added whenever appropriate. Thus, I present several attempts at “theory formation”, the final stage of Freiburger’s comparative process. I simplify the *dāna* situation by treating it as a once-and-for-all situation. This is a clear contradiction of the Manu citation <8>, where giving is to be *nityam*, i.e., “as a matter of routine obligation”. The Shapley value is also employed where suitable.

## A The balanced gift

Dharmic giving is indicated in Figure 12 and is an instance of the lower right pattern of Figure 2 (p. 143). The central problem of altruistic giving is to provide the prospective giver with reasons for such giving. A Christian motive (or idea)—namely “*fac locus Christo cum filiis tuis*” (section X.E)—has been provided by Augustine and other Church Fathers. A Christian donor hopes to be “paid” after death (<199>). Similarly, a generous donor of *dharmadāna* is promised merit or fruit.

This first section employs the Shapley value (section XI.E) in a simple constellation with just two players: a giver G (Sanskrit *dātṛ*) and a receiver R (Sanskrit *pratigrahīṭṛ*).

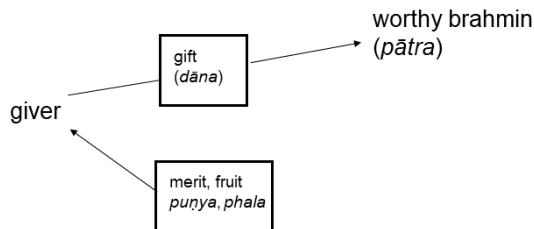


Figure 12: Dharmic giving

Arguably, the coalition function  $v$  is given by

$$[22] \quad v(G) = 0, \quad v(R) = 0, \quad \text{and} \quad v(G, R) = Ph - c$$

This coalition function captures a situation where a giver alone or a receiver alone would obtain a payoff of zero. If they “come together”, the giver transfers some gift  $D$  to the receiver. This gift does not show up in the two-man coalitional worth, as the gain ( $D$ ) for the receiver equals the loss ( $-D$ ) for the giver. Let  $Ph$  denote the merit or fruit (*phala*) accruing to the giver and let  $c > 0$  stand for the cost of becoming a worthy recipient.

The Shapley values for this coalition function are

$$[23] \quad Sh_G = \frac{Ph - c}{2} \quad \text{and} \quad Sh_R = \frac{Ph - c}{2}$$

i.e., the players equally share the gain of  $Ph - c$ . This is attractive to the agents if  $Ph > c$  holds.<sup>773</sup> To the Indian theoreticians on *dharmadāna*, the giver obtains merit  $Ph$  by giving up  $D$ . Thus, one can postulate

$$[24] \quad Sh_G = \frac{Ph - c}{2} = Ph - D \quad \text{and hence} \quad D^{Sh} = \frac{Ph + c}{2}$$

The Shapley gift  $D^{Sh}$  makes sense intuitively.<sup>774</sup> The larger the earnable fruit and the larger the cost of becoming a *pātra*, the larger the gift.

The size of the gift just obtained from Shapley’s theory might be called a balanced gift (see subsection XI.E(4)). Reformulating the above equation, one obtains

$$[25] \quad Ph = 2D - c$$

Then, the fruit to be earned is (i) a positive function of the gift, but (ii) a negative function of the cost of becoming a worthy *pātra*. The texts on *dāna* agree with (i), as will become clear soon, but have nothing to say about (ii).

## B The difficulty of giving in equilibrium

It turns out that microeconomic models are more suitable than the Shapley value for approaching the texts on *dharmadāna*. Consider the decision-theoretic situation where the giver  $G$  chooses whether or not to give a present (*dāna*)  $D$  to the receiver  $R$ . Since a gift may mean something different to the giver  $G$  than it does to the receiver  $R$ , it is useful to distinguish  $D_G$  from  $D_R$ . It is always assumed that  $D_G$  is desirable or costly to the donor and that  $D_R$  is desirable to the receiver. Thus, both  $D_G$  and  $D_R$  are positive. If no donation occurs, each agent obtains the payoff zero (0). If  $D_G$  is not a numerical value, it stands for something that the giver prefers over 0.

<sup>773</sup> The Shapley value assumes cooperation, i.e., the formation of the coalition  $\{G, R\}$ . Thus, the above formulae would also hold for  $Ph < c$ . In that case, however, giving would be inefficient.

<sup>774</sup>  $D^{Sh}$  is also obtainable from the receiver’s Shapley value by observing  $Sh_R = \frac{Ph - c}{2} = D - c$ .

