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Sāra,gandha Sutta

The Discourse of Heartwood Fragrance | S 45.143

Or, Sāra,gandha Sutta 1-4 The Discourses on Heartwood Fragrance nos 1-4

Theme: Diligence is the foremost of wholesome states (detailed)

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1 The Appamāda Peyyāla Vagga

1.1 A LATE COMPILATION? The Appamāda Peyyāla Vagga (“The Chapter on the Diligence Cycle”) occurs in the fifth and last chapter—the Mahā Vagga (the Great Chapter)—of the Saṃyutta Nikāya (S 45.139-148).¹ It is probably a late compilation that tries to present the ancient suttas rehashed in a formulaic, almost Abhidhamma, manner.

1.2 THE 10 PARABLES. Each of the 10 suttas, sequentially listed, is based on one of the 10 parables given in **the (Dasaka) Appamāda Sutta** (A 10.15) (except for the last), and is named after the parable, as follows:

(1) Tathāgata Sutta	the Buddha is the foremost of all beings	S 45.139/5:41-43
(2) (Hatthi) Pada Sutta	an elephant hoofprint is the largest of hoofprints	S 45.140/5:43
(3) Kūṭāgāra Sutta	all the rafters meet up at the ridgepole	S 45.141/5:43
(4) Mūla (Gandha) Sutta	kalanusari is the foremost of fragrant roots	S 45.142/5:44
(5) Sāra (Gandha) Sutta	red sandalwood is the foremost of fragrant heartwoods	S 45.143/5:44
(6) Vassika Sutta	jasmine is the foremost of fragrant flowers	S 45.144/5:44
(7) (Cakka,vatti) Rāja Sutta	the wheel-turner is the foremost of kings	S 45.145/5:44
(8) Canda (Pabha) Sutta	moonlight is the foremost light in the night sky	S 45.146/5:44
(9) (Sarada) Suriya Sutta	the autumn sun shines most brilliantly	S 45.147/5:44
(10) (Kāsika) Vattha Sutta	Kasi cloth is the foremost (the finest) of cloths	S 45.148/5:45

Both sets of parables—those in the (Dasaka) Appamāda Sutta and the Appamāda Peyyāla Vagga—illustrate the primacy of diligence. The parables of 7 of the above suttas (S 45.141-147), that is, the middle seven suttas, recur in **the Anicca Saññā Sutta** (S 22.102).²

1.3 THE 4 CYCLES

1.3.1 THE 4 CYCLES. Each of the 10 suttas of **the Appamāda Peyyāla Vagga** (S 45.139-148) follows this standard fourfold sequence:

- [a] Diligence refers to the cultivation of the noble eightfold path leading to solitude (*viveka*).
- [b] The cultivation of the noble eightfold path leads to the abandoning of lust (*rāga,vinaya*), etc.³
- [c] The cultivation of the noble eightfold path has the death-free state (*amata*) as its goal.
- [d] The cultivation of the noble eightfold path makes us “bend towards nirvana” (*nibbāna,ninna*).⁴

1.3.2 The 4 cycles and the 4 types of saints

1.3.2.1 This set of 4 cycles clearly attempts to emulate the fourth of the 4 noble truths, that is, the way to the ending of suffering or the noble eightfold path.⁵ If these 4 cycles refers to the path, then we can

¹ S 45.139-147/5:41-45.

² S 22.102,7-13/3:156 f = SD 12.12.

³ Comy says that “the abandoning of lust...” etc refers to the unconditioned, death-free nirvana element. The destruction of the mental influxes is arhathood. The removal of lust, etc, is a name for arhathood too. (SA 3:123)

⁴ Sn Comy, in explaining *nibbānābhirato* (Sn 86b), say, “delighting in nirvana, meaning that the mind is always inclined towards nirvana on account of the fruition attainment” (*nibbāne abhirato, phala,samāpatti,vasena sadā nibbāna,ninna,cittōti attho*, SnA 1:163). “**Fruition attainment**” (*phala,samāpatti*) “denotes those moments of supermundane consciousness which flash forth immediately after the moment of path-consciousness (sv *ariya,puggala*) and which, till the attainment of the next higher path, may during the practice of insight (sv *vipassanā*) still recur innumerable times. If thus repeated, it is called the “attainment of fruition (*phala,samāpatti*)” (Bdict). For details, see Vism 23/698-710 esp §§3, 5, 28, 49.

