



Appamada Vagga Heedfulness

(Text and Translation by Ven. Narada)





1. Appamado amatapadam
pamado maccuno padam
Appamatta na miyanti
ye pamatta yatha mata. 21.
2. Etam visesato   atva
appamadamhi pandita
Appamade pamodanti
ariyanam gocare rata. 22.
3. Te jhayino satatika
niccam dalhaparakkama
Phusanti dhira Nibbanam
yogakkhemam anuttaram. 23.

THE HEEDLESS DIE; THE HEEDFUL DO NOT

1. Heedfulness ¹ is the path to the deathless, ² heedlessness is the path to death. The heedful do not die; ³ the heedless are like unto the dead. 21.
2. Distinctly understanding this (difference ⁴), the wise (intent) on heedfulness rejoice in heedfulness, delighting in the realm of the Ariyas. ⁵ 22.
3. The constantly meditative, ⁶ the ever steadfast ones realize the bond-free, ⁷ supreme Nibbana. ⁸ 23.

Story

A jealous queen Magandiya, caused an innocent rival of hers, Samavati, to be burnt alive. The king, hearing of the pathetic incident subjected Magandiya to a worse death. The monks wished to know which of the two was actually alive and which was actually dead. The Buddha explained that the heedless, like Magandiya, should be regarded as dead, while the heedful, like Samavati, should be regarded as alive.

4. *Uññhanavato satimato
sucikammaṣṣa nisammakarino
Sa     atassa ca dhammajivino
appamattassa yaso'bhivaśohati. 24.*

THE ENERGETIC PROSPER

4. The glory of him who is energetic, mindful, pure in deed, considerate, self-controlled, right-living, and

heedful steadily increases. 24.

Story

A rich but humble young man who pretended to be very poor, living like a labourer, was later elevated to a high position by the king. When he was introduced to the Buddha by the king He described the characteristics of those who prosper.

*5. Uññhanenappamadena
sa ❹❹❹❹amena damena ca
Dipam kayiratha medhavi
yam ogbo n'abhikirati. 25.*

BY THEIR EFFORTS THE WISE CREATE THEIR OWN HEAVENS

5. By sustained effort, earnestness, discipline, and self-control let the wise man make for himself an island,² which no flood overwhelms. 25.

Story

A young monk, named Cālapanthaka, could not memorize a verse of four lines despite trying for four months and he was advised by his brother monk to leave the Order. But he was reluctant to do so. The Buddha understanding his temperament, gave him a clean piece of cloth and asked him to handle it gazing at the morning sun. By his constant handling of it with his sweating hands it soon got soiled. This perceptible change made him reflect on the impermanence of life. He meditated and attained Arahantship.

*6. Pamadamanuyu ❹❹janti
bala dummedhino jana
Appamada ❹❹ca medhavi
dhanam seññham'va rakkhati. 26.
7. Ma pamadamanuyu ❹❹jetha
ma kamaratisanthavam
Appamatto hi jhayanto
pappoti vipulam sukham. 27.*

BE HEEDFUL NOT HEEDLESS

6. The ignorant, foolish folk indulge in heedlessness; the wise man guards earnestness as the greatest treasure. 26.

7. Indulge not in heedlessness; have no intimacy with sensuous delights. Verily, the earnest, meditative person obtains abundant bliss. 27.

Story

At a certain period of the year in India it was the custom of some people to indulge in harsh speech for fun for seven days irrespective of persons. During that time the Buddha and His disciples confine themselves to the monastery. At the close of the period the devotees brought alms to the Buddha and His disciples and remarked that the Buddha

must have had an unpleasant time. The Buddha replied that despite such foolish acts the wise ever live heedfully.

*8. Pamadam appamadena
yada nudati paōōito
Pa?????apasadamaruyha
asoko sokinim pajam
Pabbatañño'va bhummaññhe
dhiro bale avekkhati. 28.*

HEEDLESSNESS SHOULD BE CONQUERED BY HEEDFULNESS

8. When an understanding one discards heedlessness by heedfulness, he, free from sorrow, ascends to the palace of wisdom and surveys the sorrowing folk as a wise mountaineer surveys the ignorant groundlings. ¹⁰ 28.

Story

The Venerable Maha Kassapa once endeavoured to comprehend by his supernormal vision the birth and death of beings. The Buddha appeared before him and said that it was only a Buddha who could comprehend the totality of existences.

*9. Appamatto pamattesu
suttetu bahujagaro
Abalassam'va sighbasso
hitva yati sumedhaso. 29.*

THE STRENUOUS AND THE ALERT OVERTAKE THE THOUGHTLESS AND THE INDOLENT

9. Heedful amongst the heedless, wide awake amongst the slumbering, the wise man advances as does a swift horse, leaving a weak jade behind. 29.

Story

Two monks retired to a forest to meditate. One was strenuous, the other was not. The Buddha praised the former.

*10. Appamadena Maghava
devanam seññhatam gato
Appamadam pasamsanti
pamado garabito sada. 30.*

EARNESTNESS LEADS TO SOVEREIGNTY

10. By earnestness Maghava ¹¹ rose to the lordship of the gods. ¹² Earnestness is ever praised; negligence is ever despised. 30.

Story

By his personal efforts and selfless service an ordinary person became after death the king of the gods.