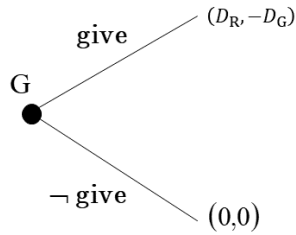


Figure 13: The simplest giving model in non-cooperative game theory

Consider Figure 13. The giver  $G$  has two actions available to him: he may either give or not give (“not” is indicated by  $\neg$ ). If he gives,  $D_G$  is lost to him, while the receiver obtains  $D_R$ , i.e., the first entry in the payoff vector is the receiver’s payoff, while the second entry indicates the donor’s payoff. It is clear that the (rational) agent  $G$  will not give  $D_G$  to the receiver  $R$  in the form of  $D_R$  in this exceedingly simple model.

The chances for making giving possible increase if  $D_G$  is small. Therefore, we should not be surprised to find textual evidence that downplays the donor’s sacrifice from giving:

⟨236⟩ *yad dadāti yad aśnāti tad eva dhanino dhanam |  
anye mṛtasya krīḍanti dārain api dhanair api* ||<sup>775</sup>

An owner’s wealth is what he gives and what he eats, for others fool around with the wife and wealth of a dead man.<sup>776</sup>

⟨237⟩ *kiṃ dhanena kariṣyanti dehino bhaṅgurāśrayāḥ |  
yadarthaṃ dhanam icchanti tac charīram aśvāśvatam* ||<sup>777</sup>

For what will embodied beings, who reside in such fragile containers, do with wealth? The bodies for whose sake they desire wealth are not eternal.<sup>778</sup>

While these quotations stress the finite nature of the donor’s current life, another one points to the ineffectiveness of wealth in securing the donor’s satisfaction:

⟨238⟩ *grāsād ardham api grāsam arthibhyaḥ kiṃ na dīyate |  
icchānurūpo vibhavaḥ kadā kasya bhaviṣyati* ||<sup>779</sup>

Why isn’t a morsel—even half a morsel—given to those who ask for it? For when will anyone’s wealth ever conform to his desires?<sup>780</sup>

From the Buddhist literature, compare ⟨164⟩. Using the economic term of a discount factor, one may translate these citations by saying that the donor does not give up  $D_G$ ,

<sup>775</sup> LDK 0.10

<sup>776</sup> Brick (2015)

<sup>777</sup> LDK 0.13

<sup>778</sup> Brick (2015)

<sup>779</sup> LDK 0.17

<sup>780</sup> Brick (2015)

but only  $\delta D_G$ , with  $\delta > 0$  and  $\delta < 1$ . After having replaced  $D_G$  by  $\delta D_G$  in Figure 13 above, giving is made more “likely”, but will still not occur.

## C A first attack on *śraddhā* and *śakti*

Remember <90>, which stresses the spirit of generosity (*śraddhā*) and the donor’s means (*śakti*). Thus, the absolute size of the gift is not important, but rather its relative size, the gift in relation to the giver’s wealth, i.e.,  $\frac{D_G}{W_G}$ . This is also evident from

<239> *anyāyādhiḡatāṃ dattvā sakalāṃ pṛthivīm api |*  
*śraddhāvarjam apātrāya na kāṃcid bhūtim āpnuyāt ||*  
*pradāya śākaṃṣṭiṃ vā śraddhāśaktisamudyatām |*  
*mahate pātrabhūtāya sarvābhyudayam āpnuyāt*<sup>781</sup> ||<sup>782</sup>

A person who gives something unlawfully acquired—although it be the entire earth—without a spirit of generosity to an unworthy recipient obtains no prosperity. By contrast, someone who gives just a handful of vegetables, offered with a spirit of generosity and in accordance with his means, to a great and worthy recipient obtains all success.<sup>783</sup>

Consider Figure 14, where the 45°-line represents the giving of *sarvasvam* (everything the donor owns). He gives with generosity if the ratio  $\frac{D_G}{W_G}$  is close to 1, but without generosity if the gift is small in relation to the donor’s wealth. Reconsider the coins given by the poor widow in the New Testament (<200>). While the relative assessment is clearly prominent, the absolute value of the gift is stressed in some other verses.

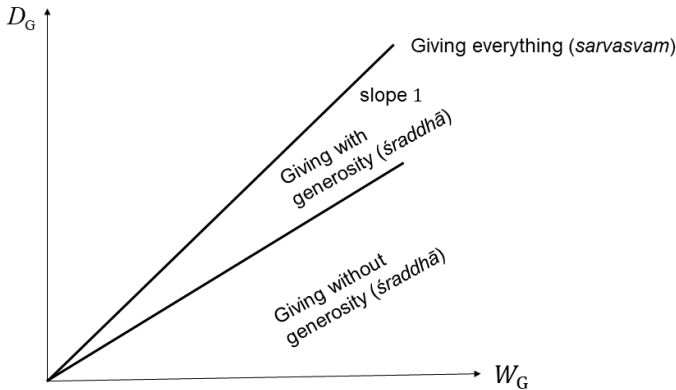


Figure 14: Giving with generosity and the donor’s wealth

781 *āpnuyāta* in Brick (2015, p. 264) is clearly a typo.