rightly surmise that they respectively refer to the 4 stages of sainthood: streamwinning, once-return, non-return, and arhathood, thus:

[a] The path to solitude (<i>viveka</i>)	streamwinning ⁶	<i>sotāpatti,phala</i>
[b] The path to abandoning the 3 roots (<i>*mūla,vinaya</i>)	once-return	<i>sākadāgāmi,phala</i>
[c] The path whose goal is the death-free state (<i>amata</i>)	non-return	<i>anāgāmi,phala</i>
[d] The path that “bends towards nirvana” (<i>nibbāna,ninna</i>)	arhathood	<i>arahatta,phala</i>

Each of these four is a separate sutta, yet they are all integrally related together in terms of understanding reality and awakening in the path.

1.3.2.2 The “**solitude**” (*viveka*) of the streamwinner refers to the mind that has broken the first 3 fetters—self-identity view, doubt, and attachment to rituals and vows⁷—that is, a mental solitude that is above and beyond being reborn in any subhuman planes, and bound to awaken within 7 lives.⁸ The once-returner has not only broken the first 3 fetters (like the streamwinner), but also destroyed the gross aspects of the 3 unwholesome roots, that is, greed, hate, and delusion, that is, weakening them significantly. The non-returner has only one more life to finish off his karma, as it were, before attaining arhathood. The arhat has broken all the 10 fetters,⁹ and plunged into nirvana, settling there, as it were.

1.3.2.3 However, the correspondence of the dour suttas here [1.3.3] do not seem not so neat at a glance—that is, if we simply follow the sequence of the 4 noble truths as popularly known. The non-returner is actually better described by the “fourth” cycle, that is, the “path that bends towards nirvana,” while arhathood should correspond with the “third” path, that one “whose goal is the death-free state” or one “who has plunged into the death-free” (*amat’ogadha*) [§5(1)].

We only need to invert these two cycles or the 3th and the 4th truths, that is, put “the path” before “nirvana” [1.3.3]. In this way, we find a natural sequence of the truth, beginning with a statement of the truth, its arising, its solution, and the “solved” state. This is not a novel arrangement, as it is probably an ancient original sequence, as found in, for example, **the Mahā Saḷ-āyatanika Sutta** (M 149) and **the Abhiññā Sutta** (A 4.251).¹⁰

1.3.3 The 4 cycles and the 4 truths

1.3.3.1 Clearly, the 4 cycles [1.3.1] refer to the 4 truths, namely, the truth that is suffering, the truth that is the arising of suffering, the truth that is the ending of suffering, and the truth that is the way leading to the ending of suffering. Their correspondence is, in fact, closer than the one with the 4 kinds of saints [1.3.2.3]. Let look at their correspondence:

(a) The path to solitude (<i>viveka</i>)	the 1 st truth	suffering	[a]
(a) The path to abandoning the 3 roots (<i>*mūla,vinaya</i>)	the 2 nd truth	craving	[b]
(c) The path whose goal is the death-free state (<i>amata</i>)	the 3 rd truth	nirvana	[d]
(d) The path that “bends towards nirvana” (<i>nibbāna,ninna</i>)	the 4 th truth	the path	[c]

1.3.3.2 While the last three pairs correspond well, the first pair needs a bit of imaginative stretch. How do we relate suffering, or the truth that is suffering (the first truth), to the path to wholesome solitude? One possible answer is by way of antithesis: our sufferings prevent us from enjoying any kind

⁵ See eg Gethin 2001:255.

⁶ Technically, these 4 should refer to their respective fruits, ie *sotāpatti,phala*, *sākadāgāmi,phala*, *anāgāmi,phala* and *arahatta,phala*. These terms refer to their full-fledged stages.

