AN 3.16 — Apaṇṇaka Sutta (Unmistakable)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

16. Apaṇṇaka Sutta (Unmistakable) Bhikkhus, it is through possessing three traits that a Bhikkhu would be practicing the unmistakable Holy Life, having established himself on the Path toward the total destruction and elimination of the contaminants (āsavas). Which three?

Here, by protecting and observing his sense faculties, a Bhikkhu lives moderately while consuming his alms food, and is dedicated to striving through heedfulness.

And how is it, Bhikkhus, that a Bhikkhu protects his sense faculties?

Here, when seeing a visible object with the eye, the Bhikkhu does not become identified with its signs and individual features or details. Otherwise, if he were to leave the eye faculty unprotected, wrong and unwholesome states of covetousness or resentment might overtake and control him. Thus, he constantly maintains control over the eye faculty, restraining and keeping it in check.

On hearing a sound with the ear, the Bhikkhu does not become identified with its signs and individual features or details. Otherwise, if he were to leave the ear faculty unprotected, wrong and unwholesome states of covetousness or resentment might overtake and control him. Thus, he constantly maintains control over the ear faculty, restraining and keeping it in check.

On smelling an odor with the nose, the Bhikkhu does not become identified with its signs and individual features or details. Otherwise, if he were to leave the nose faculty unprotected, wrong and unwholesome states of covetousness or resentment might overtake and control him. Thus, he constantly maintains control over the nose faculty, restraining and keeping it in check.

On tasting a flavor with the tongue, the Bhikkhu does not become identified with its signs and individual features or details. Otherwise, if he were to leave the tongue faculty unprotected, wrong and unwholesome states of covetousness or resentment might overtake and control him. Thus, he constantly maintains control over the tongue faculty, restraining and keeping it in check.

On touching a tangible object with the body, the Bhikkhu does not become identified with its signs and individual features or details. Otherwise, if he were to leave the body faculty unprotected, wrong and unwholesome states of covetousness or resentment might overtake and control him. Thus, he constantly maintains control over the body faculty, restraining and keeping it in check.

On knowing and cognizing a thought with the mind, the Bhikkhu does not become identified with its signs and individual features or details. Otherwise, if he were to leave the mind faculty unprotected, wrong and unwholesome states of covetousness or resentment might overtake and control him. Thus, he constantly maintains control over the mind faculty, restraining and keeping it in check.

This, therefore, is how a Bhikkhu protects and observes his sense faculties.

And how is it Bhikkhus, that the Bhikkhu lives moderately while consuming his alms food?

Here, by paying close and wise attention, the Bhikkhu knows while consuming his food that he does so neither for amusement nor for intoxication, nor for the sake of physical attractiveness or

appeal, but to simply sustain his body and nourish it, in order to protect it from sickness, so that he may continue on his noble striving. Thus, he ponders:

“I shall end my attachment to old feelings of habit and not leave the door open for new feelings of habit to invade or overwhelm me.”

This is how the Bhikkhu lives moderately while consuming his alms food.

And how is it, Bhikkhus, that the Bhikkhu is dedicated to striving through heedfulness?

Here, on walking forward or backward, whether standing or sitting, or lying down, the Bhikkhu is always engaged in the task of purifying his mind from obstructive thoughts by maintaining his ongoing mindfulness, while staying diligently and fully aware.

Thus, in the first watch of the night, whether he is walking forward or backward, whether he is standing or sitting, the Bhikkhu is always engaged in the task of purifying his mind from obstructive thoughts by maintaining his ongoing mindfulness, while staying diligently and fully aware.

Similarly, in the middle watch of the night, the Bhikkhu lies down on his right side, in the lion’s posture, with one foot bent overlapping the other, observing it all with wise attention as he is mindful and clearly comprehending, having already determined the time for rising up.

And after waking, in the final watch of the night, whether he is walking forward or backward, whether he is standing or sitting, the Bhikkhu engages in the task of purifying

his mind from obstructive thoughts by maintaining his ongoing mindfulness, while staying diligently and fully aware.

This is how the Bhikkhu is dedicated to striving through heedfulness.

Bhikkhus, it is through possessing these three traits that a Bhikkhu practices the unmistakable Holy Life, having established himself on the Path toward the total destruction and elimination of the contaminants.