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English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

About Raṭṭhapāla

Raṭṭhapāla Sutta (MN 82)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One, on a wandering tour among the Kurus with a large Saṅgha of monks, arrived at Thullakoṭṭhita, a town of the Kurus. The brahmans & householders of Thullakoṭṭhita heard it said, “Gotama the contemplative—the son of the Sakyans, having gone forth from the Sakyan clan—has arrived at Kesaputta. And of that Master Gotama this fine reputation has spread: ‘He is indeed a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed. He makes known—having realized it through direct knowledge—this world with its devas, Māras, &

Brahmās, this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk; he explains the Dhamma admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end; he expounds the holy life both in its particulars & in its essence, entirely perfect, surpassingly pure. It's good to see such a worthy one.'"

So the brahmans & householders of Thullakoṭṭhita went to the Blessed One. On arrival, some of them bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side. Some of them exchanged courteous greetings with him and, after an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, sat to one side. Some of them sat to one side having saluted him with their hands palm-to-palm over their hearts. Some of them sat to one side having announced their name & clan. Some of them sat to one side in silence. As they were sitting there, the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, and encouraged them with a talk on Dhamma.

Now at that time a clansman named Raṭṭhapāla, the son of the leading clan in that same Thullakoṭṭhita, was sitting in that assembly. The thought occurred to him, "As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it's not easy, living at home, to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, a polished shell. What if I, having shaved off my hair & beard and putting on the ochre robe, were to go forth from the household life into homelessness?"

Then the brahmans & householders of Thullakoṭṭhita, having been instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by the Blessed One's talk on Dhamma, delighted & rejoiced in his words. Rising from their seats, bowing down to him, they left, keeping him on their right.

Then Raṭṭhapāla, not long after the brahmans & householders of Thullakoṭṭhita had left, approached the Blessed One and, on arrival, said to him, "As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it's not easy, living at home, to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, a polished shell. Lord, I want—having shaved off my hair & beard and putting on the ochre robe—to go forth from the household life into homelessness. May I receive the going-forth in the Blessed One's presence? May I receive acceptance?"

"Do you have your parents' permission, Raṭṭhapāla, to go forth from the household life into homelessness?"

"No, lord, I haven't."

"Raṭṭhapāla, Tathāgatas do not give the going-forth to anyone who doesn't have his parents' permission."

"Lord, I will do what needs to be done so that my parents will give their permission for me to go forth from the household life into homelessness."

Then Raṭṭhapāla, rising from his seat, bowing down to the Blessed One and keeping him on his right, went to his parents and said, "Mom, Dad, as I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it's not easy, living at home, to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, a polished shell. I want—having shaved off my hair & beard and

putting on the ochre robe—to go forth from the household life into homelessness. Please give me your permission to go forth from the household life into homelessness."

When this was said, Raṭṭhapāla's parents said to him, "Raṭṭhapāla, dear, you are our only son, dear & beloved, raised in comfort, brought up in comfort. You know nothing of suffering. Eat, drink, & enjoy yourself. While eating, drinking, & looking after yourself, you may enjoy yourself by indulging in sensual pleasures & making merit. We don't give our permission for you to go forth from the household life into homelessness.1 Even with your death we would not want to be separated from you, so how could we—while you're alive—give our permission for you to go forth from the household life into homelessness?"

A second time… A third time, Raṭṭhapāla said to his parents, "Mom, Dad, as I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it's not easy, living at home, to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, a polished shell. I want—having shaved off my hair & beard and putting on the ochre robe—to go forth from the household life into homelessness. Please give me your permission to go forth from the household life into homelessness."

A third time, Raṭṭhapāla's parents said to him, "Raṭṭhapāla, dear, you are our only son, dear & beloved, raised in comfort, brought up in comfort. You know nothing of suffering. Eat, drink, & enjoy yourself. While eating, drinking, & looking after yourself, you may enjoy yourself by indulging in sensual pleasures & making merit. We don't give our permission for you to go forth from the household life into homelessness. Even with your death we would not want to be separated from you, so how could we—while you're alive—give our permission for you to go forth from the household life into homelessness?"