⁷ On the 3 fetters, see **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

⁸ See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

⁹ The 10 fetters (*dasa saṃyojana*): (1) self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*), (2) spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*), (5) aversion (*paṭigha*), (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa,rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa,rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (or remorse) (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*): **Kiṭṭa,giri S** (M 70) @ SD 11.1 (5.1); (**Sekha**) **Uddesa S** (A 4.85), SD 3.3(2); also S 5:61; A 5:13; Vbh 377. See SID: saṃyojana.

¹⁰ M 149,11: see esp SD 41.9 (2.4) (for refs). Cf **Gavam,pati S** (S 56.30/5:436 f), SD 53.1: see also SD 1.1 (6.2.-2.4).

of meaningful or beneficial solitude. Or, that if we really want to understand and experience true solitude, we need to understand the nature of suffering.¹¹

[a] The path to solitude (<i>viveka</i>)	the 1 st truth	suffering
[b] The path to abandoning the 3 roots (<i>*mūla, vinaya</i>)	the 2 nd truth	craving
[c] The path that “bends towards nirvana” (<i>nibbāna, ninna</i>)	the 4 th truth	the path
[d] The path whose goal is the death-free state (<i>amata</i>)	the 3 rd truth	nirvana

In fact, this is the natural sequence of the Suttas presented here, that is, following the older sequence of the truths, in terms of theory [a], practice [b+d], and realization [c].¹²

2 Significance of *appamāda*

Due to the foremost significance of diligence or heedfulness in spiritual training and the progress towards awakening, it is found in all the key teachings of the Buddha.¹³ The 10 parables illustrate that *appamāda* is said to be the foremost of all wholesome states [S 45.153abcd §2]. Hence, “Bhikshus, for a diligent monk, this is to be expected: that he will cultivate the noble eightfold path, that he would make much of” not only the noble eightfold path, but also of the 4 focuses of mindfulness, the 4 right efforts, the 4 paths of spiritual power, the 5 spiritual faculties, the 5 spiritual powers, and the 7 awakening-factors—totaling 37 limbs of awakening.¹⁴

3 Textual numbering

The European (Pali Text Society or PTS) edition of this text—the **Appamāda Peyyāla Vagga**—does not have a separate number. The Burmese or Myanmar edition (Be) numbers it as “1,” as if it starts from scratch, but then assigns each of the 4 cycles a separate number. The Sinhala edition (Ce) gives each of the 4 cycles a running number, beginning at the start of the *vagga* with “9.”

The Siamese or Thai edition (Se) gives only an abridged text of §1.2 and a bit of the following: *Sey-yathā’pi bhikkhave ye keci sāra, gandhā lohita, candanam tesam aggam akkhāyati. Evam eva kho bhikkhave...pe...* Each of the 10 parable suttas in Se begins with *sāvattthī, nidānam*, “Originating in Sāvattthī.” In other words, the cycles are treated as parts of a single sutta (unlike Be and Ce).

Here both the Be/Ce sutta numbering and the Se sutta numbering have been reflected for the sake of our familiarizing with the differing editing traditions of Asia. The numbers are simply a convention. What is essential is the teaching the suttas convey to us.

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¹¹ On *solitude*, see **Paviveka S** (A 3.92), SD 2.

¹² These are the “3 good truths” (*saddhamma*), ie, SD 1.1 (5.1.5)..

¹³ Ie, in the 7 sets, comprising the 27 limbs of awakening (*bodhi.pakkhiya, dhamma*): see **Bodhi.pakkhiyā, dhamma**, SD 10.1 (1). For an instructive monograph, see R Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, 2001 esp 255-257 (see esp n109), also 43 f, 130. See also S:B 1498, 1891 n7.

¹⁴ **S 5:41-45** (the noble eightfold path), 134-140 (*7 bojjhaṅga*), 191 (4 *satipaṭṭhāna*), 239-243 (5 *indriya*), 245-248 (4 *samma-p, padhāna*), 249-253 (5 *bala*), 290-292 (4 *iddhi, pāda*). The 7 sets comprise the 37 limbs of awakening (*bodhi.pakkhiya, dhamma*): see **Bodhi.pakkhiyā, dhamma**, SD 10.1 (1). For details on *appamāda*, see **(Chakka) Appamāda S** (A 6.53) @ SD 42.22 (2).