782 LDK 1.37–38

783 Brick (2015)

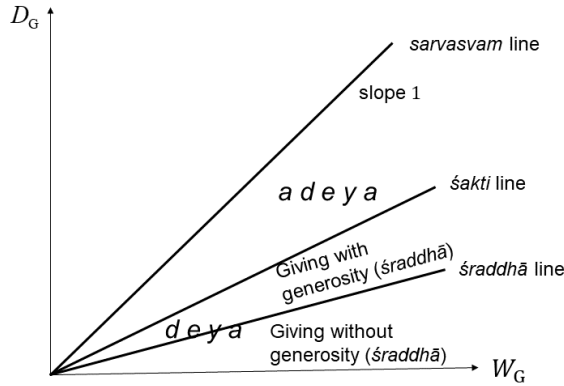


Figure 15: Giving with generosity, but only the *deya* part of one’s wealth

In particular, LDK 1.27–31 distinguishes between High Gifts (see <107>), Middle Gifts, and Low Gifts. Another piece of evidence is the request to give something that is rare (*durlabha*).<sup>784</sup>

*Śakti* does not only refer to the inequality  $D_G \leq W_G$ . Within that area, the *dharma* authors distinguish between gifts that are *deya* and those that are *adeya*. Reconsider <92> and look at Figure 15, which is meant to reflect the *deya-adeya* distinction.

## D Giving with transference of sin (*pāpa*)

Related to <99> on p. 74, the sin-transference theory has been discussed in emic terms. The idea of that theory is that a person’s gift comes together with the donor’s sin, which is then transferred to the receiver. Roughly speaking, the donor’s loss ( $D_G$ ) and gain (getting rid of his sin  $P$ ) corresponds to the receiver’s gain ( $D_R$ ) and loss (taking on the donor’s sin).

Consider Figure 16.  $\tau P$  indicates the sin that is transferred to the receiver, together with the gift  $D_R$  itself. One can think of  $\tau$  as a positive number smaller than 1, i.e., the receiver may be in a position to absorb the sin at relatively small cost to himself. The giver chooses to give if

$$[26] \quad D_G < P$$

holds. That is, the donor would value the sin he got rid of more than the gift he bestows on the receiver. However, the receiver is happy to accept the gift only if

$$[27] \quad D_R > \tau P \quad \text{or, equivalently,} \quad \tau < \frac{D_R}{P}$$

<sup>784</sup> LDK 1.16, Brick (2015)

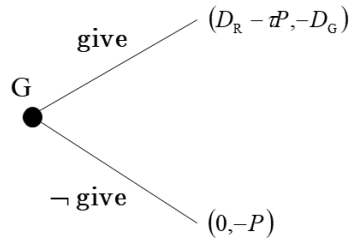


Figure 16: Giving with transference of sin

holds. According to the latter inequality,  $\tau$  has to be sufficiently small, i.e., the receiver’s sin absorption technology sufficiently effective. Putting both inequalities together, giving is welcomed by both donor and donee if

$$[28] \quad D_G < P < \frac{D_R}{\tau}$$

holds. Thus, the sin-transference theory of the gift makes giving possible. However, due to the scarcity of the material, it is quite unclear whether the above account is helpful for understanding this theory.

## E Trusted fruits versus discounted gifts

Giving may pay for thisworldly motivations, as shown in sections XVIII.E (reputation) and XVIII.B (Seneca’s *beneficium* reciprocity). Of course, *dānadharma* stresses otherworldly “fruit” much more than thisworldly<sup>785</sup> ones. Otherworldly fruits come under the headings of “fruit” (*phala*)<sup>786</sup>, “heaven” (*svarga*)<sup>787</sup>, “wealth” (*dhana*)<sup>788</sup>, and the like.<sup>789</sup> Such fruits obtained by the donor do not violate the non-reciprocity typical of *dharmadāna*: The donor does not expect a counter-present from the receiver in return for his gift (see <119>). Instead, the donor expects an *adr̥ṣṭaṃ dānaṃ* (see section III.C), which we translate as fruit and indicate by *Ph*.

Since a fruit can only be a motivating force if the donor has faith in it, *śraddhā* in the meaning of “conviction about the certainty of rewards” is relevant. One might translate it into a probability (a degree of conviction)  $\sigma$ . The expected fruit would then

785 Irritatingly, Brekke (1998, p. 288) writes that “householders’ donations [...] are motivated by a desire for merit which is, strictly speaking, a thisworldly currency.”

786 LDK 1.18, Brick (2015).

787 LDK 2.35, Brick (2015)

788 LDK 1.59–60, Brick (2015)

789 Similar deliberations hold for Buddhist lay givers. See Silk (2008, p. 19): “[P]atronage directed to meditators [among Buddhist monks, HW] will generate the best ‘rate of return’ for the donor, a clearly rational appeal to the enlightened self-interest of such potential donors.” Such meditator-monks are thought of as *puṇyakṣetra* (“field of merit”), see Silk (2008, p. 19) once again.