Then Raṭṭhapāla, not getting his parents' permission to go forth from the household life into homelessness, lay down right there on the bare floor, (saying,) "Here will be my death or my going-forth." And he went without food for one day… two days… three days, four… five… six days. He went without food for seven days.2

His parents said to him, "Raṭṭhapāla, dear, you are our only son, dear & beloved, raised in comfort, brought up in comfort. You know nothing of suffering. Get up, dear. Eat, drink, & enjoy yourself. While eating, drinking, & looking after yourself, you may enjoy yourself by indulging in sensual pleasures & making merit. We don't give our permission for you to go forth from the household life into homelessness. Even with your death we would not want to be separated from you, so how could we—while you're alive—give our permission for you to go forth from the household life into homelessness?"

When this was said, Raṭṭhapāla remained silent.

A second time… A third time, Raṭṭhapāla's parents said to him, "Raṭṭhapāla, dear, you are our only son, dear & beloved, raised in comfort, brought up in comfort. You know nothing of suffering. Get up, dear. Eat, drink, & enjoy yourself. While eating, drinking, & looking after yourself, you may enjoy yourself by indulging in sensual pleasures & making merit. We don't give our permission for you to go forth from the household life into homelessness. Even with your death we would not want to be separated from you, so how

could we—while you're alive—give our permission for you to go forth from the household life into homelessness?"

A third time, Raṭṭhapāla remained silent.

Then Raṭṭhapāla's parents went to his friends and said to them, "My dears, Raṭṭhapāla has lain down on the bare floor, (saying,) 'Here will be my death or my going-forth.' Please, dears, go to Raṭṭhapāla and say to him, 'Friend Raṭṭhapāla, you are your parents' only son… Get up, friend Raṭṭhapāla. Eat, drink, & enjoy yourself… How could your parents—while you're alive—give their permission for you to go forth from the household life into homelessness?'"3

So Raṭṭhapāla's friends went to Raṭṭhapāla and, on arrival, said to him, "Friend Raṭṭhapāla, you are your parents' only son… Get up, friend Raṭṭhapāla. Eat, drink, & enjoy yourself… How could your parents—while you're alive—give their permission for you to go forth from the household life into homelessness?"

When this was said, Raṭṭhapāla remained silent.

A second time… A third time, his friends said to him, "Friend Raṭṭhapāla, you are your parents' only son… Get up, friend Raṭṭhapāla. Eat, drink, & enjoy yourself… How could your parents—while you're alive—give their permission for you to go forth from the household life into homelessness?"

A third time, Raṭṭhapāla remained silent.

So Raṭṭhapāla's friends went to his parents and, on arrival, said to them, "Mom, Dad, Raṭṭhapāla is lying there on the bare floor, (having said,) 'Here will be my death or my going-forth.' If you don't give him your permission to go forth from the household life into homelessness, right there will be his death. But if you do give him your permission… then even when he has gone forth, you will see him. And if he does not enjoy going forth from the household life into homelessness, where else will he go? He'll return right here. So please give him permission to go forth from the household life into homelessness."

"Then, dears, we give our permission for Raṭṭhapāla to go forth from the household life into homelessness. But when he has gone forth, he should visit his parents."

Then Raṭṭhapāla's friends went to him and said, "Get up, Raṭṭhapāla.4 Your parents give their permission for you to go forth from the household life into homelessness. But when you have gone forth, you should visit your parents."

Then Raṭṭhapāla got up and, on regaining strength, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "I have received my parents' permission, lord, to go forth from the household life into homelessness. May the Blessed One give me the going-forth!"

Then Raṭṭhapāla the clansman obtained the going-forth in the Blessed One's presence, he obtained the acceptance. And not long after his acceptance, one half month after his acceptance, the Blessed One–having stayed at Thullakoṭṭhita as long as he liked—set out wandering to Sāvatthī. Wandering by stages, he eventually arrived at Sāvatthī. There he lived at Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.

As for Ven. Raṭṭhapāla—dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—he in no long time reached & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life, for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: "Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world." And thus Ven. Raṭṭhapāla became another one of the arahants.

Then Ven. Raṭṭhapāla went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, "Lord, I want to visit my parents, if you give me permission." Then the Blessed One, encompassing Ven. Raṭṭhapāla's awareness with his awareness, considered & understood, "Ven. Raṭṭhapāla is incapable of leaving the training and reverting to the lower life." So he said to him, "Now is the time, Raṭṭhapāla, for you to do as you see fit."