*11. Appamadarato bhikkhu
pamade bhayadassi va
Samyojanam aõum thālam
óabam aggi'va gacchati. 31.*

THE HEEDFUL ADVANCE

11. The Bhikkhu ¹³ who delights in heedfulness, and looks with fear on heedlessness, advances like fire, burning all fetters ¹⁴ great and small. 31.

Story

A monk, failing in his meditation in the forest, was coming to see the Buddha. On the way he saw a forest fire advancing, burning all things great and small. This sight induced him to think that he too should advance burning all the fetters, great and small, by the fire of the Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddha read his thought and, radiating a ray of light, advised him accordingly.

*12. Appamadarato bhikkhu
pamade bhayadassi va
Abhabbo parihanaya
Nibbanass'eva santike. 32.*

THE HEEDFUL ARE IN THE PRESENCE OF NIBBANA

12. The Bhikkhu who delights in heedfulness, and looks with fear on heedlessness, is not liable to fall. ¹⁵ He is in the presence of Nibbana. 32.

Story 32: A monk was frugal and contented. The Buddha attributed those characteristics to the monk's close association with Him in the past and remarked that monks of his type were already in the presence of Nibbana.

End Notes

¹ **Appamada**, literally, means non-infatuation i.e., ever-present mindfulness, watchfulness or earnestness in doing good. The ethical essence of Buddhism may be summed up by this word - **appamada**. The last words of the Buddha were - **appamadena sampadetha** - strive on with diligence.

² **Amata** - Nibbana, the ultimate goal of Buddhists. As this positive term clearly indicates, Nibbana is not annihilation or a state of nothingness as some are apt to believe. It is the permanent, immortal, supramundane state which cannot be expressed by mundane terms.

³ This should not be understood to mean that they are immortal. No being is immortal, not even Buddhas or Arahants. The idea implied herein is that the heedful, who realize Nibbana are not reborn, and so do not die. The heedless are regarded as dead because they are not intent on doing good, and are subject to repeated births and deaths.

⁴ Knowing well that there is emancipation for the heedful, but not for the heedless.

⁵ Here Ariyas mean the pure ones like the Buddhas and Arahants. The realm of the **Ariyas** means the thirty-seven

factors of Enlightenment (**Bodhipakkhiyadhamma**) and the nine supramundane states. See notes on v.44 and v.115.

6 Here meditation includes both concentration (**samatha**) and contemplation or insight (**vipassana**).

7 **Yogakkhema** - free from the four bonds of sense-desires (**kama**), craving for existence (**bhava**), false views (**diññhi**), and ignorance (**avijja**).

8 **Nibbana** = **ni** + **vana**, lit., departure from craving. It is a supramundane state that can be attained in this life itself. It is also explained as extinction of passions, but not a state of nothingness. It is an eternal blissful state of relief that results from the complete eradication of the passions.

Metaphysically Nibbana is the extinction of suffering; psychologically it is the elimination of egoism; ethically it is the eradication of lust, hatred and ignorance.

9 An island situated on a higher level cannot be flooded although the surrounding low-lying land may be inundated. Such an island becomes a refuge to all. In the same way the wise man who develops insight should make an island of himself by attaining Arahantship so that he may not be drowned by the four floods of sense-desires (**kama**) false beliefs (**ditthi**), craving for existence (**bhava**) and ignorance (**avijja**).

10 The sorrowless Arahants look compassionately with their Divine Eye upon the ignorant folk, who, being subject to repeated births, are not free from sorrow.

11 **Maghava** is synonymous with Sakka, king of the gods. The Maghamanavaka Jataka relates that in the remote past a public-spirited person who had spent his whole lifetime in welfare work with the cooperation of his friends, was born as Sakka as the result of his good actions.

12 **Devas**. lit., sporting or shining ones, are a class of beings with subtle physical bodies invisible to the naked eye. They live in the celestial planes. There are also earth-bound deities.

13 A fully ordained disciple of the Buddha is called a **Bhikkhu**. "Mendicant monk" may be suggested as the closest equivalent for "Bhikkhu". He is not a priest as he is no mediator between God and man. He has no vows for life but he is bound by his rules which he takes of his own accord. He leads a life of voluntary poverty and celibacy. If he is unable to live the Holy Life, he can discard the robe at any time.

14 **Samyojana** - lit., that which yokes beings to the ocean of life. There are ten kinds of fetters- namely: self-illusion (**sakkayadiññhi**), doubts (**vicikiccha**), indulgence in (wrongful) rites and ceremonies (**silabbataparamasa**), sense-desires (**kamaraga**), hatred (**pañigha**), attachment to the Realms of Form (**rāparaga**), attachment to the Formless Realms (**arāparaga**), conceit (**mana**), restlessness (**uddhacca**) and ignorance (**avijja**).

The first five, pertaining to This Shore (**orambhagiya**) are regarded as small, the rest, pertaining to the Further Shore (**uddhambhagiya**) as great.

The first three are eradicated on attaining the first Stage of Sainthood (**Sotapatti**).

The second two are attenuated on attaining the second stage of Sainthood (**Sakadagami**).

The second two are destroyed on attaining the third stage of Sainthood (**Anagami**).

The last five are eradicated on attaining the fourth stage of Sainthood (**Arahatta**).

15 From his spiritual heights which he has attained.