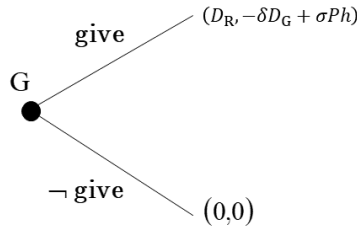


Figure 17: Giving with the earning of fruit

be expressed by  $\sigma Ph$ . Donors with a high degree of conviction would then value  $\sigma Ph$  more than donors with a low one.

Now, introducing this expected fruit into our decision model, one obtains Figure 17, where the giver gives away the discounted gift  $\delta D_G$  (section B) and obtains the expected fruit  $\sigma Ph$ . Donating is worthwhile if the expected fruit  $\sigma Ph$  is larger than the discounted gift  $\delta D_G$ , i.e., if

$$[29] \quad \sigma Ph > \delta D_G \quad \text{or, equivalently,} \quad \frac{Ph}{D_G} > \frac{\delta}{\sigma}$$

holds.<sup>790</sup> If numerical values are not easily available, the above inequality [29] can be understood as follows: the donor prefers the prospect of relinquishing  $D_G$  (which he discounts because it is not permanent) if he receives  $Ph$  with probability  $\sigma$  to that of not giving  $D_G$  and thus not obtaining  $Ph$ .

Equation [29] make clear that a large probability (a large degree of conviction)  $\sigma$  makes giving attractive for the donor. The ratio  $\frac{Ph}{D_G}$  could be called the “fruit-gift ratio”, i.e., the output-input relation that indicates the gift  $D_G$  used to produce the fruit  $Ph$ . In order to make giving attractive, this ratio has to be larger than the “fruit-gift threshold”  $\frac{\delta}{\sigma}$ . Consider Figure 18. It is a graphical translation of equation [29]. Whenever the fruit-gift ratio is larger than the fruit-gift threshold, giving pays. A spirit of generosity then prevails.

Revisiting Köhler (1973) and Brick’s remarks on *śraddhā* (section VI.B), a large degree  $\sigma$  of conviction in the effectiveness of giving (the cause) leads to a high willingness to give, i.e., to generosity (the effect). But, of course, the discount factor is also instrumental in bringing about a “spirit of generosity”. Thus, in terms of our model, the following observation neatly summarises the fruit-based Brahmanical theory of the gift: *śraddhā* (spirit of generosity) is a negative function of  $\frac{\delta}{\sigma}$ , or, equivalently

$$[30] \quad \textit{śraddhā} \text{ (spirit of generosity) is a positive function of } \frac{\sigma}{\delta}$$

<sup>790</sup> There is no need to worry about the case  $\sigma Ph = \delta D_G$ , which has a zero probability.

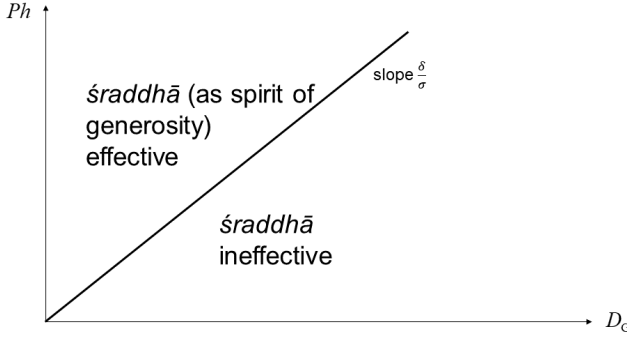


Figure 18: The two senses of giving

For a given discount factor, the above equation reveals that a spirit of generosity is brought about by a sufficiently large conviction in the effectiveness of giving. The reader is invited to revisit section XI.A: *śraddhā* in the sense of spirit of generosity is the variable or the outcome, affected by *śraddhā* in the sense of conviction in the effectiveness of giving—the parameter or input in our little model. Graphically, if  $\sigma$  increases, the line in Figure 18 becomes less steep and the donor is prepared to give larger gifts for a given merit than before. However, a sufficiently large willingness to give  $\frac{\delta}{\sigma}$  will not, by itself, lead to actual giving. We pursue this question in the next section.

