

Appamāda

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Appamāda is the opposite of *pamāda* which means heedlessness. *Appamāda*, therefore, means heedfulness, mindfulness, zeal, earnestness and diligence. A presence of mind is its characteristic (*Appamādoti sati avippavāsa lakkhaṇo*). It is the developing of the realization of four truths (*saccabhāvanāya appamādo*) which are suffering, cause of suffering, cessation of suffering and the way leading to its cessation of suffering. It is perseverance (*sātaccakiriyā*) i.e., doing something good without relaxation, without any break (*avossaggo*). It is doing wholesome actions without being careless, negligent and slothful (*appamajjanaṃ kusaladhammesu*).

In the teachings of the Buddha, *appamāda* occupies a very important place. One cannot do any important work without zeal, without being earnest and diligent. In fact, all works, particularly wholesome works have zeal as their foundation. In order to make progress on the Noble Eightfold Path, one has to work hard and has to work incessantly. Can one produce fire by rubbing two sticks off and on? It can be produced only when one rubs them together constantly, without relaxation and break for a long time. In the same way, one has to walk on the Noble Eightfold Path with zeal and earnestness without taking a break.

Walking on the Noble Eightfold Path is very serious work. It requires constant mindfulness, earnestness and unflagging zeal. The Buddha was aware of this and that is why he gave great importance to working hard in order to make progress on the Noble Eightfold Path. He said, “*Tumhehi kiccamātappaṃ, akkhātāro Tathāgatā.*” (The *Tathagatas* only reveal and explain the path, but one has to walk on it oneself.)

And for walking on the path, one has to work hard which one cannot do if he has sloth, if he is not mindful and if he has no zeal.

In his teachings, therefore, the Buddha uses words like *āsevati* (to practice), *bhāveti* (to develop, to increase) *brūheti* (to cause to grow, to increase), *vaddheti* (to increase) and *bahulīkaroti* (to take up seriously). These words are active action-words which mean that constant practice is needed to develop in Dhamma.

If one has no *pamāda* (heedlessness), then he can work hard. He can exert, make endeavor; he can keep those *dhammas* away which hinder his progress on the path and cultivate those *dhammas* which make his progress smooth on the path.

From all that has been said above, it becomes clear that for being able to cultivate wholesome *dhammas*, for being able to walk on the Noble Eightfold Path one has to be mindful, heedful and constantly vigilant to keep those forces at bay which hinder his progress on the path.

The Buddha gives great importance to *appamāda* (heedfulness, mindfulness). In fact, he says that all wholesome *dhammas* are subsumed under *appamāda*. If one is mindful, heedful and zealous, all wholesome *dhammas* can be performed by him.

Appamāda is the Gangotri of all wholesome *dhammas*. The Buddha makes it clear by giving a very apt simile. He compares *appamāda* (zeal, mindfulness, heedfulness) with the footprint of an elephant which surpasses the footprints of all living beings. The footprint of an elephant is the mightiest of all the footprints of any living being. Similarly, *appamāda* is the basis of all wholesome actions, it is the source of all meritorious qualities. Without developing *appamāda*, one cannot make progress on the spiritual path which requires constant hard work without any break.

The *Appamāda vagga* in the Dhammapada brings out its characteristics. If one is heedful, he can attain *nibbāna*, if he is not, then he is on the way to death. Those who are heedful do not die but those who are heedless are as good as dead. Here in an excellent figurative language the ethical importance of *appamāda* has been brought out. The meaning is that one who is diligent, active, mindful and zealous, can observe moral precepts, attain concentration of mind, practice *vipassana*, develop wisdom (*paññā*), realize the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) of all objects of the world, develop non-attachment (*nirveda*), break all the ten fetters (belief in a permanent self or soul, doubt, belief in the efficacy of rites and rituals, sense desire, hatred, attachment to the realm of form, attachment to the realm of formless, conceit, *uddhacca* and *avijjā*) that bind him to the wheel of birth and death, attain *nibbāna* and be free from all three kinds of suffering, physical, mental and cosmic. Heedfulness enables him to attain liberation; heedlessness keeps him in shackles, in chains of birth and death. He will be born again and again to suffer.

It is one's heedfulness that enables him to get rid of all defilements that cause his suffering. The heedful will be peaceful and happy, the heedless will know no peace and happiness.

Heedfulness makes one mindful, energetic, self-controlled, earnest, and disciplined. Thus, he can make an island of himself where he will have no fear of the floods of sense desire (*kāmogha*), desire for eternal existence (*bhavogha*), ignorance (*avijjogha*) and different wrong views (*diṭṭhogha*).

Appamāda has been figuratively called a treasure because it enables one to collect many valuable things. As a treasure is zealously guarded so that nobody can steal anything from it, in the same way *appamāda* should be zealously guarded so that all the 37 *bodhipakkhiya dhammas* that one has developed are not stolen by one's heedlessness. The 37 *bodhipakkhiya dhammas* are 4 foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), 4 right efforts (*sammappadhāna*), 4 paths to power (*iddhipāda*), 5 spiritual faculties (*indriya*) 5 mental powers (*bala*), 7 factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) and 8 constituents of the Eightfold Path.

The cultivation of all these *dhammas* is not possible without cultivating and developing *appamāda* (heedfulness). Heedfulness is mindfulness (*sati*) and it is rightly said that *sati* (mindfulness) is the means to cultivate all good qualities (*sati sabbattha sādhiḱā*). That is why the last teaching of the Buddha was *vayadhammā saṅkhārā, appamādena sampādeṭha* (All formations are impermanent. Strive zealously.) In other words, develop heedfulness and mindfulness.

The heedless are fools as they indulge in sensuous delights, the heedful are wise as they keep themselves away from them and earnestly meditate. It is the heedful who are able to concentrate their minds and attain wisdom. It is they who can experience impermanence at the experiential level, rise above attachment and attain abundant peace and bliss.

Appamāda is thus rightly called the *Gangotrī* of all wholesome *dhammas*.

Questions:

1. *Appamāda* is the *Gangotrī* of all wholesome *dhammas*. Explain.
2. Define *appamāda*. Why is it so important?



3. All works have *appamāda* as their foundation. What is meant by this?
4. '*Vayadhammā saṅkhāra, appamādena sampādeṭha*'. Elaborate.
5. *Appamāda* is called a treasure. Why?
6. Explain '*sātaccakiriyā*' and '*avossaggo*'.
7. 'Those who are heedful do not die but those who are heedless are as good as dead.' Write a short essay on this statement.
8. What are the *bodhipakkhiya dhammas*? Enumerate and define.
9. What are the four floods? Why are they called floods?
10. 'Heedfulness makes one mindful, energetic, self-controlled, earnest, and disciplined.' How?