Then Ven. Raṭṭhapāla, rising from his seat, bowing down to the Blessed One and keeping him on his right, (left). Putting his lodgings in order and, taking his bowl & outer robe, set out wandering toward Thullakoṭṭhita. Wandering by stages, he eventually arrived at Thullakoṭṭhita. There he stayed in Thullakoṭṭhita in King Koravya's Migācīra (garden). Then, early in the morning—having adjusted his lower robe and taking his bowl & outer robe—he went into Thullakoṭṭhita for alms. As he went for alms from house to house in Thullakoṭṭhita, he came to his own father's house.

Now at that time Ven. Raṭṭhapāla's father was in the middle door-porch having his hair combed. He saw Ven. Raṭṭhapāla coming from afar and, on seeing him, said, "It was by these shaven-headed contemplatives that our only son, dear & beloved, was made to go forth!" So Ven. Raṭṭhapāla—instead of receiving a gift or a polite refusal at his own father's house—got nothing but abuse.

Just then a slavewoman belonging to one of his relatives was about to throw away some day-old porridge. So Ven. Raṭṭhapāla said to her, "Sister, if that is to be thrown away, pour it here into my bowl." While she was pouring the day-old porridge into this bowl, she recognized his hands, feet, & voice. So she went to his mother and said, "May it please you to know, my lady, that master-son Raṭṭhapāla has arrived."

"Hey, if what you say is true, I give you your freedom!"

Then Ven. Raṭṭhapāla's mother went to his father and said, "May it please you to know, householder, that they say the clansman Raṭṭhapāla has arrived."

Now at that time Ven. Raṭṭhapāla was sitting by a wall, eating the day-old porridge. His father went to him and said, "Raṭṭhapāla, my dear, isn't there... What? You're eating day-old porridge? Don't you have your own home to go to?"

"How could we have a home, householder? We have gone forth from the household life into homelessness. We are homeless, householder. We went to your house, but—instead of receiving a gift or a polite refusal—we got nothing but abuse."

"Come, dear Raṭṭhapāla. Let's go home."

"Enough, householder. My meal for today is finished."

"In that case, dear Raṭṭhapāla, acquiesce to the meal for tomorrow."

So Ven. Raṭṭhapāla acquiesced in silence.

Understanding Ven. Raṭṭhapāla's acquiescence, his father went to his house and, having the floor smeared with fresh cow dung, had a great heap of gold & silver made, two great heaps made—one of gold, one of silver—so large that a man standing on the near side could not see a man standing on the far side, just as a man standing on the far side could not see a man standing on the near. Hiding them behind screens, he set out a seat between them, surrounded by a curtain.5 Addressing Ven. Raṭṭhapāla's former wives, he said to them, "Come, daughters-in-law. Adorn yourself in the ornaments that our son, Raṭṭhapāla, used to find dear & loveable."

Then, as the night was ending, Ven. Raṭṭhapāla's father had exquisite staple & non-staple foods prepared in his own house and had the time announced to Ven. Raṭṭhapāla: "It's time, dear Raṭṭhapāla. The meal is ready."

Then, early in the morning—having adjusted his lower robe and taking his bowl & outer robe—Ven. Raṭṭhapāla went to his father's house and, on arrival, sat down on the seat made ready. Then his father revealed the heap of gold & silver, said to him, "This, my dear Raṭṭhapāla, is your mother's inheritance. The other is your fathers; the other, your grandfather's—(enough that) you can enjoy wealth and make merit. Come, my dear Raṭṭhapāla. Leave the training and revert to the lower life. Enjoy wealth and make merit!"

"Householder, if you'd do as I say, you would have this heap of gold & silver loaded on carts and hauled away to be dumped midstream in the river Ganges. Why is that? This (wealth) will be the cause of your sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair."

Then, clasping each of his feet, Ven. Raṭṭhapāla's former wives said to him, "What are they like, dear master-son: those nymphs for whose sake you lead the holy life?"

"Sisters, we don't lead the holy life for the sake of nymphs."

"'Sisters' he calls us!" And they fell down right there in a faint.