## F Economic and moral feasibility (*śakti, adeya*)

In the previous section, *śraddhā* is interpreted as willingness to give, depending on the parameters of the *dāna* situation, i.e., depending on the discounted gift  $\delta D_G$ , the fruit  $Ph$ , and the degree of conviction  $\sigma$ . Consider again the following verse:

⟨240⟩ *nālpatvaṃ vā bahutvaṃ vā dānasyābhyudayaṅvahaṃ |*  
*śraddhā śaktiś ca dānānāṃ vṛddhikṣayakare hi te ||*<sup>791</sup>

Whether small or large, the size of a gift does not bring about its benefits, but rather the spirit of generosity and the means available to the donor associated with a gift—indeed, only these two things cause prosperity or ruin.<sup>792</sup>

where *śakti* is explained as follows:

⟨241⟩ *svakuṭumbāvirodhena deyaṃ dārasutād ṛte |*  
*nānvaye sati sarvasvaṃ yac cānyasmai pratiśrutam ||*<sup>793</sup>

791 LDK 1.3

792 After Brick (2015), who translates *śakti* as “capability” here. We follow Brick’s translation of LDK 1.38.

793 LDK 2.5



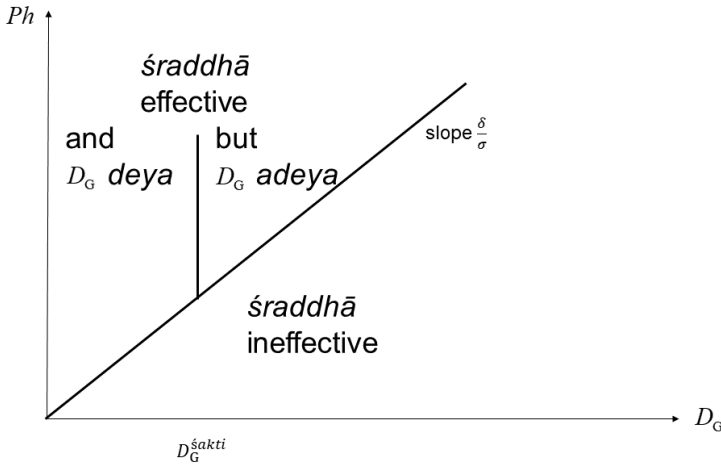


Figure 19: Śraddhā is checked by śakti

So long as it does not hurt his family, a man can give away any of his property except for his wife and his sons, [but] not the entirety of his wealth if he has descendants, nor anything he has promised to another.<sup>794</sup>

Thus, the ability to donate (*śakti*) is the second important ingredient (section VI.C). Consider Figure 19. Even if *śraddhā* is effective, a gift may be ruled out because it places too much hardship on the family.

## G Gift-fruit technology

Gift and fruit are intimately related. Inter alia, this relationship depends on the quality of the Brahmin receiver (compare Figure 20).<sup>795</sup>

⟨242⟩ *samam abrahmaṇe dānaṃ dviguṇaṃ brāhmaṇabruve |*  
*prādhīte śatasāhasram anantaṃ vedapārage ||*<sup>796</sup>

A gift to a non-Brahmin yields an equal reward; a gift to one who is a Brahmin in name only yields twice that; a gift to one who is learned yields one-hundred-thousand-times that; and a gift to one who has mastered the Vedas is infinite.<sup>797</sup>

⟨243⟩ *dusphalaṃ niṣphalaṃ hīnaṃ tulyaṃ vipulam akṣayam |*  
*śadvipākayug uddiṣṭaṃ [...] ||*<sup>798</sup>

<sup>794</sup> After Brick (2015)

<sup>795</sup> Similarly, hospitality must not be extended towards unworthy persons, as is clear from MDh 4.30.

<sup>796</sup> LDK 3.59

<sup>797</sup> Brick (2015)

<sup>798</sup> LDK 1.18

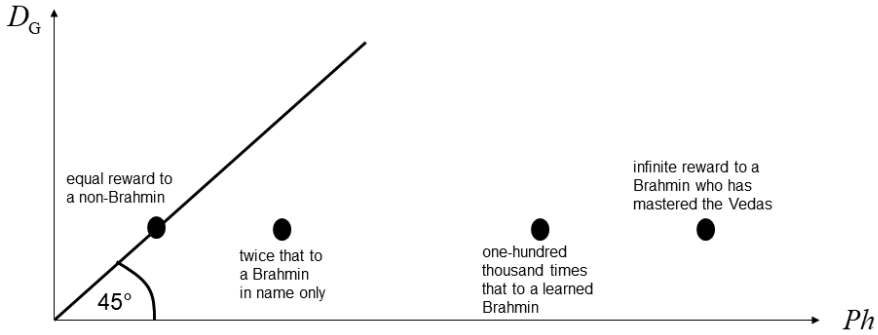


Figure 20: Rewards depend on the quality of the Brahmin

It is taught that a gift can yield six kinds of effects: negative effects, no effects, reduced effects, proportionate effects, increased effects, and imperishable effects. [...] <sup>799</sup>

