

VERSE 2 = Sn 144

**santussako ca subharo ca
appakicco ca sallahukavutti
santindriyo ca nipako ca
appagabbho kulesu ananugiddho,**

**Content with little, easily maintained,
Not doing too much and lightly engaged;
Thoughtful, with a peaceful demeanor, and
Modest, without greed among worldly things.**

santussako:

All the translations agree on this word, for its primary meaning of “content” or “contentment” is clear. As an adjective, along with all the terms in this stanza, it describes a quality of the person named in the first stanza. It is not that she happens to be content, but rather that she is capable of finding contentment in almost any situation. What is implied here is that one is *easily* contented. Contentment in the Buddha’s teaching comes not from the final fulfillment of all desires (which, of course, is not possible), but from the relinquishing of desire itself. If contentment relied upon fulfillment, it would be always elusive. But if it can be reached by having few desires in the first place, or by desires not out-stripping what is already at hand, then it is far more easily obtainable. But the ability to take this view is a rare quality of the individual, and makes up part of that skill which helps a person obtain the calm state.

subharo

A closely related quality to contentment is “ease of support.” On one level this means having simple needs, such as for food and clothing and lodging. We might also take it in a contemporary sense of needing very little in the way of emotional or psychological support from others. Ease of support is particularly mentioned as being important for monastics and teachers, who should not be a burden to their communities. The commentary mentions receiving food cheerfully rather than sullenly, regardless of its quality, as an example of ease of support. Ideally our teachers are modeling the qualities of simplicity and austerity, which also serve to support traits such as modesty and humility.

appakicco

This word is built around a form of the verb *to do*, **kicca** meaning something like that which ought to be done or which remains to be done. It thus refers to one’s duty, responsibility or business. The prefix of **appa** means “small” or in this case “few,” and so the compound is taken to describe a person who has few duties or responsibilities. It is not that one does not have to be diligent in one’s practice, or scrupulous in one’s virtue, but rather that one should be careful about getting too caught up in busy work. A person skilled in seeking peace does not allow himself to be smothered in mundane affairs. One cannot multi-task one’s way to awakening, and must retain the ability to take a broad and unhurried approach to what one does.

sallahukavutti

This compound, much like the previous one, describes a person whose activities (**vutti**, from “turnings”) are “light” (**lahu**) or devoid of heavy encumbrance. That is to say her way of life or behavior is frugal, simple, and unburdened by a lot of possessions or complexities. This could refer to a livelihood that does little harm, a lifestyle that uses few resources, or a personality that does not place many demands upon its environment. In ancient India this image was taken quite literally. Since the monks moved from place to place regularly, they were exhorted to carry only their robes and bowls as two wings of a bird that can fly off and settle down again at will. If a monk had to load many people down with head packs and back packs to carry his possessions, then he clearly was not living lightly!

santindriyo

In this context **indriya** refers to the “sense faculties,” as opposed to “controlling faculties” as sometimes found in other settings. The word **santi** means peaceful or calm, so the compound describes a person whose senses are at ease and not agitated by longing or desire. The five senses of eye, ear, nose, tongue and body can get stirred up or hungry for stimulation, a condition usually manifesting as restlessness or furtiveness. In such a state one does not perceive clearly, and it is easy to fall into error and the misapprehension of objects. The Buddha often speaks of the importance of calming

Metta Sutta analysis by Andrew Olendzki, Barre Center for Buddhist Studies

the senses, which is usually done by allowing them to focus and concentrate rather than move frenetically from one object to another. When the senses no longer hunger or thirst for gratification, one can begin to see oneself and the world more clearly.

nipako

One of many words in the Pali referring to a person who is wise, intelligent or prudent, **nipaka** can be taken very broadly to point to these qualities. Originally coming from a word meaning “chief,” it suggests the foremost of any list of qualities. To Buddhists, this will always be wisdom. The decision by the ancient poets to use one word over another, when several more or less synonymous terms are available, is often guided by metrical considerations. I’m not sure on what basis some translators take the word to mean “discreet,” since nothing is mentioned in the commentary to that effect.

appagabbho

The word **pagabbha** has a sense of someone being bold, forward or reckless, and the prefix **a-** turns the word into a negative. Clearly these are not qualities that are encouraged in one skilled in what is good. Modesty is far preferable to impudence, and the commentary lists eight ways one may be impudent in bodily actions, four ways of verbal impudence, and says there are innumerable ways of manifesting mental impudence. The examples of such behavior cited all seem to have to do with a selfish point of reference and an insensitivity to one’s surroundings.

kulesu ananugiddho

When monks and nuns in ancient India wandered for food each morning, they were said to be “among families” (**kulesu**). Their behavior in such a setting was of particular importance, since the reputation of the community in the eyes of lay supporters was at stake. In this final phrase of the stanza, mendicants are admonished to not (**an-**) go along (**-anu-**) greedily (**giddha**). This word for greed is particularly interesting, because it is built upon the word for vulture (**gijjha**). We might even go so far as to suggest the monks are being admonished to not act like vultures when going from house to house for alms. The vulture is a scavenger, standing or circling around hungrily, eyeing the best morsels, looking for his best chances, and brazenly shoving aside those in his way when he strikes out for the food. The commentary also mentions “fawning,” which is construed as empathy with householders as a way of succoring favor. These are not qualities to be cultivated by the wise, in any setting.