Then Ven. Raṭṭhapāla said to his father, “Householder, if there’s food to be given, then give it. Don’t harass us.”

“Eat, then, my dear Raṭṭhapāla. The meal is ready.”

So, with his own hands, Ven. Raṭṭhapāla’s father served and satisfied him with exquisite staple and non-staple foods. When he had finished his meal and rinsed his bowl & hands, Ven. Raṭṭhapāla stood up and recited these verses:

Look at the image beautified,

a heap of festering wounds, shored up:

ill, but the object

of many resolves,

where there is nothing

lasting or sure.6

Look at the form beautified

with earrings & gems:

a skeleton wrapped in skin,

made attractive with clothes.

Feet reddened with henna,

a face smeared with powder:

enough to deceive a fool,

but not a seeker for the further shore.

Hair plaited in eight pleats,

eyes smeared with unguent:

enough to deceive a fool,

but not a seeker for the further shore.

Like a newly painted unguent pot—

a putrid body adorned:

enough to deceive a fool,

but not a seeker for the further shore.

The hunter set out the snares

but the deer didn't go near the trap.

Having eaten the bait,

I go,

leaving the hunters

to weep.

After reciting these verses while standing, Ven. Raṭṭhapāla went to King Koravya's Migācīra. On arrival, he sat down in the shade of a tree for the day's abiding.

Then King Koravya said to his gamekeeper: "Clean up the Migācīra pleasure garden. I am going there to see the beautiful grounds."

"As you say, your majesty," the gamekeeper responded to the king. As he was cleaning up Migācīra he saw Ven. Raṭṭhapāla sitting in the shade of a tree for the day's abiding. On seeing him, he went to the king and said, "Migācīra has been cleaned up for you, your majesty. And the clansman Raṭṭhapāla—the son of the leading clan in this Thullakoṭṭhita, of whom you have often spoken highly—is there, sitting in the shade of a tree for the day's abiding."

"In that case, my dear gamekeeper, never mind about the pleasure garden for today. I am now going to pay my respects to that Master Raṭṭhapāla."

Then, saying, "Give away all the staple and non-staple foods that have been prepared," King Koravya had auspicious vehicles harnessed. Mounting an auspicious vehicle he set out from Thullakoṭṭhita accompanied by other auspicious vehicles in full royal pomp to see Ven. Raṭṭhapāla. Going as far by vehicle as the ground would permit, he dismounted and went to Ven. Raṭṭhapāla, accompanied by many eminent members of his court. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with Ven. Raṭṭhapāla. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to Ven. Raṭṭhapāla, "May Master Raṭṭhapāla sit here on the elephant rug."

"Never mind, great king. You sit there. I am sitting on my own seat."

So King Koravya sat down on the seat prepared. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Raṭṭhapāla, "There are cases where, having suffered these four kinds of loss, men shave off their hair & beard, put on the ochre robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness. Which four? Loss through aging, loss through illness, loss of wealth, & loss of relatives.... But Master Raṭṭhapāla has suffered none of these. What did he know or see or hear that Master Raṭṭhapāla went forth from the home life into homelessness?"

"Great king, there are four Dhamma summaries stated by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened. Having known & seen & heard them, I went forth

from the home life into homelessness. Which four?

"'The world7 is swept away. It does not endure': This is the first Dhamma summary stated by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened. Having known & seen & heard it, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.

"'The world is without shelter, without protector': This is the second Dhamma summary....

"'The world is without ownership. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind': This is the third Dhamma summary....

"'The world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving': This is the fourth Dhamma summary....

"These, great king, are the four Dhamma summaries stated by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened. Having known & seen & heard them, I went forth from the home life into homelessness."

"Master Raṭṭhapāla, you say, 'The world is swept away. It does not endure.' Now how is the meaning of this statement to be understood?"

"What do you think, great king? When you were twenty or twenty-five years old—an expert elephant rider, an expert horseman, an expert charioteer, an expert archer, an expert swordsman—were you strong in arm & strong in thigh, fit, & seasoned in warfare?"

"Yes, Master Raṭṭhapāla, when I was twenty or twenty-five years old... I was strong in arm & strong in thigh, fit, & seasoned in warfare. It was as if I had supernormal power. I do not see anyone who was my equal in strength."