One may be tempted to capture these quotations by a gift-fruit- or merit-technology factor  $\mu$ , where

$$[31] \quad Ph = \mu D_G$$

holds and

- *duṣphala* (in <243>) is captured by  $\mu < 0$ ,
- *niṣphala* (<243>) is captured by  $\mu = 0$ ,
- *hīna* (<243>) is captured by  $0 < \mu < 1$ ,
- *samam abrāhmaṇe dānam* (<242>) and *tulya* (<243>) are captured by  $\mu = 1$ ,
- *vipula* (<243>) is captured by  $\mu > 1$ ,
- *dviguṇaṃ brāhmaṇabrūve* (<242>) is captured by  $\mu = 2$ ,
- *prādhīte śatasāhasram* (<242>) is captured by  $\mu = 100,000$ , and
- *ananta* (<242>) and *akṣaya* (<243>) are captured by  $\mu = \infty$ .

While these translations are suggestive, they are also problematic. They presuppose that  $Ph$  and  $D_G$  are measured in the same units, be it “happiness”, Euro, or anything else. How one might come to such an understanding with respect to that unit is unclear and is not a topic addressed in any Old Indian texts. The reasons for particular values of  $\mu$ , i.e., the reasons for particular gift-fruit technologies are diverse. A gift is

- *duṣphala* on account of unworthy recipients, <sup>800</sup>
- *niṣphala* <sup>801</sup> or *aphala* <sup>802</sup> if missing the spirit of generosity (*śraddhā*) <sup>803</sup>,

799 Brick (2015)

800 LDK 1.19

801 LDK 1.19a

802 LDK 1.20a

803 LDK 1.20b

- *hīna*<sup>804</sup> if causing harm to others (*parabādhākara*)<sup>805</sup>,
- *tulya* on account of a “wicked mind” (*cittena kaluṣeṇa*)<sup>806</sup> or by “that flaw in the donor’s intention” (*saṃkalpadoṣeṇa*)<sup>807</sup>, respectively,
- *vipula* if “with all six proper components” (*yuktāṅgaiḥ sakalaiḥ ṣaḍbhiḥ*)<sup>808</sup>, and, finally,
- *akṣaya* if the gift is “given out of compassion” (*anukrośavaśāt*)<sup>809</sup>.

Brekke (1998, pp. 290, 313) points to a giver’s choice between giving a gift as a sacrifice (where the quality of the recipient is of paramount importance) or as a charitable gift (where intentions reign supreme). It is the current author’s view that Brekke’s implication that giving “becomes meritorious *a priori*” is not a good summary of the *dānadharma* authors’ intentions.

Holding the virtuousness of the receiver constant, one may consider giving as an optimisation problem, where  $Ph(D_G) - D_G$  is to be maximised subject to  $D_G$  being feasible, i.e., *deya*. It goes without saying that this decision-theoretic approach would not find any support in premodern Indian texts.

## H Proactive giving

Proactive giving—as opposed to giving in response to begging—is especially meritorious, as is clear from <108> in the context of marriages and <220> in the context of the *yugas*. Consider also the following verse:

<244> *abhigamya tu yad dānaṃ yac ca dānaṃ ayācitam |*  
*vidyate sāgarasyāntas tasyānto naiva vidyate ||*<sup>810</sup>

If someone approaches a recipient and gives him a gift or gives a gift that has not been asked for, the merit from his gift will never end, though the ocean will.<sup>811</sup>

Consider Figure 21. I assume that the receiver might beg in order to obtain  $D_R$ , with three changes in comparison to the simple gift models:

- The process of begging may be shameful, which is expressed by  $sh > 0$ . Thus, the receiver’s payoff is  $D_R - sh$  if he is given  $D_R$  after begging, but  $D_R$  if he obtains the present without begging.
- Giving without begging is especially meritorious, this being expressed by  $Ph^+ > Ph$ .