The Discourse on the Heartwood Fragrance

S 45.143

(a) Sāra,gandha Sutta 1 or Paṭhama Sāra Sutta

S 45.143a; Traditional S 5.1.13.17

1.1 Originating is Sāvattḥī.¹⁵

(A) THE *VIVEKA,NISSITA* CYCLE¹⁶

1.2 Bhikshus, just as amongst whatever heartwood, **red sandalwood** is said to be the foremost,¹⁷

2 even so, bhikshus, whatever wholesome states there are,
all of them are rooted in diligence, converge on diligence, diligence is declared the foremost amongst them.

3 Bhikshus, for a diligent monk, this is to be expected: that he will cultivate the noble eightfold path, that he would make much of the noble eightfold path.¹⁸

4 And how, bhikshus, does a diligent monk cultivate the noble eightfold path, make much of the noble eightfold path?

5 Here, bhikshus, a monk

(1) cultivates right view¹⁹

that is²⁰ dependent on solitude,²¹

dependent on fading away

dependent on cessation

ripening in letting go

(of lust),²²

(of suffering),²³

(of defilements),²⁴

(2) he cultivates right thought

that is dependent on solitude,

dependent on fading away

dependent on cessation

(of lust),

(of suffering),

¹⁵ Only in Se.

¹⁶ *Viveka,nissita*, “dependent on solitude”: see §5(1) n. See also *Viveka*, SD 20.4.

¹⁷ *Seyyathā’pi bhikkhave ye keci sāra,gandhā, lohita,candanam tesam aggam akkhāyati*. This parable recurs in **Sāra S** (S 48.55,4/5:44), SD 42.19; **Anicca Saññā S** (S 22.102,9.1/3:156) & SD 12.12 (2)., where see also red sandalwood illus.

¹⁸ *Appamattass’etaṃ bhikkhave, bhikkhuno pāṭikankham ariyam aṭṭh’āṅgikam maggam bhāveṣṣati, ariyam aṭṭh’āṅgikam maggam bahulī, karissatīti*.

¹⁹ This & foll 4 lines: *sammā,diṭṭhim bhāveti viveka,nissitam virāga,nissitam nirodha,nissitam vossagga,pariṇā-mim*.

²⁰ “Dependent on solitude...ripening in letting go,” *viveka,nissitam virāga,nissitam nirodha,nissitam vossagga,-pariṇā-mim*. On the terms here, see Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, 2001:165-168. MA says that there are 2 kinds of letting go (of suffering) (*vossagga*): “giving up” (*pariccāga*), i.e. the abandonment of defilements, and “entering into” (*pakkhandana*), ie culminating in nirvana. Gethin notes that this phrase is not unique to the 7 *bojjh-aṅgā*, but is also found in connection with the factors of the noble eightfold path, the *indriyā* and *balā* (2001: 162 f). This formula shows that that each *bojjhāṅga* is to be developed successively “as dependent on solitude, dispassion [fading away] and cessation” (Gethin 2001:166). See *Viveka*, SD 20.4.

²¹ Here “solitude” has special reference to the overcoming of the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇā*).

²² “Fading away,” *virāga* also “dispassion”.

²³ “Cessation,” *nirodha*, ie, “cessation of suffering”.

²⁴ “Letting go (of defilements),” *vossagga*, effectively synonymous with *paṭinissagga*, “relinquishment,” eg in **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118.21/3:83), SD 7.13; also **Eka,dhamma S** (S 54.1/5:313). See *Viveka,nissita*, SD 20.4 (7.3). On these 4 aspects of the *viveka,nissita* formula following the 4-truth model—ie *viveka,nissita* = 1st truth, *virāga,-nissita* = 2nd truth, *nirodha,nissita* = 3rd truth, and *vossagga,nissita* = 4th truth—see *Viveka,nissita*, SD 20.4 (7.9).