"And what do you think, great king? Are you even now as strong in arm & strong in thigh, as fit, & as seasoned in warfare?"

"Not at all, Master Raṭṭhapāla. I'm now aged, old, elderly, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life, 80 years old. Sometimes, thinking, 'I will place my foot here,' I place it somewhere else."

"It was in reference to this, great king, that the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened, said: 'The world is swept away. It does not endure.' Having known & seen & heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness."

"It's amazing, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It's astounding, how well that has been said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened: 'The world is swept away. It does not endure.' For the world really is swept away, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It does not endure.

“Now, in this royal court there are elephant troops & cavalry & chariot troops & infantry that will serve to defend us from dangers. And yet you say, ‘The world is without shelter, without protector.’ How is the meaning of this statement to be understood?”

“What do you think, great king? Do you have any recurring illness?”

“Yes, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I have a recurring wind-illness.8 Sometimes my friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen, stand around me saying, ‘This time King Koravya will die. This time King Koravya will die.’”

“And what do you think, great king? Can you say to your friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen, ‘My friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen are commanded: All of you who are present, share out this pain so that I may feel less pain’? Or do you have to feel that pain all alone?”

“Oh, no, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I can’t say to my friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen, ‘All of you who are present, share out this pain so that I may feel less pain.’ I have to feel that pain all alone.”

“It was in reference to this, great king, that the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened, said: ‘The world is without shelter, without protector.’ Having known & seen & heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.”

“It’s amazing, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It’s astounding, how well that has been said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened: ‘The world is without shelter, without protector.’ For the world really is without shelter, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It is without protector.

“Now, in this royal court there is a great deal of gold & silver stashed away underground & in attic vaults. And yet you say, ‘The world is without ownership. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind.’ How is the meaning of this statement to be understood?”

“What do you think, great king? As you now enjoy yourself endowed & replete with the pleasures of the five senses, can you say, ‘Even in the afterlife I will enjoy myself in the same way, endowed & replete with the very same pleasures of the five senses’? Or will this wealth fall to others, while you pass on in accordance with your kamma?”

“Oh, no, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I can’t say, ‘Even in the afterlife I will enjoy myself in the same way, endowed & replete with the very same pleasures of the five senses.’ This wealth will fall to others, while I pass on in accordance with my kamma.”

“It was in reference to this, great king, that the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened, said: ‘The world is without ownership. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind.’ Having known & seen & heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.”

“It’s amazing, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It’s astounding, how well that has been said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened: ‘The world is without ownership. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind.’ For the world really is without ownership, Master Raṭṭhapāla. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind.

“Now, Master Raṭṭhapāla, you say, ‘The world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving.’ How is the meaning of this statement to be understood?”

“What do you think, great king? Do you now rule over the prosperous country of Kuru?”

“That is so, Master Raṭṭhapāla. I rule over the prosperous country of Kuru.”

“What do you think, great king? Suppose a trustworthy, reliable man of yours were to come to you from the east. On arrival he would say to you, ‘May it please your majesty to know, I have come from the east. There I saw a great country, powerful & prosperous, populous & crowded with people. Plenty are the elephant troops there, plenty the cavalry troops, chariot troops, & infantry troops. Plenty is the ivory-work there, plenty the gold & silver, both worked & unworked. Plenty are the women for the taking. It is possible, with the forces you now have, to conquer it. Conquer it, great king!’ What would you do?”

“Having conquered it, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I would rule over it.”

“Now what do you think, great king? Suppose a trustworthy, reliable man of yours were to come to you from the west… the north… the south… the other side of the ocean. On arrival he would say to you, ‘May it please your majesty to know, I have come from the other side of the ocean. There I saw a great country, powerful & prosperous, populous & crowded with people. Plenty are the elephant troops there, plenty the cavalry troops, chariot troops, & infantry troops. Plenty is the ivory-work there, plenty the gold & silver, both worked & unworked. Plenty are the women for the taking. It is possible, with the forces you now have, to conquer it. Conquer it, great king!’ What would you do?”

“Having conquered it, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I would rule over it, too.”

“It was in reference to this, great king, that the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened, said: ‘The world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving.’ Having known & seen & heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.”