804 LDK 1.18a, paraphrased as *ūnatām vrajet* in LDK 1.20d

805 LDK 1.20c, translation by Brick (2015)

806 LDK 1.21b, translation by Brick (2015)

807 LDK 1.21c, translation by Brick (2015)

808 LDK 1.22a, translation by Brick (2015).

809 LDK 1.22c, translation by Brick (2015)

810 LDK 1.73

811 Brick (2015)

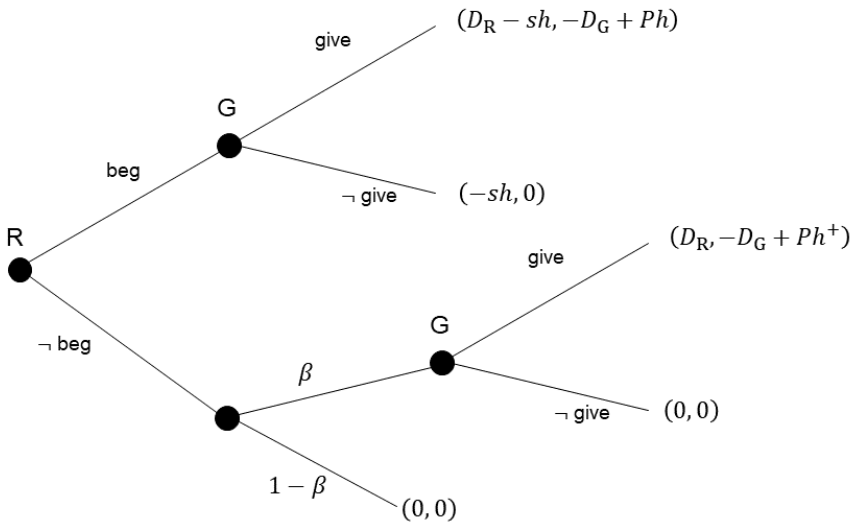


Figure 21: To beg or not to beg?

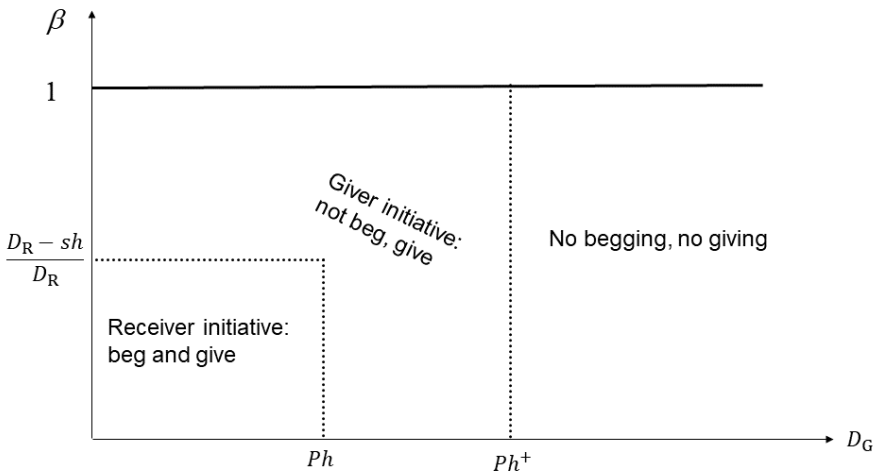


Figure 22: Backward-induction outcomes of receiver- or giver-initiative

- If the potential receiver does not beg, the potential donor will consider giving to him only if the potential receiver catches his attention. We assume that this occurs with some probability  $\beta > 0$ .

Appendix E shows how this model is solved. The outcomes are depicted in Figure 22. On the abscisse, we have the giver's assessment of the gift's value  $D_G$ , which can be low (smaller than  $Ph$ ), in the medium range (between  $Ph$  and  $Ph^+$ ), or large (above

$Ph^+$ ). On the ordinate, we have the attention probability  $\beta$ , which may be smaller or larger than  $\frac{D_R - sh}{D_R}$ .

Thus, with a view to <12>, we obtain

- the (*kaliyuga*) receiver-initiative outcome,
- the (*kṛtayuga*) donor-initiative outcome, or the
- resignation outcome (neither begging nor giving)

## I Merit transfer

In Buddhist contexts, Figure 12 from the chapter on *dharmadāna* undergoes a further complication in that the merit earned by gifting is transferred to a third party. See the arrows from merit to giver, and onwards from the giver to the receiver of merit in the upper part of Figure 23.

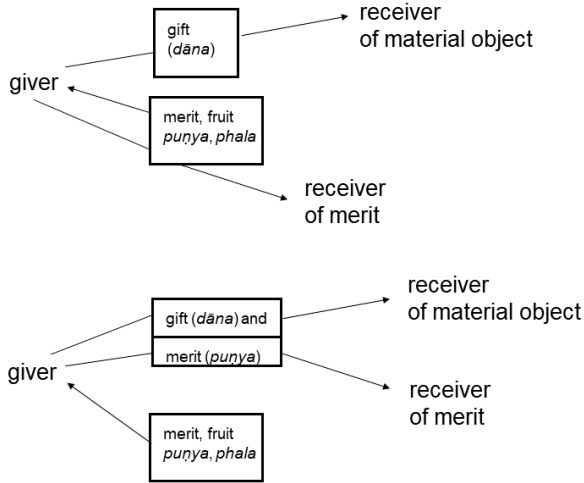


Figure 23: Merit transfer

As is clear from <175> and <176>, this “giving of good fortune” (*pattidāna*) is particularly meritorious. Apparently, by some merit-transfer technology, the merit obtained and forwarded by the original giver is not diminished, even for him.<sup>812</sup> One might run into never-ending cycles here, but this is neither discussed in the texts nor indicated in the figure. One might entertain the idea that the upper part of the figure closely corresponds to the lower one. Furthermore, the lower part of Figure 23 resembles Figure 12. The giver gives both gift and merit to the receivers of a material object and of merit, respectively. As a reward, the giver obtains merit for himself.

