

Appamāda: Diligent

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

Appamāda is one of the Buddha's favourite words. It comes into his final exhortation: 'All compounded things arise and pass away. Strive diligently for your liberation.' Although the Buddha mentions lots of virtues needed to stop unwholesome states arising and to develop wholesome states, diligence is there among them. This is how he phrases them, here in the quality of diligence: Bhikkhu Bodhi: The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha – prefers the word heedful. AN 1.58 I do not see even a single thing that so causes unarisen unwholesome qualities to arise and arisen wholesome qualities to decline as heedlessness. For one who is heedless, unarisen unwholesome qualities arise and arisen wholesome qualities to decline. AN 1.59 I do not see even a single thing that so causes unarisen wholesome qualities to arise and arisen unwholesome qualities to decline as heedfulness. For one who is heedful, unarisen wholesome qualities arise and arisen unwholesome qualities to decline. These are synonyms for appamāda: Hard-working, industrious, assiduous, heedful, meticulous, conscientious, thorough, attentive, careful, painstaking, persistent, vigilant, zealous. I think we can separate these out into three different lists: the first to do with effort, the second with mindfulness and the third with care. Perhaps you would organise them differently. Mindfulness: attentive, vigilant, heedful. Care: careful, conscientious, meticulous, thorough, painstaking. Effort: hard-working, industrious, assiduous, persistent, zealous. Each word brings a nuance to our reflection. In this way appamāda offers us a useful way to reflect on our actions. In the general how would I describe the way I think, say and do things? Taking each word and to ask: Am I in general ...? Then a daily reflection: Have I been ...? And finally even after a task: Was I ...? Appamāda is to be seen as a Right Attitude in the Eightfold Path. We express this attitude in the way we think, speak and act. In this way it becomes habitual. But, of course, this presumes that the intention and the act arise out of wisdom, Right Understanding. For these are the same qualities you need to rob a bank! Then there is antonym: lazy, sluggish, slothful, can't be bothered, do it tomorrow. That's what we have to see first of all, the underlying unwholesome tendency (anusaya) and the presenting defilement (kilesa). As per usual, we recognise it, acknowledge it, feel it and stay with it a while if there's time. If not, park it, put it one side without fear or aversion, refuse to be hijacked and raise appamāda.

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