“It’s amazing, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It’s astounding, how well that has been said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened: ‘The world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving.’ For the world really is insufficient, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It’s insatiable, a slave to craving.”

That is what Ven. Raṭṭhapāla said. Having said that, he further said this:

I see in the world

people with wealth

who, from delusion,
don’t make a gift
of the treasure they’ve gained.
Greedy, they stash it away,
hoping for even more
sensual pleasures.

A king who, by force,
has conquered the world
and rules over the earth
to the edge of the sea,
dissatisfied with the ocean’s near shore,
longs for the ocean’s
far shore as well.

Kings & others
—plenty of people—
go to death with craving
unabated. Unsated,
they leave the body behind,
having not had enough
of the world’s sensual pleasures.

One’s relatives weep
& pull out their hair.
‘Oh woe, our loved one is dead,’ they cry.
Carrying him off,
wrapped in a piece of cloth,
they place him
on a pyre,
then set him on fire.

So he burns, poked with sticks,
in just one piece of cloth,
leaving all his possessions behind.
They are not shelters for one who has died—
not relatives,
friends,
or companions.

His heirs take over his wealth,
while the being goes on,
in line with his kamma.
No wealth at all
follows the dead one—
not children, wives,
dominion, or riches.

Long life
can't be gotten with wealth,
nor aging
warded off with treasure.
The wise say this life
is next to nothing—
impermanent,
subject to change.

The rich & the poor
touch the touch of Death.
The foolish & wise
are touched by it, too.
But while fools lie as if slain by their folly,
the wise don't tremble
when touched by the touch.

Thus the discernment by which
one attains to mastery,
is better than wealth—
for those who haven't reached mastery
go from becomings to becomings,
out of delusion,
doing bad deeds.

One goes to a womb
& to the next world,
falling into the wandering on
—one thing
after another—
while those of weak discernment,
trusting in one,
also go to a womb
& to the next world.

Just as an evil thief
caught at the break-in
is destroyed
by his own act,
so evil people
—after dying, in the next world—
are destroyed
by their own acts.

Sensual pleasures—
variegated,
enticing,
sweet—

in various ways disturb the mind.

Seeing the drawbacks in sensual strings:

that's why, O king, I went forth.

Just like fruits, people fall

—young & old—

at the break-up of the body.

Knowing this, O king,

I went forth.

The contemplative life is better

for sure.

Notes

1. The preceding three sentences appear in this location only in the Thai edition of the Canon, although they appear below in all editions of the Canon.

2. This reference to the number of days Raṭṭhapāla went without food appears only in the Thai edition of the Canon.

3. This paragraph is not in the Thai edition of the Canon.

4. This first sentence in quotation marks is not in the Thai edition of the Canon.

5. This passage in the Thai edition of the Canon is much more elaborate than the corresponding passage in other editions of the Canon. The other editions mention simply that the father went home and had a heap of gold & silver made and concealed with a screen. The detail of the height of the heaps seems to have been adopted from the Commentary, for the commentators—in discussing this passage—feel called upon to explain how tall the piles were. If that detail had been in the original Pali, they wouldn't have had to supply it. As for the two heaps, that detail seems required by the later passage where Ven. Raṭṭhapāla's father points out three separate inheritances, although that passage—as indicated in the translation, mentions "heap" in the singular.

Apparently there were some discrepancies in the original discourse that subsequent editors tried to correct, but it's hard to reach a definitive conclusion as to which version is closer to the original. On the one hand, it might be that the two extra heaps were mentioned in the original, but later deleted in some editions to bring the description in line with the fact that the later passage mentions "heap" in the singular; on the other hand, it might be that the original described the father making one heap, and the editors later amended the passage to account for his later reference to three inheritances.

6. This verse is identical with Dhp 147.

7. For the meaning of the word “world” in this discourse, see SN 35:82.

8. In ancient Indian medicine, a variety of illnesses—such as indigestion, sharp pains running through the body, etc.—were said to be caused by an imbalance of the wind-property (vāyo-dhātu) in the body.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 13; MN 14; MN 54; SN 3:25; SN 4:20; AN 3:39; Ud 2:10; Sn 3:8; Sn 4:6; Sn 4:7; Thag 6:13