<sup>812</sup> Gombrich (1971) studies merit transfer in Sinhalese Buddhism.

In which manner is the donation process motivated in the case of merit transfer? In the *dharmadāna* case, the giver takes into account the merit he obtains, whereas in the merit-transfer case, he knows about the merit but gives it to a third party. This would then mean that the donor is not aware of <175>. He thinks that he passes on the merit to somebody else. However, he in fact also keeps his merit unknowingly. A microeconomic analysis of this situation is difficult and will not be attempted.<sup>813</sup>

## J Gifting without cost to the giver

In the previous section, the giving of merit occurs without cost to the giver himself. A similar phenomenon is observed in <116> in the context of knowledge. If a Brahmin gives knowledge, he nevertheless keeps it for himself. In modern economic terms, the gift of knowledge is characterised by non-rivalry in consumption. This means that consumption by one agent does not diminish the consumption possibilities of other agents. Ownership can thus be produced for the receiver without giving up ownership on the donor's side. Similarly, see the Buddhist quotation <175>, where the *pattidāna* ("giving of good fortune") is compared to a lamp which is used to light other lamps without itself being extinguished.

All of these cases are similar to the special case of  $\delta = 0$  in Figure 17. A discount factor of zero amounts to a zero cost of giving for the giver. Alternatively, one may refer to section B for the special case of  $D_G = 0$ .

## K Altruistic conflict

Proactive giving (see section XIX.H) carries the risk of being rejected due to an "altruistic conflict". This is the topic of the Buddha-as-a-hare and the Buddha-as-an-elephant *jātakas* (section VIII.C) and of the virtuous rejection recommended by Yājñavalkya:

<245> *pratigrahasamartho 'pi nādatte yaḥ pratigraham |*  
*ye lokā dānaśīlānāṃ sa tān āpnoti puṣkalān ||*<sup>814</sup>

When a man, although eligible to receive donations, does not accept them, he obtains the opulent worlds reserved for those who are devoted to giving gifts.<sup>815</sup>

I will now present a model devised by Stark (1993), which formally captures this idea of altruistic conflict. Consider two agents who are labeled father (F) and son (S). Since there are only two agents, pure and impure altruism cannot be distinguished. Father and son consume "corn" in the quantities  $C_F$  and  $C_S$ , respectively. This consumption

813 Smith (2021) discusses the puzzle of merit transfer: Why should the receiver of merit benefit from another person's—the donor's—deserving actions?

814 YSm 1.211

815 Olivelle (2019b)

leads to direct pleasure  $V$  (called felicity by Stark), which is a function of an agent's own consumption of corn. However, the agents care not only about their own consumption but also about the other agent's consumption:

$$[32] \quad U_F(C_F, C_S) = \beta_F V_F(C_F) + \alpha_F V_S(C_S)$$

and

$$[33] \quad U_S(C_F, C_S) = \beta_S V_S(C_S) + \alpha_S V_F(C_F)$$

Assuming  $\frac{dV}{dC} > 0$ ,  $\beta_F > 0$ ,  $\beta_S > 0$ , the agents are greedy in the sense of preferring more corn to less. The  $\beta$ s are called felicity factors.

$\alpha_F$  expresses the level of altruism felt by the father towards the son. Vice versa,  $\alpha_S$  stands for the level of altruism the son feels towards his father. We call preferences with

- $\alpha > 0$  altruistic or benevolent,
- $\alpha < 0$  malevolent, and
- $\alpha = 0$  neutral.

The typical microeconomic model assumes  $\alpha = 0$  and represents the neutral case. One might translate the biblical commandment to “love your neighbour as you love yourself”<sup>816</sup> as

$$[34] \quad \alpha = \beta .$$

The details of Stark's model can be found in appendix F. Here, I would like to discuss his main findings. Stark's model is a convenient way to classify preferences. In particular, depending on the parameters just introduced, father and son may stand in egoistic conflict or in altruistic conflict. An egoistic conflict is said to occur if the father likes to consume more corn than the son would prefer to let him consume. Egoistic conflicts occur if the agents have neutral or malevolent preferences. They also happen if the agents are only moderately altruistic. However, if the agents are “very” altruistic, an altruistic conflict arises. The father wants his son to consume a lot of corn and the son wants his father to consume a lot as well. In terms of the model's parameters, altruistic conflict occurs if

$$[35] \quad \alpha_F > 0 \text{ and } \alpha_S > 0 \text{ and } \alpha_F \alpha_S > \beta_F \beta_S$$

hold.

Illustrative material is provided by some birth-stories (see section VIII.C). An altruistic conflict may also result in the realm of Brahmin *dānadharma* (see <98>).

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<sup>816</sup> Mt\_E 22.39