- ripening in letting go* (of defilements);
- (3) he cultivates right speech
that is dependent on solitude,
dependent on fading away (of lust),
dependent on cessation (of suffering),
ripening in letting go (of defilements);
- (4) he cultivates right action
that is dependent on solitude,
dependent on fading away (of lust),
dependent on cessation (of suffering),
ripening in letting go (of defilements);
- (5) he cultivates right livelihood
that is dependent on solitude,
dependent on fading away (of lust),
dependent on cessation (of suffering),
ripening in letting go (of defilements);
- (6) he cultivates right effort
that is dependent on solitude,
dependent on fading away (of lust),
dependent on cessation (of suffering),
ripening in letting go (of defilements);
- (7) he cultivates right mindfulness
that is dependent on solitude,
dependent on fading away (of lust),
dependent on cessation (of suffering),
ripening in letting go (of defilements);
- (8) he cultivates right concentration
that is dependent on solitude,
dependent on fading away (of lust),
dependent on cessation (of suffering),
ripening in letting go (of defilements).

6 In this way, bhikshus, the diligent monk cultivates the noble eightfold path, grows the noble eightfold path.

(b) Sāra, gandha Sutta 2 or Dutiya Sāra Sutta

S 45.143b; Traditional S 5.1.13.18

(B) THE ROOT REMOVAL CYCLE

- 1 *Bhikshus, just as amongst whatever heartwood, **red sandalwood** is said to be the foremost,*
- 2 *even so, bhikshus, whatever wholesome states there are,*
all of them are rooted in diligence, converge on diligence, diligence is declared the foremost amongst them.
- 3 *Bhikshus, for a diligent monk, this is to be expected: that he will cultivate the noble eightfold path, that he would make much of the noble eightfold path.*
- 4 *And how, bhikshus, does a diligent monk cultivate the noble eightfold path, make much of the noble eightfold path?*
- 5 Here, bhikshus, a monk

- (1) cultivates right view,²⁵
 ending up in the ridding of lust,
 ending up in the ridding of hate,
 ending up in the ridding of delusion;
- (2) he cultivates right thought
ending up in the ridding of lust,
ending up in the ridding of hate,
with the goal of ridding delusion;
- (3) he cultivates right speech
ending up in the ridding of lust,
ending up in the ridding of hate,
with the goal of ridding delusion;
- (4) he cultivates right action
ending up in the ridding of lust,
ending up in the ridding of hate,
with the goal of ridding delusion;
- (5) he cultivates right livelihood
ending up in the ridding of lust,
ending up in the ridding of hate,
with the goal of ridding delusion;
- (6) he cultivates right effort
ending up in the ridding of lust,
ending up in the ridding of hate,
with the goal of ridding delusion;
- (7) he cultivates right mindfulness
ending up in the ridding of lust,
ending up in the ridding of hate,
with the goal of ridding delusion;
- (8) he cultivates right concentration
ending up in the ridding of lust,
ending up in the ridding of hate,
with the goal of ridding delusion.

6 In this way, bhikshus, the diligent monk cultivates the noble eightfold path, grows the noble eightfold path.

(c) Sāra,gandha Sutta 3 or Tatiya Sāra Sutta

S 45.143c; Traditional S 5.1.13.19

(C) THE DEATH-FREE CYCLE

- 1 *Bhikshus, just as amongst whatever heartwood, **red sandalwood** is said to be the foremost,*²⁶
 2 *even so, bhikshus, whatever wholesome states there are,*
all of them are rooted in diligence, converge on diligence, diligence is declared the foremost amongst them.

²⁵ This & foll 3 lines: *sammā,diṭṭhīm bhāveti | rāga,vinaya,pariyosānam | dosa,vinaya,pariyosānam | moha,vinaya,pariyosānam.*

²⁶ *Seyyathā'pi bhikkhave ye keci sāra,gandhā, lohita,candanam tesam aggam akkhāyati.* This parable recurs in **Sāra S** (S 48.55,4/5:44), SD 42.19; **Anicca Saññā S** (S 22.102,9.1/3:156) & SD 12.12 (2)., where see also red sandalwood illu.

