

## Pamada and Appamada

Pamada is forgetfulness in doing good.

We have talked about forgetfulness (pamada) often. In worldly life, as well as in our spiritual life, we sometimes forget things.

We put something down and lose it because we forget to pick it up when we leave. We also lose articles that we forget while traveling by car, train or airplane.

We suffer financially or otherwise when we forget to do certain things. Such forgetfulness in everyday life is harmful.

To forget to practice dana (generosity), sila (morality), bhavana (mental development) is unmindfulness in matters of higher, spiritual life. It is called pamada, and it is explained in the khuddaka-vibhanga as follows:

“What is the nature of pamada? It means a lack of self control with respect to unwholesome deeds, unwholesome speech, unwholesome thoughts, and five sensual objects.”

The lack of self-discipline in regard to misdeeds, is a kind of pamada. By misdeed we mean taking life, stealing, and indulging in sexual misconduct. When you think of killing or when you are killing, you give rein to your desire to kill. At that moment, you forget that you should avoid killing. The same may be said of the other two kinds of misdeeds, stealing and sexual misconduct.

Likewise, an unrestrained mind with respect to the four kinds of evil speech means forgetfulness. It means forgetting the fact that one should avoid lying, slandering, abusive speech, and frivolous talk. Hence, these are a kind of pamada.

A lack of control over evil thoughts such as the intention to get someone else's property unlawfully, the desire to kill, or doubt about the law of kamma is also pamada. It means forgetting the fact that it is good to have no desire for other people's property, to cultivate goodwill, and to believe in action (kamma) and its results.

These are the worst kinds of pamada because a person imbued with them is bent on evil and completely blind to moral and spiritual values.

### **Pamada and Sensual Pleasures**

Still another kind of pamada is licentiousness with respect to the five sensual objects. Sensual objects are objects of desire. (They form the basis of mutual attraction between men and women. The objects of men's desires are largely found in women and vice versa.) These are visible objects, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch. Of these, tastes also means the taste of prepared food as well as the comfort of clothes, bed, etc. Material goods such as gold, silver, houses, vehicles, and clothing are also sensual objects which one needs to fulfill one's sensual desire.

Uncontrolled thoughts about sensual objects, uncontrolled desire for them, and uncontrolled enjoyment of them means pamada. (It is like having no control over cattle that are let loose in a pasture to graze.) If you give free rein to sensual desires instead of restraining them by mental-training (bhavana) you will certainly forget to do good. Such an obsession with sensual desire may be regarded as middle grade pamada because it is not as serious as the pamada that leads to misdeeds.

People who do not develop their minds are imbued with middle grade pamada all the time. From the moment they wake in the morning, they think of sensual objects and these obsessive desires dominate them the whole day. They never get fed up with

sensual objects. They delight in thinking of them and suspend these thoughts only when they fall asleep.

They may think of sensuous objects the whole day, the whole night, the whole year; sensual objects may be their life-long preoccupation. This makes them unmindful of the Dhamma within. Therefore, to give vent to sensuous desire without self-restraint is pamada in respect to good deeds.

Pamada is unconsciousness, but it is not unconsciousness due to falling from a high place, drowning, or affliction with a disease. It is total unmindfulness while one goes about, eats, or indulges in pleasure. To give vent to evil desire in terms of evil deeds, evil speech, or evil thought is pamada at its worst. Less serious is the obsession with sensual objects. Then, there is another kind of pamada that is more subtle and refined.

### **Forgetting to do good**

It is also pamada to forget to develop or cultivate the good Dhammas, which in brief means failing to give alms, to practice morality, and to practice mind development (bhavana). One must devote oneself to these sincerely and appropriately. Alms should be given on certain occasions to the best of one's ability. Commitment to the Five Precepts should be permanent and one should observe the Eight Precepts (and others) whenever it is possible to do so. This is to be done seriously and steadfastly.

The good Dhammas essential to mind development are the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipathana), Four Right Efforts (Sammappadhana), Four Roads to Power (Iddhipada), Five Ethical Powers (Indriya), Five Mental Powers (Bala), Seven Elements of Enlightenment (Bogyhanga) and the Eightfold Path (Magga). The yogi should develop these Dhammas sincerely and seriously.

To watch every bodily behavior such as walking, sitting, lying, etc. whenever it occurs is to contemplate the body. To watch cramps, heat etc. is to contemplate feelings. To watch thoughts and imaginations that arise is to contemplate the states of consciousness. While to watch all the acts of hearing, seeing, etc. is to contemplate Dhamma objects.

To meticulously attend to everything that arises and to be aware of it means careful application of attentiveness. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness leads to the Four Right Efforts and the application of the other Dhamma elements for enlightenment (bodhipakkhiya-Dhamma). Therefore, to thoroughly watch the abdominal rising and falling and so forth is to cultivate the good Dhammas thoroughly. Any unmindfulness is a lack of thoroughness which means it is pamada.

Moreover, if you only note the rising and falling and other objects in fits and starts instead of doing it steadfastly and continually, you will be unmindful and all such unmindfulness is pamada. To watch for only one or two hours means pamada for the rest of the day. In that case, your concentration is arrested and it will be hard to develop insight knowledge perfectly.

In short, it is pamada if a person fails to cultivate the good Dhammas seriously, ceaselessly, and whole heartedly.

The opposite of forgetfulness is mindfulness or vigilance (appamada). It is appamada to avoid wrong deeds (wrong actions), wrong speech, and lead a good life. It is also appamada to prevent wrong thoughts through concentration and insight knowledge; to divert the mind from sensual objects through bhavana or mind development; to overcome sensual thoughts through mindfulness; or to give alms or to think of giving alms or doing good deeds. In particular, the best appamada is to watch and be aware of everything that arises from the six senses.