3 *Bhikshus, for a diligent monk, this is to be expected: that he will cultivate the noble eightfold path, that he would make much of the noble eightfold path.*

4 *And how, bhikshus, does a diligent monk cultivate the noble eightfold path, make much of the noble eightfold path?*

5 Here, bhikshus, a monk

(1) cultivates right view,²⁷

plunging into the death-free [nirvana],
crossing over to the death-free,
ending up in the death-free;²⁸

(2) he cultivates right thought,

plunging into the death-free,
crossing over to the death-free,
ending up in the death-free;

(3) he cultivates right speech,

plunging into the death-free,
crossing over to the death-free,
ending up in the death-free;

(4) he cultivates right action

plunging into the death-free,
crossing over to the death-free,
ending up in the death-free;

(5) he cultivates right livelihood,

plunging into the death-free,
crossing over to the death-free,
ending up in the death-free;

(6) he cultivates right effort,

plunging into the death-free,
crossing over to the death-free,
ending up in the death-free;

(7) he cultivates right mindfulness,

plunging into the death-free,
crossing over to the death-free,
ending up in the death-free;

(8) he cultivates right concentration,

plunging into the death-free,
crossing over to the death-free,
ending up in the death-free.

6 In this way, bhikshus, the diligent monk cultivates the noble eightfold path, grows the noble eightfold path.

(d) Sāra,gandha Sutta 4 or Catuttha Sāra Sutta

S 45.143d; Traditional S 5.1.13.20

(D) THE NIRVANA-PRONE CYCLE

1 *Bhikshus, just as amongst whatever heartwood, red sandalwood is said to be the foremost,*²⁹

2 *even so, bhikshus, whatever wholesome states there are,*

all of them are rooted in diligence, converge on diligence, diligence is declared the foremost amongst them.

3 *Bhikshus, for a diligent monk, this is to be expected: that he will cultivate the noble eightfold path, that he would make much of the noble eightfold path.*

²⁷ This & foll 3 lines: *sammā,diṭṭhiṃ bhāveti amat'ogadham amata,parāyaṇam amata,pariyosānam*. The word *ogadha* (mfn & pp of *ogāhati* = *ava*, “down”+ √GAH, to plunge) has 2 senses: (1) plunged into (usu water) & (2) firmly standing (in water, esp on firm ground). Both senses apply here.

²⁸ These 3 lines: *sammā,diṭṭhiṃ bhāveti | amat'ogadham amata,parāyaṇam | amata,pariyosānam*, On this formula, see Gethin 2001:255 n109.

²⁹ *Seyyathā'pi bhikkhave ye keci sāra,gandhā, lohita,candanam tesam aggam akkhāyati*. This parable recurs in *Sāra S* (S 48.55,4/5:44), *SD* 42.19; *Anicca Saññā S* (S 22.102,9.1/3:156) & *SD* 12.12 (2)., where see also sandalwood illus.

4 And how, bhikshus, does a diligent monk cultivate the noble eightfold path, make much of the noble eightfold path?

5 Here, bhikshus, a monk

(1) cultivates right view,³⁰

bending towards nirvana, sloping towards nirvana, tending towards nirvana;

(2) he cultivates right thought,

bending towards nirvana, sloping towards nirvana, tending towards nirvana;

(3) he cultivates right speech,

bending towards nirvana, sloping towards nirvana, tending towards nirvana;

(4) he cultivates right action,

bending towards nirvana, sloping towards nirvana, tending towards nirvana;

(5) he cultivates right livelihood,

bending towards nirvana, sloping towards nirvana, tending towards nirvana;

(6) he cultivates right effort,

bending towards nirvana, sloping towards nirvana, tending towards nirvana;

(7) he cultivates right mindfulness,

bending towards nirvana, sloping towards nirvana, tending towards nirvana;

(8) he cultivates right concentration,

bending towards nirvana, sloping towards nirvana, tending towards nirvana.

6 In this way, bhikshus, the diligent monk cultivates the noble eightfold path, grows the noble eightfold path.

— evaṃ —

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³⁰ This & foll line: *sammā,diṭṭhīm bhāveti | nibbāna,ninnaṃ | nibbāna,poṇaṃ | nibbāna,pabbhāraṃ.*